

Children's homes – Interim inspection

Inspection date	15/02/2017
Unique reference number	SC013402
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Action for Children
Registered provider address	Action for Children, 3 The Boulevard, Ascot Road, WATFORD WD18 8AG

Responsible individual	Shelagh Frankcom
Registered manager	Post Vacant
Inspector	Bridget Goddard

Inspection date	15/02/2017
Previous inspection judgement	Good
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 home was judged good at the full inspection. At this interim inspection, Ofsted judges that it has sustained effectiveness.</p> <p>At the full inspection, three requirements and three recommendations were made. One of the requirements has been fully met. This relates to ensuring that young people's risk assessments are promptly updated. This has been thoroughly addressed in that all risk assessments have been checked and updated. In addition, each risk assessment has been completed to a good standard, and appropriately reflects the young person concerned.</p> <p>Good progress has been made on the requirement relating to staff receiving routine supervisions and appraisal. All permanent staff have received an appraisal, and eligible, temporary staff are scheduled to receive an appraisal by the end of March. The quality of these appraisals is good in that they contain a helpful mix of self-assessment and skilful analysis. Progress on supervision practice is less well developed. A routine pattern of frequency and content for all staff started well. However, this has not been maintained. The management team plans to review how to maintain acceptable practice, particularly in relation to recording supervision sessions.</p> <p>The final requirement made at the full inspection related to ensuring that the home has sufficient, skilled staff. Recruitment efforts are ongoing, but progress has been limited. A small number of permanent staff have started work, but this has been matched by those leaving. This means that the home is still reliant on significant numbers of agency workers. This does not routinely promote continuity of care for young people. The management team is considering new strategies based on retaining existing staff.</p> <p>Managers and staff have successfully met the three recommendations made at the full inspection. Young people were offered a stimulating range of activities at half term, and staff are adept at offering individualised care to groups of young people with diverse needs. Visual representations of activities are now much more prominent than previously, and young people's requests for particular bedroom items have been addressed. Agency staff use is still high, particularly over holiday periods, but this is being more consciously managed across the two units. This has helped create a better balance of permanent and temporary staff in each unit.</p> <p>The previous, registered manager has resigned her post, and a new manager is in post who has begun the registration process. The previous, registered manager is</p>	

working alongside the new manager, and is also spending time undertaking direct work with young people. This positive initiative has given valuable, additional management oversight of key areas such as risk assessments and appraisals. In addition, young people have developed their social skills by spending planned time in the wider community enjoying activities such as going out for meals.

There have been no significant incidents since the last inspection, and no use of restraint. There have been no missing-from-home incidents. Staff are competent at dealing with challenging behaviour by negotiating alternative activities. Young people benefit from the good range of inside and outside resources, which are available within the safe grounds of this home. However, the quality of decoration and soft furnishings is less than adequate in some areas. These areas do not present as a warm and homely environment for young people.

Alongside their usual duties, managers and staff are good at working positively with emergency admissions. Essential assessments are promptly and thoroughly completed, communication between staff is clear, and young people are appropriately cared for in line with their needs. This demonstrates that, generally, an effective staff and management team is in place.

Information about this children's home

This children's home is run by a registered charity in partnership with a local authority. Care and accommodation are provided in two separate and distinct houses on the same site with the same registered manager. The home provides care and accommodation for four children under short-break arrangements, for two further children looked after in one house, and for five children who live permanently in the other house. Children may have a learning disability and/or a physical disability. The long-stay residential house specialises in work with children with a range of complex needs.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
01/11/2016	Full	Good
16/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
23/06/2015	Full	Good
21/02/2015	Interim	Declined in effectiveness

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 within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
13: Ensure that there are sufficient, experienced, qualified and skilled staff to meet the needs of each child. This relates both to staff vacancies in the home, and the large number of agency staff that are used. (Regulation 13 (2)(c)(d))	31/05/2017

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that a note of the outcomes of supervisions is kept, and that both supervisor and staff members have a copy of the record. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.4)
- Ensure that the children's environment is homely. This particularly relates to the decoration and soft furnishings in the short-stay house. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

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 that 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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