

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	17/11/2016
Unique reference number	SC453372
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered manager	Gary Snaith
Inspector	Debbie White

Inspection date	17/11/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Inadequate
There are serious failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare adequately promoted.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Inadequate
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Inadequate

SC453372

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is inadequate because:

- Poor recruitment arrangements potentially put children and young people at risk. The registered person has failed to obtain two written references for all staff working at the home. Instead, the registered person has accepted verbal references.
- Not all previous employers have been contacted when new staff have previously worked with children or vulnerable adults. Additionally, some staff have started to work at the home without a valid criminal record check.
- Written staff rosters are inadequate. They are recorded using a pencil, therefore could be tampered with. The rosters do not set out full details of the staff working at the home, nor do they include the actual hours worked.
- Some care staff have not attained a relevant level 3 childcare qualification within the required timescales. There are no action plans in the form of a workforce development plan to show that the registered person has strategies in place to support all staff, including the registered manager, to acquire a relevant qualification in a timely manner.
- Night-time staffing arrangements are potentially hazardous. There are no night-time, lone working or risk assessments in place covering the overnight period to ensure that children's and young people's needs are met and their safety is promoted.
- The statement of purpose does not include all the elements of schedule 1 by setting out the range of needs of the children and young people who are accommodated. Additionally, it does not adequately reflect the actual training and experience that staff have.

The children's home strengths

- The children and young people have progressed from their starting points. The staff have very positive views of all the children and young people, and strive to nurture positive relationships with them. The staff consult with the children and young people, and respect their views and wishes.
- The staff actively respond to the children's and young people's hopes and aspirations, with very positive outcomes. The children and young people experience a varied range of meaningful activities, and have developed skills in their chosen hobbies and vocational interests.
- The children and young people have achieved some very good outcomes that have occurred as a direct result of the staff undertaking individual, one-to-one work with them. They are very well supported to understand the risks associated with internet usage and how this can potentially lead to them being exploited.
- The children and young people are developing good independence skills. They are supported to achieve in their education, and their health needs are met.

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 within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement which covers the matters listed in schedule 1. (Regulation 16(1)) In particular, set out the range of needs of the children that the home intends to accommodate and ensure that all the staff have the skills, training and experience to meet these needs.	31/12/2016
* The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. (Regulation 32(1)) In particular, all individuals employed to work in the children's home must satisfy the requirements of this regulation, and the registered person must have full and satisfactory information in respect of each of the matters in schedule 2.	31/12/2016
For the purposes of paragraph (3)(b), an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification if, by the relevant date, the individual has attained: (a) the level 3 diploma for residential childcare (England) ("the level 3 diploma"); or (b) a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the level 3 diploma. (Regulation 32(4)(a)(b))	31/12/2016
13. In order to meet the leadership and management standard, with particular reference to safe staffing, the registered person must: ensure that: (2)(c) staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; (d) the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child.	31/12/2016
Schedule 4 sets out the other information that the registered person must keep in relation to a children's home. The registered person must: (a) maintain in the home the records in schedule 4. (Regulation 37(2)(a))	31/12/2016

In particular, staff duty rosters must set out the full name of persons working at the home and keep a record of the actual rosters worked.	
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* Subject to a compliance notice

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that there is a workforce plan in place which can fulfil the workforce-related requirements of regulation 16, schedule 1. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)
- Ensure that all children's case records are stored securely. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This children's home provides care and accommodation for four children and young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is operated by a private provider.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
01/02/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
03/11/2015	Full	Good
25/03/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
11/06/2014	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Inadequate
The experiences and progress of children and young people are judged to be inadequate, because the judgement on how well children and young people are helped and protected is that they are inadequate. This is a limiting judgement. All the children and young people have all progressed from their starting point and are achieving good outcomes. There are some very good examples of when the staff have directly influenced meaningful changes to children's and young people's lives through direct work that provides good, individualised support. A young person said, 'I like it here. This is my home and the staff are my family. I think that the staff support and help me.' All the children and young people have individual written residential plans that set out their needs and how these will be met on a day-to-day basis. The plans correspond with the children's and young people's care plans and any new outcomes that are identified at their placement reviews, which provides consistent care that is underpinned by the aims and objectives of their placement. There are some weaknesses within the current residential plans. Some of the plans are generic and do not fully show individualised care. There are some plans, which are of good quality, that show that children's and young people's needs and wishes are very well met. The children and young people are involved in their planning and they have regular key-worker sessions. This support has reaped some very positive outcomes for children and young people. An independent reviewing officer said: '[Name] is very happy at the home and she feels safe. The plans are good and [Name] is progressing. She is involved in her care and understands how staff support her.' In one instance, a member of staff has worked with a child's social worker to undertake some highly skilled life-story work, with very good results. This work is helping the child to understand why she is living in a children's home and not in her family home. An independent reviewing officer said, 'There is some excellent work being done around [Name's] identity and background. The individual support is very good and it is having a very positive impact.' However, there are some shortfalls in the storage of confidential information. Children's and young people's case files, and other confidential information, are not	

