

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	31/01/2014
Inspector	Denise Jolly
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	25/10/2013
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is privately operated. The home is registered for three young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

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**.

At the last inspection, in October 2013, the overall effectiveness of the children's home was judged as adequate. The quality of the care provided was good, and the recently appointed manager of the home had lead progress in the quality of relationships experienced by young people. However, there were some weaknesses in the staffing records of the home and in written records for young people. The shortfalls included gaps in the employment history of some staff; gaps in the disciplinary and conduct history of some staff who had transferred into the home; incomplete records of sanctions imposed, and incomplete records of the placing authorities' plans of care for some young people.

Since that time, the manager has made progress to address some of the shortfalls. Due to persistent reminders to placing authorities, and the involvement of senior managers to emphasise the importance of effective planning, young people now have appropriate placement plans in place. However, some additional documents such as minutes of reviews of those plans, or personal education plans, are still missing from young people's files. The manager is diligent in chasing missing documentation, so that young people can receive care that meets their identified

needs.

Although used rarely, records of sanctions imposed by staff provide a clear and detailed picture of the measures taken. Young people are involved in a review of any incident that results in staff imposing a sanction. Together, they identify the steps to take to prevent further upset, and work towards agreed plans to improve relationships and behaviour in the home. As a result, young people increase their knowledge, understanding and ability to maintain successful and healthy relationships. Young people say that staff help them to find better ways to manage their behaviour, and that this helps them to have improved contact with their families.

Young people say they enjoy living in the home. They are making pleasing progress in many aspects of their lives. Some attend school regularly, while others have begun to engage in their education after a long period of absence. This increases their chances for futures that are more successful because they work towards achieving accredited schemes of work. They say that staff are interested in them and help them to complete schoolwork. Young people increase their independence by using public transport, attending appointments with other professionals without staff, and helping with domestic tasks around the home.

Young people contribute their thoughts and views about the home in regular consultation, young people's meetings, and daily interaction with staff. As a result, young people engage in activities they are interested in, and respond to staff who encourage them to try new experiences. Young people have recently started to attend a community youth club that offers a wide range of outdoor and developmental activities, and this provides them with opportunities to make friends of their own age and interests. Staff achieve a suitable balance of the need for protection while enabling young people to take reasonable risks, to enable them to enjoy the same social experiences as other young people of their age.

Staff are not trained in supporting young people to use the internet or social media safely, and as a consequence, young people are not sufficiently skilled in recognising the impact and risks of engaging in inappropriate text messaging. Staff intervene when necessary, to ensure that upset and risk is kept to a minimum, but young people have not progressed in their awareness of the dangers associated with mobile telephone and internet use.

Young people describe the home as 'cosy', and say that they are involved in choosing and decorating it. Generally, the home is a comfortable and relaxing place to be. Staff and young people are currently reviewing the use of space in the home, to provide an additional lounge area for young people. This will involve the removal of the office to upstairs so that the home presents as a more domestic environment. The quality of furnishings reflect the emphasis staff place on the comfort of young people, although one bed was in need of replacement, to ensure young people have the best chance to enjoy a good night's sleep.

One requirement and one recommendation have not been satisfactorily addressed.

Together with other shortfalls identified during this inspection, this means the home is making inadequate progress. The manager does not ensure that they have full and satisfactory information about all staff before they begin to work in the home. The Registered Manager recruits and selects new staff by using procedures that help prevent unsuitable people from having access to young people. Any gaps in their employment history are fully explained. However, not all internal appointments are subject to the same level of monitoring. The Registered Manager does not routinely assess the past conduct of staff when they apply for transfer into the home. Neither do they obtain verification of why previous positions have ended. In addition, when staff from other homes provide temporary cover on an occasional basis, the Registered Manager does not ensure that they have assessed the nature and outcome of any allegations previously made about that individual. This falls short of safer recruitment practice, and places young people at risk because unsuitable people may have access to them.

The manager routinely monitors the running of the home, and as a result, she understands the strengths of the home. Staff benefit from improved supervision and development, to enhance the quality of care they provide to young people. She has identified some areas for development: the quality of recording; the layout of the home; promoting young people's social development and confidence in the community, and enabling them to become more independent. However, monitoring of progress is not consistently maintained, as evidenced by the shortfalls identified during this inspection.

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
26 (2001)	ensure that full and satisfactory information is available in relation to all persons employed at the home in respect of each of the matters specified in Schedule 2, specifically that as far as reasonably practicable, they receive verification of why any previous position that involved work with children ended. Regulation 26 (3d), Schedule 2 (4))	28/02/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure that children are protected from abuse and other forms of significant

harm by implementing rigorous staff transfer checks and procedures (NMS 4.1)

- ensure that there is a homely and comfortable environment, particularly that young people have comfortable mattresses (NMS 10.3)
- ensure that there is a good quality learning and development programme, so that staff are equipped with the skills to meet the needs of children, particularly with regard to internet and telephone safety (NMS 18.1)
- ensure that the results of any reviews of placement and education plans are promptly recorded on the child's file. (NMS 25.8)

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*.