

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC032163
Inspection date	14/01/2014
Inspector	Jennifer Reed
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	22/05/2013
--------------------------------	------------

© Crown copyright 2014

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 range of services provided by a local authority. The home is currently registered to accommodate up to 14 children who have complex learning difficulties and disabilities. The home is reaching the end of a period of transition of re-focusing its service provision. The home, originally a short break service, is now mostly meeting the needs of children and young people who require longer term placements. Only one placement is still being provided as a short break service.

At the time of the inspection the home was providing care and accommodation for seven young people. The four distinct units located within the home operate to meet the differing needs of accommodated young people.

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 **satisfactory progress**.

The children's home was judged to be adequate overall at the full inspection undertaken in May 2013. Since the previous inspection, the service has demonstrated its commitment to improving the quality of care and outcomes for accommodated young people. The home has made satisfactory progress in addressing the one requirement and the majority of the eighteen recommendations made for improvement raised at the previous inspection. At this interim inspection, two requirements and two recommendations were made to promote further improvement.

Risk assessment processes within the home show a more individualised and focused approach to assessment. A generic approach to the risk assessment of the premises has reduced. Due regard is given to children's rights and the consideration of how the home's environment can best meet each young person's unique needs. For example, a review has been undertaken of the locking of some internal doors and the fitting of safety guards on all radiators. This has improved the environment for those young people who do not require the protection of such rigorous safety measures. These young people now enjoy more open access within the home and unnecessary safeguards have been removed. Staff are working to reduce the possibility of a risk averse culture operating within the home and young people have opportunity to take appropriate controlled risks as a normal part of growing up. This helps young people's personal and social development as they move towards adulthood. Young people are able to choose and plan their meals, shop for their ingredients and cook the evening meal on a regular basis.

The accommodation units are being refurbished and re-organised to provide more personalised areas of the home that will effectively support young people's diverse needs. A considerable amount of work has been completed to redecorate and refurbish areas of the home to provide a pleasant living environment for young people. Three out of the four units are beginning to look more homely and staff have further plans in place to enrich the quality of the home. The fourth unit is scheduled for redecoration. Written guidance for staff and most white boards have been removed from unit walls; some metal radiator cages have been taken off. This contributes to reducing an institutional approach to caring for young people and also improves the quality of the young people's home. However, risk assessments for some young people identify that they do need radiators to be covered to promote their welfare and keep them safe from harm. The metal cages are still in place around these radiators in some areas of the home and their design continues to provide an institutional feel and reduces the appearance of a family home environment.

A good effort has been made by the home to provide a more stimulating environment designed to support young people's comfort and developmental needs. Staff are mindful of what each young person needs, likes and enjoys. The units have been reorganised, or are in the process of re-organisation to maximise the use of space in ways that will benefit young people's personal development. The staff team demonstrate knowledge and enthusiasm to progress their plans for improvement. However, budgetary constraints impact on the amount of resources that can be made available to the home to provide a wider range of stimuli that will support young people's behaviour, mood and needs. Nevertheless, since the last inspection, the home has set up weekly arrangements for staff to externally access different stimulating toys and games for young people to enjoy at their leisure. Young people's views are taken into account in the development of the home. One young person said, 'I chose the green paint and I helped choose things in the sitting room. I like it!' Participation opportunities help young people to build their confidence and increase their skills and self-esteem.

Since the last inspection, the staffing structure of the home has changed and been

improved in response to the changing function of the home. Staff have been appointed to their respective posts, following a review of their skills and competencies, to ensure staff are able to effectively carry out their duties. Staff now have clear job descriptions and contracts which clearly outline their roles and responsibilities. Recruitment and selection processes are in place to provide a full staffing establishment that will have the capacity to cover planned leave, training and sickness absences. This is likely to significantly improve the continuity of care young people receive and their attachments will not be overly disrupted.

Staff rotas have been revised and there is now sufficient time allocated within rotas for senior workers to handover between each shift. This contributes to improvement in communication within the home which underpins the delivery of care practices that are likely to lead to positive outcomes for young people.

There has been improvement in the leadership and the management of the home. The results of statutory reviews and reviews of placement and care plans are recorded promptly on young people's files. The quality of recording within the home's records has improved and entries are legible. The Registered Manager completes regular review reports of the home's monthly monitoring, processes and forwards these to Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI), as is required. However, these reports and the system in place for reviewing the home's records do not evidence a sufficiently rigorous approach to monitoring. Management oversight does not routinely include the evaluation and analysis of information, and the identification of trends and patterns. Minor errors in young people's case files have not been identified, although these have not to date, adversely impacted on outcomes for young people. Nevertheless, these shortfalls impact on the home's ability to identify issues of concern to inform the continual improvement of the quality of care provided by the home.

The previously identified shortfalls in the quality of the local authority's independent persons' monthly visits and reports, were being addressed by the local authority at the time of this inspection. The independent persons are receiving training and a new reporting format has been devised. However, monthly reports for visits to the home have not been sent to the home or HMCI in recent months. This weakens safeguarding within the home.

Staff report that they generally receive regular supervision. However, there are no effective management or monitoring systems in place to provide a clear overview of the frequency of supervision to staff, to ensure they receive the support they require to look after young people well and to enhance their professional development.

Staff benefit from a good range of training, in both core areas and in specific areas to meet the needs of the young people and the purpose of the home. Managers within the home have set up detailed training records which now clearly identify the qualifications gained and the training courses completed by each member of staff. A number of staff are enrolled on the Level 3 Children and Young People's Workforce Diploma with mandatory social care pathway, and four further staff have been nominated this year by the home to commence their training to achieve this award.

However, no arrangements are in place for the night staff to undertake Level 3 training.

The Registered Manager is currently updating the home's Statement of Purpose to reflect the recent changes in the operation of the home.

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
27 (2001)	ensure that all persons employed receive appropriate training, supervision and appraisal (Regulation 27(4)(c))	31/03/2014
33 (2001)	ensure the person carrying out the visit prepares a written report on the conduct of the home. (Regulation 33(4)(c))	28/02/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated. Risk reduction does not lead to an institutional feel; in particular, continue the work in progress to satisfactorily meet this standard (NMS 10.3)
- monitor, in line with regulations, all records kept by the home to ensure compliance with the home's policies, to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends. Immediate action is taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring. (NMS 21.2)

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*.