

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC398385
Inspection date	04/11/2013
Inspector	Dawn Bennett
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	19/03/2013
--------------------------------	------------

© Crown copyright 2013

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is part of a large private children's care organisation and is registered to accommodate up to three young people, who have emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

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

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **inadequate**.

There were a number of serious shortfalls identified during this inspection. While there is some good work carried out in the home, these shortfalls have led to the overall judgement of inadequate.

Poor quality placement matching and subsequent inadequate management of high risk behaviours have resulted in serious safeguarding concerns and an emergency end to a placement. These shortfalls have caused disruption, injury and harm to young people living at this home.

Against a backdrop of poor group matching, staff strive to provide young people with consistent good quality care. They receive personalised care and therapy and their individuality is identified. Young people and social workers are positive about the attachments and relationships the young people make with staff. However, young people's outcomes in development, health, behaviour, relationship building and education are inconsistent. They have also been further compromised by this service's poor management of young people's risk-taking behaviours and safety.

As a result, some young people are currently choosing not to attend school and do not have a plan in place to support them to study or return. Incidents of challenging behaviour have increased and other young people living at the home are not feeling settled or able to revise for exams. Alternative arrangements to study have been made, but have not always been appropriate. Staffing levels have been increased in the home, but they have not always been adequate to meet the needs of all the young people.

The home's records do not demonstrate that staff have followed risk management strategies. The staff have not had recent training required to meet and safeguard the complex and diverse needs of the young people in placement. They are also failing to prevent the issues in this home from affecting the young people accommodated at the neighbouring children's home, which is managed by the same Registered Manager.

The allegation made as result of the failure to safeguard young people was appropriately referred to partnership agencies and is currently being investigated. However, there has been a significant delay by the organisation to undertake an internal investigation to be able to address practice issues and ensure the future safety of young people placed.

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
18 (2001)	ensure that the registered person promotes the educational achievement of children accommodated in a children's home; in particular, by ensuring that the children make use of educational facilities. This specifically relates to ensuring that young people who are out of education are provided with the resources to continue to study and have a plan to return to education (Regulation 18 (1) (a))	20/12/2013
18 (2001)	ensure that the registered person shall promote the educational achievement of children accommodated in a children's home; in particular, by ensuring that the routine of the home is organised so as to further children's participation in education. This specifically relates to ensuring that children have appropriate space to study and complete homework (Regulation 18 (1) (b))	20/12/2013
4 (2001)	ensure that the children's home is at all times conducted in a manner which is consistent with its Statement of Purpose. This specifically relates to the home operating separately to the children's home next door (Regulation 4 (6))	20/12/2013
25 (2001)	ensure that there is at all times, having regard to the need to safeguard and promote health and welfare of the children accommodated in the home, a sufficient number of suitably, competent and experienced persons working at the children's home (Regulation 25 (1) (b))	20/12/2013
27	ensure that all staff receive appropriate training. This	20/12/2013

(2001)	specifically relates to training in self-harming behaviour (Regulation 27 (4)(a))	
11 (2001)	ensure that the children's home is conducted so as to promote and make proper provision for the welfare of children accommodated there. This specifically relates to ensuring at the point of placement that the home can meet the needs of the young person and that their placement is compatible and does not jeopardise the safety of young people already placed (Regulation 11 (1) (a))	20/12/2013
11 (2001)	ensure that the children's home is conducted so as to promote and make proper provision for the welfare of children accommodated there. This specifically relates to staff adhering to risk assessments and behavioural management strategies to ensure the safety of young people (Regulation 11 (1) (a))	20/12/2013
34 (2001)	ensure that the registered person maintains a system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals. This specifically relates to any allegations or suspicions of abuse in respect of children accommodated in the home. (Regulation 34 (1))	20/12/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that records are clear, up to date and contribute to an understanding of the child's life. (NMS 22)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **inadequate**.

