

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC055912
Inspector	Christy Wannop
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Verve Life Limited
Registered person address	1 River View Longmoor Road, Greatham LISS Hampshire GU33 6AE
Responsible individual	David Powell
Registered manager	POST VACANT
Date of last inspection	30/07/2013

Inspection date	13/08/2014
Previous inspection	adequate
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection

This home was judged adequate at the last full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judge that it has **declined in effectiveness**.

The home is currently without a Registered Manager. A new manager has been appointed and has yet to submit a complete application to register with Ofsted. There has been unsatisfactory leadership at the home over the last 18 months. This inspection identifies some regulatory shortfalls.

The service has taken action to meet two of the four previous recommendations. Fire drills now take place at different times of the evening and during the day. The organisation's child protection procedures have been shared with the local safeguarding authority. These actions mean that staff are better able to keep children safe from risk of fire and also work in a way that is consistent with the local child protection team.

The home was asked to ensure the use of electronic devices, such as front door buzzers to alert staff to children leaving the building, is done in line with an ethical policy that young people and others can understand. There is a brief policy that states doors will be alarmed at night, when the door is also locked, but neither the current Statement of Purpose, the Children's Guide or young people's plans have this information. The effectiveness of this measure is not evaluated. Whilst there is no suggestion that the device is used to control children unnecessarily, insufficient action has been taken to ensure consistency and clarity.

Young people have some improved information in the Children's Guide about the individuals they may contact if they have a concern or a complaint. However, some of the information is misleading and refers to information on notice boards in the home that do not exist. Additionally, the home does not make clear how they will respond if a young person does make a complaint or raise a concern. Young people who have concerns currently are not confident that these will be dealt with. They do not have good information because the children's guide does not say what the home

will do in response.

The home has managed a recent potential safeguarding incident and has taken action to remove young people's electronic gadgets for two years, until adulthood, as a consequence. The action is in contradiction to the home's stated approach to move away from sanctions and towards positive reinforcement as a means of encouraging constructive behaviour. Items were removed in the middle of the night and young people have been given misleading information about their whereabouts. There is no record of the rationale for the decision to confiscate items permanently. This action has not been considered as a measure of control under the home's policy on managing behaviour. The action taken did not accord with the previous plan for managing this element of young people's behaviour. The permanent removal of personal possessions does not give young people the opportunity to learn, improve or take responsibility for their behaviour. The service has not ensured that young people understand the reasons for these events in their life in a way they can understand.

There is no separate record of any safeguarding concerns, incidents or allegations. Information about safeguarding actions is documented within children's individual records, including confidential information about other young people. This is in contradiction with the home's safeguarding policy and procedure for keeping records of such events and breaches young people's confidentiality. Without a distinct record, it is difficult for the service to review the effectiveness and implementation of the home's child protection procedures and learn lessons from incidents through critical review.

The staff do not always have sufficient statutory information about the young people they care for. There was not an effective placement planning approach for young people on short stays. The home did not sign or agree a placement plan with the placing authority for the care of young people, nor did they create their own in house plan. There were no minutes of statutory review meetings. This means that there was no formal agreement about how the young person should be cared for on a day-to-day basis, or how the home would promote or safeguard their welfare. The service has also had difficulty in securing up-to-date placement plans for other young people, but has pursued the local authority for updates. Staff have made their own record of review decisions until the statutory review minutes are in place for these longer-term young people.

There have been serious events when staff have called the police to the home. These events have not been notified to Ofsted. This means the regulator has not been kept informed of significant incidents in young people's lives. Private information is at risk. The service does not ensure secure storage of confidential information. Staff and children's files are kept in unlocked filing cabinets in the garage, which is also unlocked and in regular daily use.

Internal and external managerial monitoring is developing in effectiveness.

Consultation with stakeholders has just begun. It remains for this to become embedded in the quarterly review of the quality of care and for this to be sent to Ofsted. The service has made improvements and the manager is realistic about the improvements still needed. They have strengthened their procedures for young people who may run off and developed new documentation to record any incident when children go missing. They have created new recording systems for physical intervention, with the intention that this will make managerial overview better. They have invested in positive relationship building with local authority placement managers.

The service offers a local, familiar service to the local children's disability team, including emergency placements and respite care to young people. The home has looked after five young people since the last inspection. Two young people have moved successfully on to adult placements, having lived for some years at the home. Some young people return for visits and meals to keep in touch and staff also visit them and follow their progress. This demonstrates that the service has forged some important long-term relationships with young people and plans well for positive transitions for their move into adulthood. There are other strengths: families are welcomed at the home and the staff work in partnership with parents, grandparents and also with placing authorities. The manager feels that young people, who have not had consistent home lives, now enjoy positive parenting. The service takes action to keep young people safe. Parents and a placing social worker report no concerns. One parent described her very positive view of the home and how staff have been supportive, 'a godsend'. She describes the service as 'a home from home.' Young people are clearly relaxed and confident with staff they know and trust. One young person said that one staff in particular was, 'excellent.' A placing social worker spoke with confidence of the work staff do with young people and how well they communicate about incidents and at statutory reviews.

Despite the regulatory shortfalls and the consequential decline in effectiveness, this is a service that has promoted positive outcomes for young people. It remains to demonstrate the capacity for further improvement under the permanent leadership of a confirmed Registered Manager.

Information about this children's home

This home is operated by a private provider and is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to of four young people with learning disabilities, two of whom may have concurrent physical disabilities.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
30/07/2013	Full	adequate
18/04/2013	Full	inadequate
23/01/2013	Interim	inadequate progress
16/08/2012	Full	adequate

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
11 (2001)	conduct the home so as to promote the safeguarding and welfare of children and respect their privacy and dignity. Specifically, make sure that any action to safeguard or sanction behaviour is clear, reasonable and fair and understood by children (Regulation 11(1) (2))	31/08/2014
12A (2001)	co-operate with the child's placing authority in agreeing and signing the plan for the child's placement, where that child is looked after by a local authority (Regulation 12A)	31/08/2014
28 (2001)	ensure the case records of children accommodated in the home are kept up to date and include: a copy of any plan for the care of the child prepared by his placement authority, and of the placement plan,	30/09/2014

	and the date and result of any review of the placing authority's plan for the care of the child, or of the placement plan (Regulation 28 (Sch 3) (8)(9))	
30 (2001)	ensure, if any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 5 takes place, the registered person shall, without delay, notify the persons indicated in respect of column 2 of the table (Regulation 30(1))	31/08/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure children know that their views, wishes and feelings are taken into account in all aspects of their care; and are helped to understand why it may not be possible to act upon their wishes in all cases; and know how to obtain support and make a complaint. For example: make use of additional communication formats to ensure young people with communication difficulties can have the information about important decisions about their lives, in a format that is most useful to them (NMS 1)
- ensure that where specific measures, including electronic devices, are used to monitor children, there is a written policy that sets out how they should be used, how they promote the welfare of children, how children will be informed of their use, how legitimate privacy of children will be protected and how children will be protected from potential abuse of such measures (NMS 10.5)
- ensure all staff's work is consistent with these regulations and National Minimum Standards, the home's policies and procedures. Specifically, ensure that staff implement the child protection policy and procedure for written records (NMS 21.3)
- ensure records are stored securely, that staff understand and follow the home's policy for the keeping and retention of files, managing confidential information and access to files (including files removed from the premises) (NMS 22)
- ensure the result of all statutory reviews and reviews of placement plans are recorded on the child's file, and individuals responsible for pursuing actions at home arising from reviews are clearly identified (NMS 25.6)

What inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspections we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

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.