

Children's homes - interim inspection

Inspection date	03/03/2016
Unique reference number	SC389781
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	The Qalb Short Break Services Ltd
Registered person address	35 Beaufort Court, Admirals Way, South Quay Waterside, London, E14 9XL

Responsible individual	Yasmin Choudhry
Registered manager	Mohammed Rahman
Inspector	Seka Graovac

Inspection date	03/03/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Outstanding
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection This home was judged Outstanding at the full inspection. At this interim inspection, Ofsted judge that it has declined in effectiveness. The last inspection report listed two good practice recommendations. One related to evidencing closer partnership working with children's parents and professionals from their schools and social services. Staff have recorded more consistently their contact and consultations with the parents and professionals. In addition to the records on individual children's files, staff also make the same records in the three newly created separate logs of communication with the parents, schools and other professionals. Duplicating records does not make the practice better. Keeping records on the relevant children's files is sufficient and better practice than keeping them in separate logs. The second recommendation related to achieving better transition practice. The service has not secured consistent improvement in this area of work. An example of this is that there was no transition plan in place for one young person who recently turned 18 and left the service. Staff reviews of the young people's independent living skills every six months show the progress that the young people have made. However, the high levels of control and security in the environment raise questions about how effectively staff help young people to develop practical skills and emotional resilience that they need as they are preparing to leave the home. Staff keep some internal doors keypad locked and adaptations to the environment, such as having high-level handles on some doors, restricts young people's access to some areas, such as toilets. Staff are confident that these measures are absolutely necessary to protect the children. They do not see these measures as forms of restraint and restriction of liberty. This includes young people who preparing to move to adult services and those who a staff member described as 'travel-trained and safe to go out'. Staff have developed their own care plans for children. However, none of the children has an integrated education health and care plan that would contain details of any restraint/ limitation to access necessary as a consequence of a child's impairment or disability. There are no risk assessments in relation to the child's individual needs and the environment. The information about the restriction of	

access and the security arrangements is not included in the statement of purpose or any other document or policy. The home does not demonstrate how staff balance the protection of children with enabling children to take reasonable risks in a safe environment. It is not clear how the physical characteristics of the environment enable children to learn how to protect themselves better and how this changes with children's age and development. Although staff are very clear that any limitation to access and freedom of a child, is in the child's best interests, the records that safeguard children's rights and demonstrate the home's high aspirations for children are not in place. The home provides a highly protective environment. How staff enable children and instil them with 'I can' attitude is less clear.

The locks are connected to the fire alarm system and would disengage in case of a fire. A general evacuation strategy is in place that describes what staff need to do in case of a fire. Fire drills that include full evacuation of the premises regularly take place. The records do not include the names of the children who participated, so it is possible that some children have never taken part. In addition, despite children having a wide range of disabilities, including severe sensory impairments and mobility issues, none of the children has a personal emergency evacuation plan. At the time of the inspection, the route from one fire exit through the garden to the assembly point was partially obstructed by a trampoline.

In light of the concerns that Ofsted received in relation to the use of the CCTV equipment in the home, the inspector paid particular attention to this aspect of the service. The practice regarding monitoring and surveillance is in breach of the regulations and quality standards.

Staff on duty were not able to provide clear information about how many cameras were in the home and their location. By the end of the visit, the inspector established that there were probably eight cameras in the home: four internal and four external. The home's statement of purpose states that there are six cameras.

There are a number of issues with the home's CCTV policy. This document contains information about the use of cameras outside the building, in the kitchen and in the children's activity room. It fails to mention the use of a camera in the lounge. Staff were unsure if there was a camera in the sensory room or not.

The policy states that no camera will be hidden from view. However, some cameras are placed in small round white containers that makes them very difficult or even, impossible to see. These containers are very similar to the smoke alarms. Both the staff and the inspector were confused which one was which. The policy also states that signs will be prominently placed around the building informing staff, children and visitors that they are entering an area covered by CCTV. This has not happened: no such signs have been displayed. The policy refers to some legislation but not to the legislation that the quality standards link to, such as the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 and the Surveillance Camera Code of Conduct 2013. The staff were very clear of the purpose of the use of external cameras and

their reasoning was convincing. However, they were unable to explain how the use of the CCTV within the communal areas of the home protected children. They gave examples of how it protected staff in case of any allegations against them. The CCTV policy lists the following purpose of the use of the cameras: to deter crime; to assist in prevention and detection of crime; assist with the identification, apprehension and prosecution of offenders; to assist with the identification of actions that might result in disciplinary proceedings against staff and young people and to monitor security of buildings and young people (going missing). There have been no episodes of young people going missing from home: they cannot go out without a staff member unlocking the doors.