Young people's positive outcomes have been compromised by this service's inadequate management of young people's risk-taking behaviours and safety. Some young people present a risk to others. Other young people place themselves at considerable risk. Poor management has resulted in young people not being safeguarded. This has a detrimental impact on some young people's well-being and placement.

Young people's outcomes are not consistent. Some young people are making good progress, whereas others are not. There are occasions when young people who are struggling are impacting on the progress of others.

Young people's educational progress is varied. Young people go to mainstream schools and the company's own school. Attendance for some is good to outstanding. However, other young people are refusing to attend. Those that are attending are making good personal progress, in line with their educational plans. For example,

they are on target to achieving the exam grades they will require to undertake A-levels. Where appropriate, they have participated in after-school tutorials in subjects where they need additional support. They are actively involved in school trips and have successfully completed work experience. This has provided opportunities for voluntary work over the school summer holidays.

Where young people have recently chosen not to attend education, they are being supported by the home's staff to undertake worksheets and go on educational trips. This work is not, however, being set by the young people's schools or external educational professionals. The staff liaise with education staff, but there is no clear strategy agreed to support the young people to complete course work or progress into the final year of their education.

Some young people in the home are very unsettled. This has meant it has been difficult at times for other young people to concentrate and revise for exams. The company and staff team have provided alternative opportunities for study by taking a young person away on holiday over half term. However, there have been other occasions when the alternative offered has been for the young person to go to another children's home in the evening to study. This is not appropriate practice for the young person, who is unable to revise in their own home with all their study equipment to hand. It is also not appropriate for the young people living in the other home to have their space used by someone who does not live there.

Young people are supported to lead healthy lifestyles and look after their own health and well-being. All young people have an awareness of their own health and medical needs. They are enthusiastic and active participants in choosing, cooking and enjoying healthy meals. Some young people have used the knowledge they have to improve their health; for example, by losing weight. However, other young people chose to put their health at risk through the challenging behaviours they exhibit.

Some young people have learnt and developed confidence through a range of social activities. They help choose and take an active part in arranging trips and pursuing hobbies and interests. They have good relationships with peers in the local community and will often participate in 'sleep-overs'. Other young people require a lot of staff supervision in order to take part in activities. This can have a negative impact on other young people in the home.

All young people are supported to develop relationships with family members and others who are important to them. However, some young people feel unable to invite guests to stay overnight in the home, because of other young people's behavioural issues.

Quality of care

The quality of the care is **inadequate**.

The home's care planning framework leads to good assessment of the young people's individual needs. However, this process is compromised because group

matching protocols are ineffective. They have resulted in young people being placed together whose behaviours have placed each other at serious risk of harm. The consequence of this has resulted in inadequate outcomes for young people, including an emergency end to a placement.

Staff have worked hard to provide stable and caring routines for young people. Relationship-building is placed at the centre of staff practice and in some cases this positively impacts on young people's self-esteem and behaviour. Staff have a good understanding into the individual needs and personalities of young people. These needs, however, are diverse and not compatible.

Staff are proactive in identifying resources and opportunities for young people. They give full support to young people attending school, work experience and leisure activities. The enthusiasm and pride of staff has clearly impacted on some young people who have developed good self-esteem and become increasingly confident.

Young people's comments and feedback from their social workers indicate they are generally satisfied with living at the home. Young people like and enjoy spending time with the staff. Social workers are provided with regular good quality information.

Some young people develop emotional resilience because staff understand and respond to their backgrounds and past experiences. They have access to therapy and key working sessions to discuss relationships with families and their emotional well-being. Social workers identify this as a good area of progress for young people. Social workers say young people grow in self-esteem, have a good sense of achievement and attend and do well in school.

Young people's views and feelings are very much valued. This gives young people confidence to express their views both in terms of their placements and the running of the home. For example, they choose their own meals, activities and attend meetings about their futures. Young people value key working processes and house meetings as ways to talk about their placements and the running of the home. Young people are very reassured in that they can talk to the staff and have easy access to the home's manager.

Young people know about the home's complaints procedure and they are confident that just talking to staff will help resolve concerns. No complaints have been formally received in the home.

