

Inspection report for children's home

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| Inspector | Nick Veysey |
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This local authority children's home provides care and accommodation for up to four children and young people who may have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The primary task of the home is to provide short to medium-term care to prepare children and young people to live in a foster family.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

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| 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's overall effectiveness was judged as good at the last inspection in October 2013. Some areas for improvement were found relating to the quality of monitoring reports and frequency of visits completed by elected members; the regularity of formal professional supervision for the manager and staff, and team meetings; and ensuring risk assessments clearly show the specific measures staff should take to manage and reduce any potential risk to children's safety and emotional well-being.

The children's home is making satisfactory progress. Young people continue to live in a safe and supportive environment where they receive a good quality of care. They are making continued progress in relation to education, emotional stability, forming and maintaining suitable relationships and not taking part in risky and harmful behaviour. The home is effectively meeting its objectives: since the last inspection two young people have moved to live with a family, and another young person has started introductions with foster carers.

Some progress has been made in addressing most of the recommendations for improvement, but further work is required to enhance the quality of risk assessment records and monitoring reports.

Staff place the welfare of individual young people at the centre of their practice. They are reflective, resourceful and creative in finding ways to support young people, regardless of the challenges young people and their circumstances may present. Staff are committed to helping young people with complex emotional needs overcome difficulties. Their perseverance has enabled young people to make significant progress. Young people are more settled and emotionally secure. They are more able to form positive relationships with staff and willing to accept their help and guidance and to sort out problems. A young person said 'I've changed, I listen to staff and realise they are trying to help me.'

Young peoples' behaviour has improved and they are rarely involved in harmful behaviour that impacts negatively on their welfare and other people. Staff apply consistent boundaries tailored to the specific needs of each young person to help them feel secure and understand what is expected of them. Occasionally young people struggle to manage their feelings and resolve conflicts positively and there have been some concerns about bullying. Staff are vigilant and ensure young people are protected from the risk of intimidation and aggression. Young people are appropriately supervised and staff are working with all the young people to build better relationships, sort out differences and help young people be more assertive. A young person said that although some young people 'can be scary sometimes' she feels safe. She confirmed that she talks to staff if she gets upset and that they are supportive and help to sort things. The young person also confirmed she can have her own space when she needs it. Another young person said that 'things are getting better', some young people 'have their moments, but staff help to calm them down.' Staff have developed a good understanding of each young person's needs. Regular support from a psychologist and training on attachment disorders is developing staff's insight into young people's behaviour. A member of staff said 'we understand the emotions behind the behaviour and use interventions that work, for example acknowledging the young person's feelings and working with them at an emotional level helps them to feel calm and manage their feelings better.' Staff are effectively helping young people to manage their feelings more constructively and think about their own strategies to help them calm down. Young people are starting to find it easier to manage their feelings appropriately and are talking more to staff about what is upsetting them.

Staff are experienced, skilled and effectively deployed to promote and safeguard young people's welfare. Staff work well together and follow a clear and consistent approach that provides young people with a suitable structure and routine. Staff feel very well supported by the manager. The manager and staff are now receiving professional supervision at regular intervals to provide them routine opportunities to discuss their performance and development with a senior person. Team meetings now take place routinely to provide staff with the chance as a group to review and reflect young people's progress, the running of the home and how best to develop and improve the standard of care and support. In addition team meetings are being

used as opportunities to share information and work with psychologists to develop a better understanding of young people's needs and effective ways to support them. However, the team meeting minutes are not detailed or reflective resulting in a missed opportunity to show young people's development, how best to support them and any key lessons for future practice.

Written risk assessments and plans for young people's safety clearly identify risks and are consistently put into practice but the risk assessments do not always show a detailed picture of the specific measures staff need to take. The information in risk reduction and behaviour management plans, for example, state 'staff intervention is required to defuse potential conflict' but does not clearly show precisely how staff should intervene to effectively manage the situation and what measures should be used in specific circumstances and with individual young people.

Elected members from the local authority have carried out monthly out monitoring visits since the last inspection. The local authority has also run further training for elected members in January 2014 to help them understand their role and how to effectively scrutinise of the performance of the home. However, the impact of the training cannot be fully evaluated because Ofsted have not received any reports since the training took place. The quality of the monitoring reports the regulator, Ofsted, has received since the last inspection are still not of a consistently high standard. Some reports lack proper analysis of the findings and do not provide a clear picture of young people's experiences and the quality of the care. For example, the report for January 2014 states that 'the home has a bullying policy and incidents are addressed as issues occur and wherever possible seem to be resolved quickly', but it does not evaluate how effectively young people are protected from bullying. It does not comment on the suitability of the bullying policy, evaluate the strategies being used to address bullying, and show young people's views about how well staff prevent or deal with bullying. This lack of thoroughness does not assist the home to understand the effectiveness of its approaches, secure improvements and better outcomes for children.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure that children's risk assessments explicitly show the specific measures staff should take to manage and reduce any potential risk to children's safety and emotional well-being (NMS 4.5)
- ensure that team meeting minutes are reflective and detailed enough to contribute to an understanding of children's lives and how best to support them (NMS 22)
- ensure the written report showing the findings of the Regulation 33 monitoring visit is of a consistently high quality to assist the service to secure improvements

and better outcomes for children. (Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 3.13)

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*.