The policy does not engender a culture of trust and positive relationships within the home. While external cameras are clearly used for contemporaneous monitoring, the staff were unable to demonstrate how the internal cameras helped to monitor children. Only the registered manager, who was not present at the inspection, has access to viewing through the internal cameras. All cameras automatically record what is in the front of them. According to the home's policy, images are not held for more than 14 days and if stored on removable data, such as a CD, will be destroyed once the purpose of recording is no longer relevant.

The children's guide does not refer to the use of the cameras in the home. There are no records to show that the children, their parents and social workers have been made aware of the extent of the use of the cameras within the home; that they consented to the use of the cameras and agreed how exactly the monitoring and surveillance safeguarded and promoted the welfare of the children without being no more intrusive than necessary having regard to the child's need for privacy.

The staff were very clear that there were two cameras in the kitchen. They reported that this was because the manager arranged for the second camera to be installed sometimes last year, having realised that if a child went in a particular corner of the kitchen, he could not see them through the camera. Due to the children's complex and often profound needs, the staffing levels are suitably high and children are never left unsupervised. The staff were unable to convince the inspector why such extraordinary levels of video camera surveillance were required to safeguard children at the same time when the staffing levels were appropriate.

In addition to the weaknesses in the SOP, CCTV policy and the children's guide that have been already mentioned, the inspector also identified some other gaps in the home's documents and policies. The young person's guide does not include contact details of the Office of the Children's Commissioner. Children's equality and cultural diversity plans still refer to the old regulations and the national minimum standards. This includes the plans for the children who only recently started using the service. The home has a policy titled 'prostitution policy'. The policy does not contain any information regarding child sexual exploitation (CSE) and does not make clear that CSE or 'prostitution' is a child protection concern. Some staff have had training on this subject and reportedly, there have been no CSE concerns.

No significant incidents have occurred, since the last inspection. There have been no complaints raised with the home. Children have continued to have fun and highly enjoyable experiences during their short breaks. Staff supported them to access a wide range of activities in and outside of the home. Children have excellent opportunities to try new things and develop their interests. The staff members play positive roles in their lives and help them to achieve better social integration.

Information about this children's home

A limited company operates this service. A local authority fully funds it, mainly for the use of families and young people who live in this inner city borough. The home is registered to provide short breaks for up to eight young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties, learning disabilities, physical disabilities and sensory and communication impairment.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25/09/2015	Full	Outstanding
19/03/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
09/01/2015	Full	Good
19/03/2014	Interim	Good Progress

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.

Requirement	Due date
The registered person may only use devices for the monitoring or surveillance of children if— (a) the monitoring or surveillance is for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child concerned, or other children; (b) the child's placing authority consents in writing to the monitoring or surveillance; (c) so far as reasonably practicable in the light of the child's age and understanding, the child is informed in advance of the intention to do the monitoring or surveillance; and (d) the monitoring or surveillance is no more intrusive than necessary, having regard to the child's need for privacy. (2) This regulation is subject to any monitoring or surveillance requirements imposed by a court. (Regulation 24)	01/06/2016

Recommendations

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

- Make sure that any decisions to limit a child's access to any area of the home and any modifications to the environment of the home in order to safeguard any child is informed by a rigorous assessment of that individual child's needs, is properly recorded and is kept under regular review. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 15 paragraph 3.10)
- Make sure that the home's written policy on using CCTV or other monitoring equipment refers to the current legal guidance and best practice, contains correct information and is fully implemented. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 16 paragraph 3.16)
- Update the children's guide so that it helps children to understand how to contact the Office of the Children's Commissioner. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 24 paragraph 4.22)
- Make sure that each child has a personal emergency evacuation plan that describes the arrangements in place to protect them in case of emergencies,

such as fire. This includes making sure that all routes to the assembly point are clear of any obstructions, taking particularly into account that some children might be in a wheelchair. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 42 paragraph 9.5)

- Make sure that all staff have sound understanding that restricting a child's liberty of movement and changes to the physical environment of the home (such as using high door handles) are forms of restraint. Any restrictions necessary to safeguard a particular child need to be covered in the child's education, health and care plans, as well as in the home's statement of purpose. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 47 paragraph 9.42)
- Make sure that the registered persons lead a team that has a culture of high aspiration for children which is demonstrated through the care, resources and opportunities offered to the children. This in particular relates to updating policies and procedures so that they reflect current thinking about the best practice and ethos. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 52 paragraph 10.4)
- Ensure that as well as longer-term support for children to move on from the home effectively, the home has an important role in supporting each child leaving the home in the period immediately before their departure. The registered person should work with the placing authority to ensure that each child's transition is planned and help each child to prepare for leaving both practically and emotionally. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 57 paragraph 11.9)

What the inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspection we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, young people and their families. In addition the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

This 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 Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the *Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards*.

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