

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	20/01/2014
Inspector	Rachel Ruth Britten
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	22/05/2013
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home is privately owned and the organisation operates other children's homes in the area.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Good progress	The children's home has demonstrated continued improvement in quality of care and outcomes for children and young people and where appropriate has addressed all requirements and the large majority of recommendations that were raised at the previous inspection.
Satisfactory progress	The children's home has maintained quality of care and outcomes for children and young people and where appropriate has addressed all requirements and the majority of recommendations that were raised at the previous inspection.
Inadequate progress	The children's home has failed to address one or more requirements and/or has not met the majority of recommendations and/or the quality of care and outcomes for children and young people have declined since the last full inspection.

Progress

Since their previous inspection the service is judged to be making **inadequate progress**.

The home was judged good overall at the last full inspection in May 2013. However, there has been inadequate progress in regard to a number of shortfalls identified at the last inspection. In addition, the outcomes for some of the young people have deteriorated at times. Two of the four placements made in the period since the last inspection have broken down. This has been due, at least in part, to inadequate care practices and poor leadership and management. The manager left shortly before Christmas; two staff have been disciplined and moved from the home; and all other staff except the deputy have left.

Despite this, the home adequately meets the current welfare and safety needs of the young person who remains settled long term in the home. Ofsted have been kept informed appropriately of incidents and management arrangements. There are adequate staffing levels, (although there is not enough staff experienced in the home to lead every shift.) An acting manager with a good track record has been working in the home since mid-January 2014 to support a transition period when the newly appointed manager takes up his post in February 2014. The organisation is also

using this period to undertake a complete refurbishment of the home. Furthermore, there are to be no admissions until recruitment and training of a new full staff team is completed and the new manager registered.

The work of the home has not been conducted consistently over the period since the last inspection in May 2013. There have been instances where proper provision has not been made for the welfare of young people. For example, in June, a young person vulnerable to sexual exploitation was missing for 15 days following a planned contact visit to a former children's home. Shortly afterwards, the same young person was able to abscond from the home, being collected by car by an unknown male. In addition, indecent images had been saved by her onto the home's computer. As a result of child protection enquiries, the young person was made the subject of a secure order when subsequently found. Whilst it is unclear how directly staff practice and leadership and management led to these incidents, supervision and skill of staff and managers did not assure the young person's safety. Equally, there was a period of inappropriate care practice by a key member of staff in September 2013, including an inappropriate restraint of a young person. The young person complained and safeguarding agencies were involved. The member of staff was disciplined and no longer works in the home. The young person concerned did not benefit from a positive relationship with that member of staff. Thirdly, an incident occurred in October 2013 when two young people were able to break into the office, steal a quantity of cash and go missing for three days. Again, a series of poor practices by staff and errors of judgement by managers jeopardised young people's safety and welfare.

Outcomes for some young people are positive despite this. For example, a young person has moved on towards independence during 2013. She stated in a Christmas card, 'thank you for all the help and support that you gave me! I've got a new job now and I'm doing really well and if it wasn't for a lot of you I wouldn't have been able to do it so thank you.' The social worker for the young person in long term placement recently wrote, 'it is a shame that so many key members of staff moved on. The manager has been an excellent manager who has worked tirelessly with my young person and will be sorely missed - stability in staffing would improve things, however all current staff have worked fantastically with my young person.' The social worker for the young person made the subject of a secure order after going missing stated, 'it was a pleasure to work with you - she was obviously settled and that showed in her engagement with me as social worker and with her school work, for example, her GCSE English coursework.' In August 2013 an independent home visitor said, 'they (staff and manager) think outside the box to give young people every opportunity to thrive'.

