

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	16/02/2017
Unique reference number	1229977
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered manager	Paul Jacobs
Inspector	Rosie Dancer

Inspection date	16/02/2017
Previous inspection judgement	N/A
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Requires improvement
The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement

1229977

Summary of findings

The children's home provision requires improvement because:

- Not all aspects of assessed risk have clear strategies for staff to use to mitigate the concerns.
- Case recordings of missing and bullying incidents are incomplete or not easy to access.
- Not all complaints made by children have been fully dealt with, as young people have not always received confirmation of the outcome.
- Young people do not have access to the means to enable them to have contact with a professional or an advocate without recourse to staff.
- Young people are not always offered the opportunity to talk to someone independent of the home when they return from a 'missing' episode.
- Medical advice was not sought when there were concerns about a young person who returned to the home and appeared to be inebriated.
- Not all staff receive supervision at the frequency and of the quality expected by the organisation.
- Not all incidents requiring notification to Ofsted have been reported.
- The statement of purpose has some shortfalls and has not been provided to Ofsted following review.

The children's home strengths

- The manager has recognised some shortfalls and has taken action to address them.
- Young people develop good relationships with staff and confide in them.
- All young people are currently engaging in education.
- The manager and staff have achieved good working relationships with other agencies.

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
<p>Subject to paragraph (6), the registered person must establish a procedure for considering complaints made by or on behalf of children. The registered person must ensure that a record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of any investigation. (Regulation 39(1)(3))</p> <p>With specific reference to ensuring that complaints are fully investigated and recorded, and that the child is provided with the outcome of their complaint.</p>	24/04/2017
<p>Subject to paragraph (5), the registered person must ensure that children are provided at all reasonable times with access to the following facilities which they may use without reference to persons working in the home- a telephone on which to make and receive telephone calls in private; and facilities to send and receive post and, if the necessary facilities are provided for the use of children, electronic mail, in private. (Regulation 22(3)(a)(b))</p>	24/04/2017
<p>12. The protection of children standard</p> <p>In order to meet the protection of children standard, the registered person must ensure that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>(2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure:</p> <p>(a) that staff:</p> <p>(i) assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child.</p> <p>This is with specific reference to ensuring that strategies to safeguard children are clearly set out in risk assessments.</p>	24/04/2017
<p>The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for</p>	07/05/2017

<p>each child which: (1)(a) include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child; (b) are kept up to date; and (c) are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36(1)(a)(b)(c))</p> <p>With specific reference to ensuring that records of missing episodes are fully completed.</p>	
<p>The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay of any significant event, in line with the regulation. (Regulation 40(4))</p>	07/05/2017
<p>16. The quality and purpose of care standard</p> <p>In order to meet the quality and purpose of care standard, the registered person must: (1) compile in relation to the children’s home a statement (“the statement of purpose”) which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1. (3)(a) keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and (b) notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision.</p>	07/05/2017
<p>The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children (“a quality of care review”) at least once every 6 months. The system referred to in paragraph (2) must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff. (Regulation 45(1)(5))</p> <p>With specific reference to ascertaining the opinions of social workers.</p>	07/05/2017
<p>The registered person must ensure that all employees undertake appropriate continuing professional development, and receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33(4)(a)(b))</p> <p>This is with specific reference to complying with the organisational policy in relation to the supervision of staff and ensuring that staff meetings support the team’s professional development needs.</p>	07/05/2017

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further, the service should take account of the following recommendations:

- When a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority must provide an opportunity for the child to have an independent return home interview. Homes should take account of information provided by such interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect each child. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 45, paragraph 9.30)

With specific reference to offering a young person the opportunity to talk to someone independent of the home when they have returned from being missing.

- The registered person is responsible for ensuring that each child’s day-to-day health and well-being needs are met. Staff should work to make the children’s home an environment that supports children’s physical, mental and emotional health, in line with the approach set out in the home’s statement of purpose. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 33, paragraph 7.3)

This is with specific reference to seeking medical advice, should a young person present as being under the influence of alcohol.

- For children’s homes to be nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of their children, they will, in most cases, be homely, domestic environments. Children’s homes must comply with relevant health and safety legislations (alarms, food hygiene etc.); however, in doing so, homes should seek as far as possible to maintain a domestic rather than ‘institutional’ impression. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 15, paragraph 3.9)

This is with specific reference to ensuring that all fire doors’ self-closure mechanisms work effectively and that the builders’ fencing is removed from the perimeter of the site.

- It is good practice for a note of the content and/or outcomes of supervision sessions to be kept, and to ensure that both the person giving the supervision and the staff member have a copy of the record. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 61, paragraph 13.4)
- Some records may be kept electronically (regulation 38), provided that this information can be easily accessed by anyone with a legitimate need to view it and, if required, be reproduced in a legible form. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 61, paragraph 14.2)

With specific reference to considering how electronic records relevant to

young people's time at the home can be identified for ease of audit and monitoring.

