

Children's homes - interim inspection

Inspection date	09/11/2015
Unique reference number	1183494
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered manager	Denise Ansah
Inspector	Chris Peel

Inspection date	09/11/2015
Previous inspection judgement	N/A
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
<p>The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection</p> <p>This is the first inspection since the home's ownership was transferred from the local authority to a new Trust. At this interim inspection Ofsted judge that it has sustained effectiveness. This follows a 'good' full inspection under the previous ownership. The management team for this home is unchanged since the previous inspection.</p> <p>Since the management of the home has transferred to a new trust the staff are optimistic about the change with the prospect of improving practice and communication between them and other parts of the organisation. The statement of purpose and children's guide are awaiting information about roles in the new organisation to be updated. Currently the guide does not provide sufficient information about advocacy services or the Office of the Children's Commissioner to make it clear why it might be helpful to contact them. Indeed, young people were not able to say what an advocate did.</p> <p>The manager and staff have sought to make improvements in line with requirements and recommendations made at the last full inspection. Progress has been made in the care of children and young people and running of the home as a result, but not entirely consistently.</p> <p>Locks on the front door have been changed so that staff do not have to release it to allow young people to leave and internal doors are not generally locked as a measure of control. There was an exception when a bridging placement of just a few days for a young person with a history of absconding was accepted. A thorough impact risk assessment identified potential problem areas and contributed to the placement's success. Staff responded well to the young person's needs and she made positive comments about the home before she left. However, measures introduced to keep the young person safe, including locking the front door and that to the kitchen, were not subject to a written risk assessment to better justify their temporary use.</p> <p>Two other young people have transferred out of the home. One was a planned return home and the other a breakdown following an arrest and then a move out of the area. Summaries of these noted how each was worked with but not its impact. Records did not indicate how the young person who returned to his mother's care was helped to prepare for the move, although she was fulsome in</p>	

her thanks to the home for what had been done for her son.

Supervision is now more regular and staff report that it is helpful to their practice. They are able to request additional sessions or discussions too. The format for recording in the supervision log is much clearer but some gaps had still gone unnoticed.

There were similar oversights in the recording of fire drills and requests for return to care interviews, despite drives to improve both. None of these had a direct impact on the care of young people, particularly as young people who had gone missing rarely had an independent person to conduct an interview, whether or not it had been requested. The Trust has made plans to employ someone whose duties will include undertaking these interviews to address this long standing problem.

Training plans include a drugs awareness course that staff have been booked on to.

The home had policies covering all the elements of a behaviour management policy but not brought together in one document as required by regulation. This was rectified during the inspection.

Staff have worked with young people to improve behaviour, introducing methods that suit their needs and abilities. An example is a 'stepping forward plan', a framework that has helped a young person see what he needs to change to achieve his aims. There have been some notable successes as a result, including a work experience placement and fewer outbursts but he struggles to apply this across different settings. Another young person has been able to increase his independence in the community through negotiated step increases in the length of time he can be away from the home.

Young people are able to express their opinions at house meetings and key work sessions. However minutes do not indicate which agenda items are brought by the young person concerned and the latter do not specify actions and plans made to follow up.

Incidents of children going missing have been relatively high, but skewed by over two thirds involving one young person within a period of just 6 weeks. In comparison sanctions and physical restraint are low.

Staff demonstrate a positive attitude towards young people, talking about them with considerable regard. At handover meetings they are careful to report positives to those coming on shift as well as difficulties and include reflection of events and what may have effected them. The manager and staff work well with other parts of the system to promote the best interests of young people. Examples include feedback from a headteacher about assisting a student to overcome behavioural difficulties, liaison with a local police community support officer over an incident involving a young person from the home and challenging the appropriate use of a particular restraint method in a school.

Information about this children's home

This home is registered to provide care and accommodation for seven young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties. It is a purpose-built local authority children's home that opened in 2005 but transferred to a recently established trust in October 2015

The previous Unique Reference Number was SC065486

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendations

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

- any decisions to limit a child's access to any area of the home must only be made where this is intended to safeguard the child's welfare and informed by a rigorous assessment of that individual child's needs, be properly recorded and be kept under regular review. (Guide to the Children's Home Regulations 3.10, page 15)
- children should be able to see the results of their views being listened to and acted upon, in particular that key work sessions record agenda items they raise and have actions and plans drawn up. (Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations 4.11, page 22)
- the children's guide should include information to help children to understand how they can access advocacy support or independent advocacy and how to contact the Office of the Children's Commissioner. (Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations 4.22, page 24)
- staff should continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. Where there are safeguarding concerns for a child plans agreed between the home and their placing authority must include details of the steps the home will take to manage any assessed risks on a day to day basis (Guide to the Children's Home Regulations 9.5, page 43)
- staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. This should include completion of fire logs, supervision logs and records of requests for return to home interviews. (Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations 14.4, page 62)

What the inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspection 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

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, young people and their families. In addition the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

This 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 Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the *Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards*.

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