

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC391993
Inspector	Deborah White
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	St Cuthberts Care
Registered person address	St Cuthberts House West Road Newcastle Upon Tyne Tyne & Wear NE15 7PY
Responsible individual	Sheila Terese Errington
Registered manager	Dianne Francis Hewison
Date of last inspection	22/01/2014

Inspection date	23/12/2014
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	There has been no enforcement action since the last inspection.

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	inadequate
Outcomes for children and young people	good
Quality of care	good
Keeping children and young people safe	inadequate
Leadership and management	inadequate

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	inadequate
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Full report

Information about this children's home

The children's home provides care and accommodation for up to six young people. The home is provided by a charity and is registered to care for young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties and learning disabilities.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
22/01/2014	Interim	good progress
16/05/2013	Full	good
03/12/2012	Interim	satisfactory progress
22/06/2012	Full	good

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

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
16 (2001)	ensure the registered person shall prepare and implement a written policy which sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of any allegation of abuse or neglect and that the procedure provides for written records to be kept of any allegation of abuse or neglect, and of the action taken in response (Regulation 16 (1) (a) and (2) (d))	23/01/2015
11 (2001)	ensure the home is conducted so as to promote and make proper provision for the safeguarding and welfare of children accommodated there. In particular, for children who go missing and children	23/01/2015

	at risk from exploitation (Regulation 11 (1) (a))	
34 (2001)	establish and maintain a system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals and improving the quality of care provided in the children's home (Regulation 34 (1) (a) and (b))	23/01/2015
27 (2001)	ensure that all persons employed by him receive appropriate training. In particular, training in sexual exploitation (Regulation 27 (4) (a))	13/02/2015

Recommendations

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

- ensure staff follow the behaviour management policy that sets out measures of discipline which may be used in the home. Additionally, ensure sanctions for poor behaviour are not punitive but restorative in nature, so that children are helped to recognise the impact of their behaviour on others (Children's Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 5: Children's Homes, paragraph 2.89)
- ensure children and young people are protected from bullying or negative attitudes, and where appropriate provide additional staff training and or guidance about how to intervene and reduce bullying behaviours by young people in their care (Children's Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 5: Children's Homes, paragraph 2.84)
- ensure the children's home has a record of the recruitment checks which have been carried out on those working in the home (NMS 16.3)
- ensure there are clear and effective procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the home that includes a robust, evidence based development and improvement plan (NMS 21.1)
- ensure records are clear, up to date and stored securely and the home has a written policy that clarifies the purpose and format and content of information to be kept on the Registered Manager's files (NMS 22.2)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Young people are happy, outgoing and confident. The home is a busy environment, accommodating six teenagers, with lots of positive activities of daily living and individual routines. Young people know why they are living in a children's home and are very well supported making important life transitions. This gives young people an insight into why they live differently from their friends and peers who live in a family home. A social worker said, 'My child is doing fantastic, this is a good placement. They have made very good progress and receive good support.'

Young people are generally healthy and understand about healthy living. They know about healthy eating and the importance of exercise. A lot of leisure activities involve healthy pastimes such as going to the gymnasium, walking and swimming. As a result, young people are educated to learn and develop a healthy lifestyle they can take with them into later life. A child said, 'The food is good and healthy. We don't get cola to drink as that is bad for you. We get fruit and good things.' Young people access the healthcare services they need to meet their needs. They are also supported to learn about life changes associated with growing up and puberty, which can be a confusing time for teenagers.

All young people have progressed from their starting point and since the last inspection visit. Educational outcomes are promising. Some young people have excelled beyond expectations and are very proud of their achievements. This increases their confidence and feelings of self-worth. Other young people who struggle with attending school have been supported to take their first steps back into education. This is often a difficult time for young people but good outcomes and achievement is teaching them resilience and the importance of a good education.

Young people are very much involved in their local community and see their locality as their home area. They access lots of local amenities and take advantage of living in a town and near the town centre. The area offers a range of activities where young people can pursue their hobbies and interests. This helps steer them away from anti-social behaviours and negative peer influences. Young people are highly involved in planning their free and leisure time where they can experience new activities and be involved in positive decision making.

Young people are and feel nurtured and genuinely cared about. They know the home's boundaries and expectations, which helps them develop consideration of others and compromise. These are very important life-skills that help young people learn about empathy and understanding. Young people also learn good independence skills, which prepares them for adulthood. A child said, 'I like cooking and I cook a lot. I like to bake with staff.'