stored in a locked cupboard. This potentially compromises their privacy.

The staff promote and nurture positive relationships. This helps the children and young people to develop trusting bonds, which gives them emotional stability. The staff have a very good understanding that some children and young people find it difficult to engage with adults. They patiently persevere to show that they care and that they are genuinely interested in their well-being. This consistent approach enriches children's and young people's lives.

A social worker said: 'The staff are very caring. My child's key worker gives [Name] very good support, and even changes her shifts if she feels that [Name] needs extra support.' A child said: 'I can talk to staff about anything. I know that they are there for me.'

The staff support children and young people to be healthy. They access the healthcare services that they need, which includes working with specialist healthcare professionals. The children and young people learn about healthy living and how to lead a healthy lifestyle. They are meeting their developmental milestones and they are physically thriving.

A young person said: 'We know about healthy eating and we have lots of exercise and do sports. Staff talk to us about how important it is to be fit.' A social worker said: 'Staff work with other services to support my child. They seek professional advice if they need it.'

Educational outcomes are mixed. Some young people are excelling at school and achieving their potential. The staff support the children and young people in school and act as good parents. Other children and young people are struggling to engage fully in their education. However, the staff and social workers are working closely with schools and education providers to improve these children's and young people's outcomes.

Recognising the children's and young people's hopes and aspirations is a strength. The children and young people participate in a range of their chosen hobbies, which include rugby, horse riding, swimming, dancing, gymnastics and singing. Two of the young people are very good singers and the staff have helped them to secure an audition with a popular television talent programme. This teaches children and young people that it is possible to follow their dreams.

A child said: 'We do lots of things. I play rugby and go out with the staff. There is lots to do.' An independent reviewing officer said: 'The staff are very supportive and very understanding of [Name's] needs. Staff genuinely delight in [Name's] achievements.'

Children and young people are prepared for later life. Staff teach them independence and self-help skills that equip them to make a smooth transition into

adulthood. The children and young people know how to cook and shop. They are learning budgeting skills. They help around the home doing everyday tasks, and they are responsible for their personal laundry and keeping their bedrooms tidy. This gives the children and young people confidence in their skills and abilities.

A young person said: 'I can cook and bake. I like to bake cakes and I sometimes help with the tea.'

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Inadequate
Poor recruitment practices compromise children's and young people's safety and welfare. The registered provider has failed to carry out robust safety checks on new starters to ensure that the children and young people are not looked after by unsuitable adults. A number of key lines of enquiry were identified for this inspection as a result of a complaint that was sent to Ofsted about staff recruitment, namely that the registered manager had requested only a verbal reference for a new member of staff. The registered manager confirmed that he had contacted a referee for a verbal reference for a staff member who had recently commenced employment. Further discussions with the registered manager revealed that all the references obtained for staff working at the home have been verbal references. The registered provider has also failed to contact the previous employers of any staff who have previously worked with children and young people or vulnerable adults. The home's recruitment policy states that staff can start working at the children's home without a relevant criminal check 'if they are supervised by other staff'. This is contrary to regulation, and significantly compromises children's and young people's safety and welfare. In further investigation, the registered manager said that some staff start working at the home without being employed and without a valid criminal check or two written references 'to see how they are, and to see if they get on with the children and young people'. When asked if he thought that this might put children and young people at risk, he responded, 'No, we know these people.' This lack of understanding of the importance of robust safety checks potentially compromises children's and young people's safety and welfare. Due to the seriousness of these failings, the registered provider will be issued with	

a compliance notice to ensure that immediate actions are taken to improve recruitment practice in the children's home.

