

Children's homes – monitoring

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Inspector	Sharron Escott

This monitoring visit

At an interim inspection carried out on 12 January 2016, a serious concern was identified by the management team and they notified Ofsted of their concerns. An incident of inappropriate use of physical intervention had occurred. This raised significant concern about the management of behaviour within the home, and about staff practice. This was the second incident notified to Ofsted in relation to the inappropriate use of physical intervention by staff in a period of two months. Managers responded appropriately and immediately to this incident, and had identified that staff practice was not protecting young people from risk of harm. Ofsted issued a compliance notice following this inspection.

This purpose of the monitoring visit carried out on 22 April 2016 was to evaluate whether the provider had met the requirement in relation to the compliance notice. The inspector found that the provider has taken action and addressed the shortfalls identified.

The registered person had commissioned an independent review of the home's behaviour management systems. The report identified 'that young people feel physical intervention is rare and only happens when necessary, they feel safe in the home'. The manager, staff and young people have reviewed and amended the behaviour management and safeguarding policies and procedures, and the restraint reduction policy. Senior staff have attended two 'away days', facilitated by a member of the restorative justice council, focusing on restorative practices. As a result, there is now greater emphasis and understanding on de-escalation and restorative responses. Young people are better supported to recognise their emotions and, as a result, are beginning to self-regulate their actions.

Physical restraint training has been reviewed and now makes it explicit that young people cannot be restrained by staff to obtain compliance with requests. Behaviour management training has been reviewed and further developed. All staff are required to attend regular refresher training and a monthly workshop about restraint techniques to reflect on their practice.

Quality monitoring systems have been reviewed. Activities now include more robustly examining closed-circuit television (CCTV) for each incident, more closely scrutinising incident reports and talking to young people and staff in more detail about any incident. The home invites the local authority designated officer to independently review physical restraint incidents using records and CCTV.

The manager and senior leaders have undertaken a robust review of the physical environment, and 'blind spots' in CCTV coverage have been identified. In response, new CCTV cameras have been installed and a request for additional cameras has been made. These actions will help to strengthen the manager's monitoring of incidents within the home.

Since January 2016, there have been four incidents involving physical intervention. Between January 2015 and April 2015 there had 36 restraints within the same period of monitoring. This reflects a decrease of 88%. This evidences a more skilled work force, clear boundaries and therapeutic environment.

The quality and accuracy of the records relating to these incidents, and the manager's monitoring of them, are variable and require improvement. In one of the cases sampled the manager and independent visitor failed to identify the evident differences between the written record and a review carried out of incident using CCTV. Despite this, appropriate action is taken when concerns or shortfalls in expected practice are identified.

Information about this children's home

This secure children's home is managed by a local authority. It is approved by the Department for Education to restrict young people's liberty. Education is provided on site in dedicated facilities. The children's home can accommodate up to 10 young people who are aged between 10 and 17 years and accommodated under section 25 of the Children Act 1989. Admission of any young person under 13 years of age requires the approval of the Secretary of State.

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:

- Ensure that all incidents of restraint are recorded and reviewed by the registered person and that they respond promptly where any issues of concern emerge. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards' page 49, paragraph 9.59)

Information about this inspection

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

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