Young people are listened to and feel their views are important. This makes them feel valued and respected. Contact arrangements are known to young people to ensure they maintain meaningful relationships with people who are important to them, such as their family, friends and previous carers.

Quality of care

good

Relationships between staff and young people are positive and based on mutual respect. Staff understand safe relationship boundaries and model good social skills. Interactions are warm and nurturing. Staff are skilled at using appropriate touch, which is reflected in how young people approach and interact with them. This provides young people reassurance, comfort and emotional security.

Staff see consultation with young people as important, particularly in relation to young people's care-plans and important decisions. Young people know how to complain and feel able to talk to staff. Staff facilitate and encourage regular young people's meetings and keyworker sessions to provide opportunities for open discussions and private talking time. Informal consultation, such as chatting at mealtimes and during activities, enables consultation to take place in a relaxed non-threatening way. As a result young people feel listened to and are empowered to talk about their views and how they feel.

Staff have a good knowledge of young people's individual personalities, needs and behaviours. They use this knowledge to quickly identify and react to subtle changes in young people that may signal signs of distress or anxiety. Staff are skilled at understanding the interpersonal dynamics in the house and where disagreements or challenges between young people are surfacing. They react quickly and effectively to maintain a calmness that enables a settled, harmonious home. Young people learn, from watching staff, how to diffuse potential difficult situations. A social worker said, 'My young person is progressing and doing well. Their behaviour has settled dramatically.'

There are good examples of interagency networking that provide young people with effective multi-disciplinary professional care. This meets young people's individual needs. Staff work in partnership with schools, healthcare services and other agencies to provide holistic care. Young people are very well supported to attend professional appointments and keyworkers liaise with external workers to ensure care interventions are relevant and consistent.

Activities are planned with young people to take into account their aspirations and wishes. Staff know which young person they will be working with during each shift, which gives them time to plan outings and activities effectively. This prevents young people being let down and disappointed. This emphasis on engaging and occupying young people creates fun ways to learn new hobbies and skills. A social worker said, 'Staff are very patient with my young person and the diversionary activities are

having a good effect.'

Staff strive to provide a homely environment that meets young people's needs. The home is located centrally and there is easy access to services and amenities. The home is very clean and tidy, and welcoming. This is especially important for new young people, entering the home for the first time, who may be feeling scared or apprehensive.

Keeping children and young people safe inadequate

There are some examples where risks to young people are reduced as a result of living in the home. Staffing levels are good, which provides for improved observation and supervision. All staff have received general child protection training that is checked to ensure training is regularly updated. Feedback from social workers consulted is positive in relation to child safety. All young people have reduced their risk taking behaviours from their starting point. However, a number of shortfalls in keeping young people safe has impacted on the outcome judgement for safeguarding and the overall judgement of inadequate.

There are some positive aspects of behaviour management. Incidents of challenging behaviour have reduced and restraints are rarely used. Staff are skilled at using de-escalating techniques that diffuse potential flash points and conflicts between young people. There are a number of incentive schemes that young people fully engage in that promotes good behaviour. This is a positive way for young people to learn and develop good social skills. Staff actively praise good behaviour and talk to young people about how inappropriate behaviour impacts on others. This helps young people to take responsibility for their actions.

Sanctions are used but they are not always permissible, effective or restorative in nature. There are a limited number of good examples of where young people have been consulted about their behaviour and they have written letters of apology to peers. This positively encourages empathy. There is, however, an emphasis on using young people's pocket money as a sanction, which is viewed negatively by the young people. For example, delaying payment to young people. There is no evidence to show this sanction is affecting changes to behaviours yet this is the most popular sanction used. There are also examples where sanctions used are not included in the home's list of permissible sanctions. Therefore, staff are not always operating within the behaviour management policy and young people are not fully informed of possible consequences to their actions.

Bullying is discouraged and countering bullying measures are in place but these are not fully reducing incidents in the home. There have been examples of peer on peer bullying each month since the last inspection. Although incidents are reduced, some young people are still experiencing bullying in their home. This impacts on young people's emotional security and general welfare.

Information provided for this inspection about the number of referrals to social care is incorrect. The initial number given by a senior staff member was questioned by other staff on duty who also could not provide a definitive number of actual referrals. Staff were however, able to confirm that no young person currently accommodated is subject to a child protection referral.

The home do not keep a record of all child protection referrals made and the actions taken in response. Records are kept on young people's files but these are archived once a young person moves on from the home. Therefore there are no records, in the home, to show that robust actions are taken in response to all historic safeguarding or welfare concerns. This impedes the home's monitoring and statutory inspection visits that place a significant focus on how young people are and have been kept safe.