There have been instances when children and young people have gone missing since the last full inspection, but these have significantly decreased. The staff have a good understanding of how to support children and young people who run away from the home, and their input and individual support have positively influenced those who were previously at risk. This promotes the children's and young people's welfare.

The children, young people and the staff have very good relationships with the local police who visit the home informally to offer support and advice. The staff contact the police if they have any specific concerns about children's and young people's safety. This joint working is having positive outcomes.

A visiting policeman said: 'Part of my role is to advise children and young people about personal safety. The staff are good at contacting us, and we talk to the staff and directly to the young people. We often call in for a chat and a coffee so that the young people see us as people who can help them. It works really well.'

There are good strategies in place to help children and young people who are at risk from exploitation to understand and manage e-safety. The children and young people accept that some restrictions are in place to keep them safe. These include agreed time-limited access to the internet, staff controlling the passwords on the home's computers and tablets, children and young people knowing that staff will check their browsing history, and all children and young people handing in their mobile telephones at night. This embedded culture informs children and young people, and keeps them safe from potential abusers.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Inadequate
The registered manager has been post since the home registered with Ofsted in April 2013. He has used his transferrable skills, having previously worked in adult services, to support children and young people to achieve good outcomes. He does not have a relevant level 5 childcare qualification, but he is now working towards completing one. The statement of purpose is lacking the required detail, as listed in schedule 1. The statement does not set out the range of needs of the children and young people whom it intends to accommodate. This information is important to ensure that social workers and placing authorities can make a clear judgement to place children and young people appropriately. Additionally, the information set out about the staff working at the home does not demonstrate that they have the necessary	

skills, training, qualifications or experience to meet these needs. This potentially compromises successful placements.

There are currently nine full-time staff members working at the home, including the registered manager. Currently, there is only one residential support worker who has completed a level 3 qualification in caring for children and young people. Some staff have exceeded the required timescales to complete their level 3 qualification, which has resulted in the home failing to ensure that children and young people are cared for by staff who are adequately qualified.

There are no written plans in place in the form of a workforce development plan to show that the registered persons are addressing any shortfalls in staff training. Consequently, the registered provider has failed to ensure that all staff are motivated and supported to complete a relevant childcare qualification in a timely manner. This lack of management oversight has resulted in the current position in which not all staff are adequately trained.

The staffing levels during the day are sufficient to meet children's and young people's needs. The staff work flexibly to ensure consistency, and often work additional hours to support children and young people. However, night-time staffing arrangements are inadequate and potentially unsafe.

Currently, the night-time arrangements are that one staff member does a sleep-in duty. There are currently four female children and young people living at the home who have a history of going missing, are at risk of sexual exploitation and have experienced challenging behaviours, usually late at night.

There are no additional safety measures, such as external door alarms, to alert the sleep-in staff member should a child or young person decide to leave the home or allow access to another person. Nor are there any risk assessments in place to identify potential risks and how these will be eliminated or reduced. This potentially places children and young people at risk.

Additionally, male staff members often do the sleep-in duty. This means that during the night the girls do not have access to a female staff member, should they need personal support. Again, there are no risk assessments in place to identify any possible risks associated with one male member of staff being responsible for four female children and young people with the risks that are identified in their care plans.

The staffing rosters do not set out the full names of the staff on duty, their designation or the actual hours that they work. The rosters are written in pencil, which means that they can easily be tampered with. This failure to keep accurate staffing records potentially compromises children's and young people's safety, should these records be required for future reference, for example if the duty rosters are needed for an investigation or a child protection enquiry.

There are some positive elements in outcomes for leadership and management. The registered manager and staff team work well with other professionals to support children and young people. Feedback from social workers and independent reviewing officers is positive, and there are some very good examples of joint working.

Comments from social workers and independent reviewing officers include: 'Staff are very good at promoting contact, and communication is very good' and '[Name's] key worker has done some very good work with her and with [Name's] mother. This has been really good and has positively impacted on [Name].'

The staff are also good at challenging services on behalf of children and young people. An independent reviewing officer said: 'The staff are good at supporting [Name]. They have chased the social worker for documents and will professionally challenge for her.' This promotes children's and young people's rights and equality.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place, however, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

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 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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