- Regulations 35-39 detail the records that must be kept in children's homes. All children's case records (regulation 36) must be kept up to date and stored securely whilst they remain in the home. Case records must be kept up to date, and signed and dated by the author of each entry. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home was registered in August 2016. This is its first inspection. Due to structural repairs to the premises, the home was not in use from October 2016 until January 2017.

This is a children's home run by a local authority. It provides care and accommodation for up to six young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

The home provides short-term care and accommodation, which may be on a shared-care basis, aimed at preventing a family breakdown. It also accommodates young people while assessments of their longer-term placement needs are carried out. The home does not offer long-term placements. The home also provides an emergency bed.

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
<p>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</p>	<p>Requires improvement</p>
<p>Young people using the home currently do so on a shared-care basis. They spend the majority of their time at the family home and stay two or three nights at the children’s home.</p> <p>Following incidents that occurred when the home was first opened, improvements have been made to the decision-making and admission processes. Consideration is now given to the needs of all the young people and the staff’s ability to meet them. However, these improvements have not been fully tested, as only one young person stays at a time. Therefore, staff have not been required to manage incidents between young people. The assessments regarding the current young people are variable in quality. This inconsistency leaves the potential for issues to arise due to incompatibility when more than one young person is staying at the home.</p> <p>Another area of improvement to admissions is that they are conditional on the young person having a confirmed education plan. The current young people using the home have educational placements that they are attending. This ensures that they have predictable day-to-day routines. Staff show interest in their learning, and one young person is considering his options for future study. Achievements, however small, are celebrated and appropriately rewarded.</p> <p>Young people have used the complaints procedure, but not all complaints have been followed up effectively. Records of investigations were not all available and one young person has left the home not knowing the outcome of their complaint.</p> <p>Recently, there has been a ban on the use of mobile phones while young people are staying at the home. This is for safety reasons, so that the young people are not influenced by outside sources during their stay. However, it does mean that, should young people have a worry that they feel unable to discuss with staff, they are unable to contact their social worker or other professional without recourse to staff.</p> <p>The organisation has agreed a contract with an advocacy service, which has identified an advocate to visit the home on a weekly basis. However, these visits have not yet commenced.</p> <p>Young people have engaged well with staff. There are a number of activities available at the home, such as board games, construction and electrical kits, and arts and crafts. In the community, young people can choose from activities that</p>	

range from attending the local gym to walking and playing in the woods. Visits further afield to places of national interest are also arranged. Through taking part in these activities, young people learn new skills and have fun.

Young people's health needs are met well when they are staying at the home. Consent is obtained from parents to administer necessary medication. The arrangements for the storage and administration of medication are safe. The young people and staff have access to a clinical team employed across the county. This team is available to staff for consultation about individual young people to guide decision making in areas such as admissions, behaviour management and care planning. There have been recent changes to the personnel of this team and currently it is developing systems to measure the outcomes of the work. For the young people currently at the home, it is too soon to assess the progress.

The staff work closely with the nurse for looked after children. She is further developing services for the young people to provide a more integrated approach to young people's healthcare across the settings that they stay in. For one young person, this means that a health professional who already has a good relationship with him is to become his lead health professional. Young people also have access to universal services such as the local child and adolescent health services, and staff are working with a young person to encourage him to engage with these services.

The young people currently at the home live at home for part of the week and therefore have sufficient contact with their family members. Family members are welcomed into the home, when appropriate.

For previous residents, there have been some positive moves for them following an assessment of their needs. For example, one young person moved on to a longer-term children's home and has now been able to return to live with his family. Another moved on to a specialist residential special school able to meet his complex needs. He was fully involved in choosing which school he would like to attend through discussion with the staff. A third young person went to live in one of the authority's semi-independent homes and is reportedly doing well there.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
<p>Young people using the service are safe and say that they feel safe while staying at the home. The plan for the current young people is to improve their safety through work with them about the risks that they place themselves in, for example through being involved in gang culture. It is also to support families to manage their child's behaviour more effectively, with the aim of them not having to be admitted into care. The young people have developed good relationships with staff and trust</p>	

them. Staff spend quality time with them, and young people have begun to engage. It is too soon to assess the effectiveness of the work with these young people.

Risk assessments identify areas of risk and some strategies for staff to use to minimise the risks. However, not all strategies are clearly set out. In one case, a young person is at risk from self-harm, yet the strategies outlined for staff to use are limited. There is no detail about the practical steps that they should take, such as minimising his access to implements that he could use to harm himself. Information is not included about how frequently he should be monitored if staff suspect an increase in the risk. There is no information for staff to guide the actions that they should take if he does attempt to self-harm or has harmed himself.

