

Children's homes – monitoring visit

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Type of inspection	Monitoring
Inspector	Christy Wannop Louise Whittle

This monitoring visit

This inspection took place after a local authority raised serious safeguarding concerns about the home. Nine regulatory shortfalls were identified. These included a failure to ensure sufficient, experienced, skilled staff provide continuity of care for young people at the home. The registered person also failed to assess and prevent the risk of harm to young people and, consequently, their welfare suffered. They failed to notify Ofsted, without delay, about serious safeguarding events.

It is Ofsted's view that the failure to meet the regulations has, and continues to, put young people at risk. Ofsted has restricted accommodation at the home, to prevent any new admissions, from 19 August 2015 to 29 September 2015.

The registered person does not conduct the home in accordance with their claim in the statement of purpose, which is to 'reduce risk taking' through 'high staffing levels'. The home is understaffed and staffing levels are minimal. The entire permanent team consists of five staff plus the manager. The registered person has not planned staffing levels to meet the needs of young people, or to be able to respond flexibly to unexpected events. Staff shortages, caused by sickness and annual leave, has seriously reduced the already minimal permanent residential team to three. The registered manager is on leave until 1 September and has resigned. Only one of the two senior staff currently working has completed their probationary period and has any knowledge of the young people.

The registered person has not anticipated shortfalls in the staff team and relies on agency staff and staff from other of their children's homes to fill gaps in the rota at the last minute. Staff who are not attached to this home, or who have only worked for the organisation for three weeks are left in sole charge of the home. This structure does not promote continuity of care, or safe care for young people.

Staff have suffered serious assaults because they have been unable to manage one young person's violent behaviour. Agency staff are not trained in the home's approved system of physical intervention. They are not able to safely support trained permanent staff in any restraint, because they do not know the approved techniques.

The registered person failed to prevent harmful sexual abuse in the home and outside it. Staff, working alone on trips out with young people, have been unable to protect them from going missing, child sexual exploitation (CSE), and drug abuse. Young people have required hospital treatment as a result.

Poor risk management has failed to protect young people. The registered person did not assess the level of risk to each child, or arrange to reduce this risk. They have not shown that they have the skills to identify and act on signs that a child is at risk

of harm, including from each other. Staff failed to safely supervise young people, despite clear evidence of their vulnerability to sexual exploitation and history of sexually inappropriate behaviour.

Despite knowing that there had been abusive sexual activity between young people at the home, the registered person did not make sure that staff updated their risk assessments to include these risks, or make clear the protective actions staff should take. They failed to provide the leadership and the levels of skilled staff supervision to promote young people's welfare and consequently, further abuse took place.

Despite, knowing of recent incidents and increased risks, the registered person then made an unsafe decision to reduce staffing levels even further to lone working arrangements in the home. The registered person left a member of staff, who had worked for the organisation for only three weeks, alone with a young person during the night. This was below the level deemed safe by the placing authority.

The registered person did not notify Ofsted immediately of three incidents of serious harm to young people at the home. There was a delay of several days in giving an account of the events on 7 and 13 August 2015 and no information was shared at all about a serious event on 9 August. The registered person did not plan or instigate essential direct work by staff with both young people after these incidents to address the risk and their harmful relationship.

Records are poor. Some rotas are incomplete and do not show who has worked at the home. Staff do not record incidents when young people go missing from home in accordance with their policy and procedure. Consequently, there is not a clear record of exactly how often this has happened and whether staff have followed the procedure, or given a proper and complete account to the placing authority. The responsible individual's records of the supervision of the registered manager do not show a robust or complete account. For example, there is no record of any safeguarding discussion, despite the admission of a very vulnerable young person with a history of CSE. The registered person does not record or conclude serious concerns raised by a local authority according to their own complaints' procedure. This lack of rigor in recording reduces the registered person's ability to effectively review the quality of care and make improvements, because they cannot be confident about the accuracy of the records.

It is Ofsted's view that this children's home is unstable and that until effective leadership secures more competent, permanent staff to care for young people, and can promote their welfare, that no more young people can be admitted. Ofsted will carry out a further inspection visit to monitor compliance with the restriction of accommodation.

Information about this children's home

This privately owned children's home is registered for three young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home's statement of purpose describes crisis intervention, short, medium and long -term placements for children aged 10 to 17 years on admission.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person(s) meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the *Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards*. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
QS 11	In order to meet the positive relationships standard the registered person must ensure that staff— (2) (i) meet each child's behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child's relevant plans; (iv) help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone; (vi) help each child to understand, in a way that is appropriate according to the child's age and understanding, personal, sexual and social relationships, and how those relationships can be supportive or harmful; (vii) help each child to develop the understanding and skills to recognise or withdraw from a damaging, exploitative or harmful relationship.	30/08/2015
QS 12	In order to meet the protection of children standard so that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— (a) that staff— (i) assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; (ii) help each child to understand how to keep safe;	30/08/2015

	(iii) have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; (iv) manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other; (b) that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm.	
QS 13	In order to meet the leadership and management standard the registered person must enable, inspire and lead a culture in relation to the children's home that— (a) helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and (b) promotes their welfare. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— (c) ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; (d) ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; (e) ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child; (f) understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home.	30/08/2015
16	The registered person must ensure that the home is at all times conducted in a manner which is consistent with its statement of purpose. This is with specific reference to its claim to have 'high staffing levels'. (Regulation 16(5))	30/08/2015
31	The registered person must ensure that the employment of any person on a temporary basis at the children's home does not prevent children from receiving such continuity of care as is reasonable to meet their needs. (Regulation 31 (1))	30/08/2015
34	The registered person must prepare and implement a policy ("the missing child policy") which sets out the procedures to be followed, and the roles and responsibilities of persons working at the home, in relation to a child who is, or has been, so absent. (Regulation 34(4)(b))	30/08/2015
37	The registered person must maintain in the home the records in Schedule 4; ensure that the records are kept up to date. Specifically, a copy of the staff duty roster of persons working at the home, and a	30/08/2015

	record of the actual rosters worked. (Regulation 37, Sch 4(3))	
39	The registered person must ensure that a record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of any investigation. (Regulation 39 (3))	30/08/2015
40	The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if- a child is involved in or subject to, or suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation; there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (a) (e))	30/08/2015

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- Plan staffing levels to ensure that they meet the needs of children and can respond flexibly to unexpected events or opportunities. Staffing structures should promote continuity of care from the child's perspective. (The Guide to the Quality Standards page 54, paragraph 10.15)
- Ensure, if it is likely that there might only be one member of staff on duty at any time the manager should make a formal assessment of the implications for children's care, including any likely risks. This assessment should be recorded and available for inspection by Ofsted and placing authorities. (The Guide to the Quality Standards page 54, paragraph 10.18)
- Ensure any registered manager placed in charge of a children's home or staff member in a deputy or supervisory role such as 'shift leader' have substantial relevant experience of working in a children's home and have successfully completed their induction for the home in which they are employed. (The Guide to the Quality Standards page 54, paragraph 10.21)

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this visit was to monitor the action taken and progress made by the home since their last Ofsted inspection.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

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