

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC013402
Inspector	Shaun Common
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Action for Children
Registered person address	Action for Children 3 The Boulevard, Ascot Road WATFORD WD18 8AG
Responsible individual	Shelagh Margaret Zoe Frankcom
Registered manager	Graham Michael O'Connor
Date of last inspection	21/10/2014

Inspection date	21/02/2015
------------------------	------------

Previous inspection	good
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection

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

There are some excellent relationships between staff and young people. Staff engaged very positively with young people, whose responses to staff showed they were happy, felt safe and well cared for the most part.

Staffing levels at the home are adequate to meet the basic needs of young people. Staff show a clear commitment to the home and the care of the young people; however, they are not able at all times to provide good quality care. Staff were attending to other tasks, such as preparing meals and dealing with essential administrative responsibilities and as there was not sufficient staff to undertake these required tasks, they were diverted away for periods of time from the direct care of the young people. Staff stated that some young people at the home require 2:1 staffing support for personal care needs or when administration of medication is needed. A young person was observed engaging in a positive and enjoyable activity with a staff member. As 2:1 care was needed for another young person the staff member had to leave the young person on their own for a short period of time to attend to the other young person's needs. The young person's demeanour clearly changed as a result of this. The staff member then had to prepare lunch and the same young person was taken into the kitchen and had to stay with the staff member while this task was undertaken. Although this could be a positive activity at times, on this occasion there was no alternative for the young person, such as continuing the activity he was enjoying, as this was the only way the staff member could maintain appropriate supervision.

The home does not have a consistent staff team. Staff on duty presented as hard working, committed and caring. Staff on duty stated that a number of permanent staff are very regularly working overtime in order to ensure there are sufficient staff to care for young people. Staff confirmed there is a reliance on agency and casual staff to compliment permanent staff members. Overall, this does not ensure that

young people are able to build positive and consistent relationships and develop secure attachments. The rotas in the home lack clarity due to the significant numbers of changes being made to ensure duties are covered. Rotas do not show the roles of the individual staff members and therefore it is not possible, without staff guidance, to identify which are permanent, casual and agency staff to determine whether there is an appropriate balance at all times.

At the last inspection, the home had one recommendation and this has not been addressed. The registered person was asked to provide a comfortable and homely environment that is well maintained and decorated. A number of shortfalls are evident at the home that impact upon the care provision for young people. All three overhead tracking hoists are not working leaving staff to provide for young people's personal care needs with one mobile hoist. A ground floor window in a very frequently used area of the home is faulty and does not close properly leaving the security of the home compromised. However, staff are at the home at all times therefore the impact of this security concern is reduced. Staff contacted out of hours maintenance when this matter was raised with them at the inspection; however, staff were told the matter had already been reported and no-one would visit the home at that time to assess and address the concern. Maintenance stated they would visit the home in two days to address the issue. Other areas of the home were also of concern, such as: the security provided by the front door; a broken magna lock to a door leading to the rear garden; the join between two parts of the bathroom flooring has lost its sealant; folding screen doors sticking so that two staff were struggling to close them for an activity for a young person; lack of sufficient water pressure for young people to enjoy the shower; a water leak leading to the kitchen flooring lifting at various points in time and becoming a potential trip hazard; water damage to kitchen kick-boards; the general décor of the home not being of a high standard with doors and walls throughout being marked, worn and scuffed, which detracts from the internal appearance.

In addition to shortfalls in the standards of maintenance and décor in the home, there is a significant concern about the gates in the rear garden area. These were seen to be padlocked shut and/or locked with plastic zip ties. One of these gates was clearly marked as a fire exit and staff pointed out that the other gate, although having no fire sign, was also a fire exit. As these were external to the property the risk is not as high if it were an exit door to the main building; however the person in charge was asked to immediately take necessary action to remedy this issue. Wardrobes in one young person's room were seen to be coming open. These were seen to full of bedding and towels being stored for the use of all young people at the home. Staff confirmed this and this is not appropriate for the young person using this room.