The current young people have not gone missing from the home, but previous young people have. Staff took appropriate action in reporting young people to the appropriate agencies, but record keeping of incidents is poor. Records were difficult to track, and some were incomplete and unsigned. In some cases, return home interviews were offered to young people with staff, not with an independent person. This means that young people did not have an opportunity to discuss any concerns that they might have had about events at the home with someone uninvolved in the home.

On returning home from a 'missing' episode, a young person was assessed to be under the influence of alcohol. There was no evidence that medical advice was sought, and the young person went to bed in an inebriated state. There were known risks relating to sexual exploitation and the police instigated a protection order to secure her safety. The manager failed to notify Ofsted of this incident.

Some successful work was carried out with individual young people who have moved on from the home. The work helped them to manage their emotions and behaviour more effectively. One parent said that she was now able to talk with her son in a way that had not been possible before. However, another parent reported that her son thought that being at the home was a laugh and a joke. He told her that even though he behaved badly he was still rewarded by the staff. The manager recognised that there was a lack of consistency among staff in implementing the reward and incentive scheme, and has reviewed these arrangements. Incentives linked to the young person's placement plan are now discussed during key-work sessions so that young people understand them better. It is too early to assess the impact of this development.

When physical interventions have been used, they have been in accordance with legislation and are clearly recorded. Room searches are carried out for appropriate reasons, and clear records are made of each search.

A newly introduced policy stopping young people having access to a mobile phone

while staying at the home has reduced the risks from inappropriate social media usage. The organisation is looking into a system to monitor young people's internet use and, until that has been implemented, young people only have access to the internet when supervised closely by staff.

There has been one reported incident of bullying, but it was not possible to assess the actions of staff, because the record could not be found. Currently, as there are no young people staying at the home at the same time, bullying is not an issue.

Allegations made against staff have been referred to the appropriate safeguarding professionals for investigation. Staff are aware of the actions that they should take if they have a concern about a young person or if an allegation is made to them about another professional. Staff recruitment practice is thorough and ensures that staff are deemed suitable to work with the young people.

The premises are of a high quality and action is taken in a timely way to address general maintenance issues. Regular checks, such as those relating to fire risks, are carried out, yet one young person's bedroom door was not shutting fully, as the bottom of the door was catching on the pile of the carpet. This could compromise safety in the event of a fire. Large pieces of metal fencing, site signs and bollards left by the builders detract from the pleasant environment and do not make a good first impression.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement
<p>The registered manager is permanent, suitably experienced and qualified. He holds a diploma in social work and is currently studying for a level 5 qualification in leadership and management.</p> <p>The work of the home is underpinned by a statement of purpose that is clearly written. However, it does not include all the points listed in schedule 1 of the regulations. Specifically, it does not detail how to access the home's child protection policies or the behaviour management policy, or provide details about how the impact of clinical work is measured. The most up-to-date copy of the statement has not been provided to HMCI.</p> <p>The manager has carried out his first monitoring report under regulation 45. The report demonstrates the learning from caring for the first cohort of young people and details how improvements have been made. In addition to the developments already mentioned, the manager has overseen changes to some bedroom windows to prevent young people placing themselves at risk by climbing onto the roof.</p> <p>More analysis is required in relation to some areas, such as complaints and the</p>	

effectiveness of individual behaviour management plans. There appears to have been no input from placing social workers about their view of the quality of care or the effectiveness of the work.

The staff team is new, and has a range of skills and experience. Many staff were new to residential work when the home opened. It has taken time for staff to settle into their new roles. Staff show a high commitment to grow and develop as a team, and to provide the young people with a positive and helpful experience during their time at the home.

Support to staff through supervision is poor. Supervision has not been in line with the organisation's policy. For example, not all staff have been supervised at the frequency expected, and records do not show that an agenda is set, that safeguarding matters are discussed or that issues from the previous session are followed up. Some records are not secure and are not signed by either supervisor or supervisee. Team meetings are held regularly, but they are not based on an agenda, safeguarding is not routinely discussed and there is no time frame for the actions that are identified.

All staff have been through a comprehensive training programme as part of their induction process. Some staff felt that there could have been more focus on the requirements in relation to recording, but feel that they now understand the systems. There are seven staff who have a level 3 qualification or equivalent and three who are undertaking the qualification, and the remaining seven are either enrolled on a course or are in the process of being enrolled.

Care plans for young people currently using this service are adequate for the purpose of shared care arrangements. However, not all records in case files were signed and dated, and the electronic recording system is difficult to navigate. It was not possible for staff to find all the specific records requested by the inspector. This makes it difficult to monitor incidents so that any patterns and trends can be identified and minimised.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place, however, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

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 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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