Young people live in a house which is decorated and furnished to promote a homely welcoming environment. Photos and items around the home reflect the young people's choices and personalities. Each young person is actively encouraged to personalise and take pride in their bedroom.

Currently some young people's behaviour is resulting in extreme damage to the environment. The main impact of this damage has been to their bedrooms. The staff team has been quick to report damage to the organisation's maintenance team;

which has prioritised repair work. The Registered Manager and staff team are currently supporting the young people to redesign and invest in their bedrooms by choosing new paint colours and furniture.

Safeguarding children and young people

The service is **inadequate** at keeping children and young people safe and feeling safe.

Young people at this home are not adequately safeguarded. The home has admitted young people who present serious risks to themselves and others. Risk assessments inform behaviour management strategies and placement plans. Plans often result in high levels of supervision of some young people both inside and outside the home. Positive relationship building means that young people accept the levels of support and supervision.

Young people enjoy spending time with staff and staff supervision is normally effective in directing and diverting young people's attention to more positive activities and choices. However, on a recent occasion, staff practice was not in line with management strategies. This has resulted in a young person making a serious allegation.

The records relating to the date of the allegation do not provide a clear account of the actions taken by staff in following procedures to safeguard young people and managing the environment. However, when the allegation was made at a later date it was referred promptly to the relevant child-care team within the local authority. Immediate actions were taken to safeguard all young people.

Since this allegation, young people's high-risk behaviours have increased and are at times extremely challenging. Staff take a calm approach to behaviour management and focus on positive reinforcement to encourage young people's development in this area. Some behaviour management plans identify triggers and strategies for dealing with most known behaviours. However, often some extreme and dangerous behaviours are exhibited and this has resulted in injury to young people, staff and to the environment.

Visitors to the home are suitably checked, vetted and monitored. Staff are trained in child protection and health and safety to ensure good health and safety standards. Most fire drills and practice evacuations occur regularly to promote fire safety and awareness of what to do in an emergency.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the children's home are **inadequate**.

This home was outstanding at its last full inspection and was judged as making good progress at its last interim inspection. There were no requirements or recommendations made as a result of the last inspection.

The Registered Manager of this home is also registered to manage a second children's home which neighbours this service. The operation and practice of these two homes are not separate, in line with their Statements of Purpose. The young people have been taken next door to complete school revision when other young people's behaviour has been unsettled. Behavioural incidents involving young people from this home have also occurred next door, resulting in damage to property and cars. This means that the behaviour of the young people at the home is having a negative impact on the lives of the young people next door.

Staff are provided with an established programme of induction and mandatory training. They also have fortnightly input at staff meetings from the organisation's clinical team. There are records of mandatory staff training and these ensure that refresher courses are arranged where necessary. The core group of staff at this home are experienced and are all trained to level three. The three newest staff members are either still on probation or have just started their level three training.

Staff are currently managing extreme high risk behaviours but have not had recent training to support them in managing self-harming behaviours. This means that young people are looked after by staff who are not equipped with the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to meet their needs.

Staffing levels within the home are assessed to meet the needs of the young people placed. They have recently been reviewed and increased. This is to ensure that there is adequate support for all young people within the home. This increase has not always been effective in ensuring that all young people go out as planned, due to the number of staff required to support those young people exhibiting challenging behaviour.

There are systems in place for monitoring the care provided. The monthly external quality assurance visitor produces robust reports that identify the home's strengths and any shortfalls. The Registered Manager is then proactive in producing an action plan to address any issues raised within clear timescales. For example, the visitor made a recommendation about the frequency of fire safety checks. Action was taken immediately to address the shortfall.

However, the organisation's investigation into recent practice issues that resulted in a serious allegation being made has not been addressed in a timely way. This means that there has been a limited impact on driving up standards of care in the home, or looking at lessons that need to be learnt to ensure good outcomes for young people in the future.

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 *Inspections of children's homes – framework for inspection* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.