Partnership working with other agencies and professionals is good for the most part. Staff spoke of the close links and liaison they have with schools and health services in order to ensure that young people are well cared for. Some young people have left the home since the last inspection. Staff were not clear about the transition

arrangements in place for these young people. Files did not contain any clear plans that showed what preparation was undertaken with the young people and the arrangements made and carried out in order to support them to move successfully to other services. Staff spoke of transition workers from placing authorities not always attending meetings to discuss and agree the arrangements. Staff did speak of some of the work they had undertaken, such as supporting young people with visits to adult care provisions and sharing information with new placements; however, they were not clear how this was coordinated or managed. Files with young people's personal and private information are routinely stored on top of a kitchen bench in an open area of the home. This does not ensure that young people's information is stored safely and securely as it could be accessed by visitors to the home or those young people who have the ability to access these.

Incidents involving the use of physical restraint do occur. These are always recorded and all relevant information is available. Records show the reasons for using physical restraint are in line with regulation. One notification has been made to Ofsted. This was undertaken in a timely manner and ensures that Ofsted can maintain monitoring and oversight of the quality of the provision.

External monitoring of the home is carried out through visits by an independent person under regulation 33. Visits cover a range of matters and identify strengths of the provision and any areas for improvement. This supports the home to improve the quality of care provided. However, the report of the visit in January 2015 showed that the visitor did not interview staff or speak with parents of young people. This does not ensure that a full and accurate picture of care provision is attained and evaluated.

Internal monitoring of the home is not robust. Reports of monitoring carried out by the Registered Manager are required to be sent to Ofsted every three months. The last report received by Ofsted covered the period of July to September 2014. This does not ensure that Ofsted are appraised of the performance of the home and of the quality of care provided to young people. A number of shortfalls have been identified at this inspection, which determines lack of robust monitoring. For example, lack of clear transition plans and lack of staff awareness of such planning, the adequacy and consistency of staffing and a range of maintenance issues, some of which relate to safety and security.

Information about this children's home

This children's home is run by a registered charity in partnership with a local authority. It provides a short break service for up to 12 children and young people with disabilities.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/10/2014	Full	good
18/02/2014	Interim	satisfactory progress
21/10/2013	Full	adequate
07/03/2013	Interim	satisfactory progress

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
25 (2001)	ensure that there is at all times, in order to meet the number and needs of children accommodated, a sufficient number of competent and experienced persons working at the home (Regulation 25(1))	31/03/2015
11 (2001)	promote and make proper provision for the safeguarding and welfare of children accommodated; specifically, ensure that fire gates in the rear garden of the property are not padlocked or locked shut preventing access or egress in the event of a fire, unless the fire authority or other suitable professional has approved this (Regulation 11(1)(a))	08/03/2015
28 (2001)	ensure children's case records are kept securely in the children's home; specifically, that the records are not kept in unsecure parts of the children's	08/03/2015

	home where they can be accessed or seen by those who do not have authority (Regulation 28)	
31 (2001)	ensure that all parts of the children's home are secure from unauthorised access, are reasonably decorated and maintained, and are reasonably equipped to meet young people's needs and have suitable storage (Regulation 31)	15/03/2015
33 (2001)	ensure the person carrying out the visit under the regulation interviews with their consent and in private, children's parents, relatives and person's working at the home as appears necessary; specifically, ensure staff, parents and/or relatives are interviewed where possible at every visit (Regulation 33(8)(a))	31/03/2015
34 (2001)	maintain the system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6; specifically, ensure that all matters are robustly monitored and action is taken where shortfalls are identified that impact upon the quality of care of young people (Regulation 34)	31/03/2015
34 (2001)	supply to HMCI a report in respect of any review conducted under the regulation. (Regulation 34)	31/03/2015

Recommendations

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

- ensure that staff meet young people's individual needs as set out in the child's placement plan; specifically, ensure that planning sets out young people's needs in relation to leaving the home and transition to other services; that staff understand these needs and that there is a clear, co-ordinated and recorded approach to transition involving all relevant people, agencies and professionals in delivering the plan (NMS 2.3)
- ensure that records of staff working in the home demonstrate the staffing level; specifically, that rotas demonstrate the role of each staff member so that the overall constitution of staffing levels can be determined (NMS 17.2)
- make every effort to achieve continuity of staffing so that children's attachments are not disrupted; specifically, address the very regular and consistent use of agency and casual staff. (NMS 17.8)

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.