

Children's homes - monitoring

Inspection date	30/06/2015
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Type of inspection	Monitoring
Inspector	Gillian Walters

This monitoring visit

A monitoring visit was conducted on 30 June 2015 following two notifications received by Ofsted that raised concerns about the effectiveness of the home's arrangements to keep young people appropriately safe and secure.

The first notification from the home received on 21 June 2015 dealt with the circumstances of two young people leaving the home late at night and then returning, with one young person alleging that she had come to harm during the short period that she had been absent.

The second notification received on 25 June 2015 alerted Ofsted to the situation that two other young people had been missing from the home since 21 June 2015, having spent time with friends in the local community and then failing to return.

This monitoring visit explored staffing arrangements and the vigilance of staff, specifically in relation to the supervision and checks made on young people to determine whether or not the first incident could have been predicted or avoided. The home's practice and arrangements for dealing with children and young people that are absent or missing were also examined.

Staffing levels were found to be appropriate during that night to meet the needs of the young people in each of the home's properties. Clear arrangements were in place to make regular checks on young people throughout the night and these were consistently documented, providing a clear picture of activity throughout the night-time period.

The two young people concerned resided in separate bungalows and no indication was provided to suggest that there was a plan for them to leave the home together. One young person had disabled detectors that would have ordinarily alerted staff to a young person leaving the home. An outside window restrictor had also been removed to enable a second young person to leave her bungalow. The restrictor had been returned to its original position, giving the appearance during a routine check that it was intact and consequently, staff did not detect that it had been tampered with.

During the period of time, estimated to be less than an hour, that young people were absent, staff believed that they were settled in their own bedrooms asleep. Once alerted by a member of the public that one young person was believed to have left the home, staff promptly took action to ensure that all young people in residence were present and safe. Staff acted appropriately in involving the police when it was indicated that one young person may have come to harm.

The home has since reviewed some security measures, taking account of what they have learned from this experience. This includes using specialist security screws in restrictors to lessen the likelihood of them being tampered with. Since this incident one bungalow remains unoccupied until a full appraisal and repairs

can take place of the door alarm system.

In relation to the second notification, it would appear that the two young people concerned had not planned to absent themselves from the home. Staff went to collect young people from their day out after they had called to say that they had missed their last bus. The young people did not meet with staff as planned and then contacted them to say they did not plan to return.

During the period that these young people were missing the home maintained good communication with both the police and the young people's families. As young people were keeping in contact with some family members, staff were encouraging messages to be passed to young people to let them know that they were not in any trouble and that they were just concerned for them. Staff actively searched and assisted police in attempting to locate them. They did eventually return of their own accord following a public police appeal, having been missing for a significant number of days. The two young people expressed remorse for worrying staff and said that they understood that staff cared for them and had been concerned for their safety.

Although the home acted in co-operation with other services to ensure the young people's earliest return, it delayed in alerting Ofsted to the situation which failed to promote transparency of its operation. As a result, a requirement is made for the home to keep Ofsted suitably informed of any future serious incidents that may occur.

Information about this children's home

This section should outline:

- The home is registered to accommodate up to 50 children with emotional and behavioural problems
- It is operated by a private organisation
- The home is also a registered with Ofsted as a school

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 with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
40: Notification of a serious event The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40(4)(b))	31/07/2015

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this visit was to monitor the action taken and the progress made by the home since their last Ofsted inspection.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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