However, leadership and management and staffing in the home deteriorated from the autumn of 2013. Differences of opinion between the manager and the organisation emerged over the matching of placements and admissions of new young people. After the positive move of one young person towards independence into a more urban environment, the manager was instructed to take a young person with risks of going missing. The new young person was placed alongside a long term resident of the same sex and similar risks. The area manager cites that a lack of

commitment and deterioration in morale and performance ensued. Many staff left and the manager showed signs of stress and poor judgement. The new placement quickly broke down and the behaviour and outcomes in education floundered for the young person in long term placement. There was a series of incidents in the home involving both young people. These included damage to the house and cars, and threats to staff as well as the incident of theft of money and going missing. Whilst the staff and manager worked to establish behaviour boundaries and worked with police to avoid criminalising young people unnecessarily, they insisted that the young people were inappropriately placed together. When questioned at the time by Ofsted about the serious incidents notified, the manager's strategies appeared insightful and positive about ways to ensure better outcomes for both young people.

Nevertheless, the manager failed to identify areas where minimum standards were not met, including keeping in mind shortfalls raised at the last Ofsted inspection. This is due to ineffective monitoring. For example, a summary of the allegation, the actions taken and the outcome, was not made or given to the member of staff whose inappropriate care practice and restraint was investigated. Instead, the employee received only a letter about the outcome of the disciplinary process in relation to the matter. This shortfall was raised at the last inspection, but occurred again. In connection with the same matter, the young person's complaint is not recorded in the complaints log for the home and it is unclear where all the records about the complaint are located. This was not identified by manager or monthly visitor monitoring either. Similarly, when the theft of money from the home safe occurred, a room search took place. This was not written up to demonstrate its conduct in accordance with the home's policy. Again, this was a shortfall raised at the last inspection which happened again. The practice did not improve, nor did manager monitoring identify the shortfall. Furthermore, whilst there is now more robust practice in logging young people's monies, shortfalls of security in the office and of accounting for the home's own budget remained. As a result, money could be stolen and staff were unsure of how much was gone.

The home has a generally good track record and the capacity to improve, if the new manager and area manager work effectively together. The present owner organisation intends to apply to Ofsted for the re-registration of the home. This is part of a rolling programme of applications in respect of homes which it acquired during 2012/13. Currently, the acting temporary manager is ensuring an adequate quality of care for the single placement in residence. He is settled again and is showing some improvements in his engagement in school and social activities, benefitting from good supervision and care from new and enthusiastic staff alongside the deputy manager, who is the only remaining member of the former staff team.

The acting temporary manager is re-establishing monitoring and recording systems according to the organisations' procedures. She is highly competent in these procedures and intends to prepare the way for the new manager to assume responsibility for a home that is better organised.

Whilst there is already various positive feedback about the home on file from some young people and many social workers, there has not been regular consultation with

Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) or with young people and relevant others at the end of placements. The acting manager and area manager understand the importance of consultation to inform monitoring and leadership and management generally. They also undertake to consider ways to incorporate inspection findings more clearly into monthly monitoring activity and development planning. In this way, they aim to ensure that practice improves consistently.

Areas for improvement

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 Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
11 (2001)	ensure that the home is conducted so as to make proper provision for the welfare of children accommodated there (Regulation 11 (1)(a))	20/02/2014
24 (2001)	ensure that a written record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response and the outcome of the investigation (Regulation 24 (5))	20/02/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure that a clear and comprehensive summary of any allegations made against a member of staff, including details of how the allegation was followed up and resolved, a record of any action taken and the decisions reached, is kept on the person's confidential file and a copy is provided to the person as soon as the investigation is concluded (NMS 20.7)
- ensure that the home carries out searches of young people's rooms and possessions in accordance with the home's guidance (NMS 3.20)
- ensure that staff members who are placed in charge of the home and other staff at particular times (e.g. as leaders of shifts) have substantial relevant experience of working in the home and have successfully completed their induction and probationary periods (NMS 17.5)
- improve the effectiveness of monitoring, to ensure compliance with standards and to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends. Ensure that immediate action is taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring (NMS 21.2)
- ensure that the views of the child, child's family, social worker and IRO are

sought regularly on the child's care. This particularly pertains to regular liaison with IRO as part of monitoring activity and obtaining the views of the child and all involved at the end of a placement. (NMS 1.4)

About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the progress made by the provider since the last full inspection, identifies any further strengths, any areas for improvement and makes judgements as outlined in the *Inspection of children's homes – framework for inspection*.