At the time of this inspection there is no bespoke child protection procedure that sets out what to do in response to a safeguarding concern to ensure all staff know what to do. There is a corporate overarching child protection policy that includes good information about what constitutes abuse and the importance of making a referral. The policy states each home within the organisation must have their own child protection procedures in place.

There is some important information in the home's child protection file that is out of date; including the names and contact numbers for the local authority safeguarding officers. Some staff listed are no longer employed by the authority. All staff spoken to know to contact the local authority social care response team if they have concerns and the number recorded in the home is correct. They understand what constitutes a child protection concern and they also know to contact the emergency duty team outside of office hours. This reduces the immediate risk to young people; however, poor recording and missing procedures potentially compromises young people's safety and welfare.

Incidents of young people going missing, returning late and not being in their proper place have reduced in the four weeks leading up to this inspection. This demonstrates good progress. Staff know to follow vulnerable young people who leave the home unsupervised and know to search local areas if they are concerned. However, there are some shortfalls in managing young people who are a known risk of going missing and possible exploitation.

There are a number of inconsistencies in how staff manage risk taking behaviours for missing young people. For example, a going missing and exploitation risk assessment states a young person is on one-to-one supervision at all times. Records show the young person has been missing and has failed to return at their expected time. Staff confirmed the young person has been given permission to have some independence time and they have not returned as expected. This is contrary to the management plan and safety arrangements.

Staff have reported missing young people to the police, however, staff responses to missing incidents are inconsistent and contrary to written risk management strategies. On some occasions police have been alerted without delay and on other occasions staff have waited until late evening until reporting. As a result, the some young people have been missing for long periods where their whereabouts are unknown. This poses a risk to vulnerable young people.

Staff recruitment is managed centrally by the provider and all safety checks are carried by the organisation's human resource department. Copies of recruitment information is sent to home where additional staff files are stored. The system is well-managed and the majority of files are complete and include the required information. However, there is some missing information. One file does not have copies of certificates and another no proof of identification. This impedes the home's systems to confirm and double-check all safer recruitment information is present.

Information provided at inspection records the home is maintained and utilities are regularly checked and serviced.

Leadership and management

inadequate

The Registered Manager is an experienced practitioner who has the right qualifications to operate and manage a children's home. The manager has worked in residential care for many years and has a good understanding of working with teenagers who have experienced distress and trauma. The manager has a very nurturing approach to caring for children and young people. This is evident from watching her interactions with young people living at the home.

The Registered Manager leads an established staff team who share her child-centred visions and values. Staff are committed to the home and speak highly of the support and guidance they receive. Staff moral is good and all the staff consulted say they are very happy working in the home. A social worker said, 'This is a very good staff team. They work well together. Communication is good and the home is always welcoming.'

The home operates within the Statement of Purpose and conditions of registration. Social workers and placing authorities know what services are offered and the purpose and function of the home. This informs decisions about appropriate placements. The young person's guide is informative and explains how it is for young people to live at the home. There are no requirements or recommendations from the last inspection visit.

There are significant shortfalls in some aspects of the home's leadership and management. Concerns about the internal monitoring of the home have been identified during this inspection. There is and have been failures to recognise where

the required systems and procedures that should be in place to keep children safe are missing, inconsistent, disorganised and generally poor. This misinforms staff working at the home and compromises young people's welfare.

Monitoring reports are also lacking in detail about how the quality of care is improved. There is little evaluative text to show any trends or patterns that indicate concerns or progress. Additionally, the reports do not include any statements to show how monitoring impacts on young people.

The home's development plan is very basic and does not link to monitoring findings or demonstrate robust actions to improve the service and outcomes for young people. As result, future planning is poor and lacks a solid evidence base to inform clear, effective improvement objectives.

Overall, staff training and development is satisfactory. There is a training development plan that monitors statutory training and induction for new starters is good. A staff member said, 'This is the best induction training I have ever had.' There are some training shortfalls. Staff are not adequately trained in some vital areas of child protection, namely child sexual exploitation. This is especially important as some young people accommodated are at risk from exploitation. Findings from this inspection have identified shortfalls in safeguarding young people that include concerns about managing risk taking behaviour and inconsistent risk management of vulnerable, exploited young people.

General record keeping and storage of records in the home is untidy and lacking in any kind of order. Documents, including policies and procedures, are not in their proper place and some information is misfiled or missing. Not all confidential records are stored securely and staff are unable to find requested information in young people's case files. This is indicative of poor administration systems.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

Information 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 main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.