

1256639

Registered provider: Utopia Children's Services Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is owned by a private company that also owns two other children's homes in an adjoining region. The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 8 to 9 February 2018

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	Good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
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The effectiveness of leaders and registered managers	Requires improvement to be good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: This is the home's first full inspection

Overall judgement at last inspection: Not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- The home is managed by a strong and experienced registered manager. She provides her team with the direction and support required to deliver good-

quality individualised care. Collectively, the team has the confidence and skills to advocate for the needs and rights of children in its care.

- The registered manager and care staff demonstrate genuine care for the children who they look after. All three children are making good progress, educationally, socially and emotionally. This is because the staff have the skills to develop and maintain trusting and respectful relationships with children.
- Three placing social workers contributed to this inspection. They commented very positively about the progress that their young people have made since coming to the home.

The children's home's areas for development:

- Ensure that records pertaining to children's daily living are meaningful and informative documents that provide a detailed overview of the child's life and experiences while living at the home.
- Ensure that missing-from-home protocols detail the time scales within which staff are required to search and report a child as missing.
- Ensure that the home's locality risk assessment details the response times of emergency services.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet 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: The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard the registered person must (h) use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13(2)(h))	30/03/2018
14: The care planning standard The care planning standard is that children:	30/03/2018

(a) receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home.

(Regulation 14(1)(a))

In particular, ensure that care and behaviour management plans and risk assessments are reviewed in order to provide new and temporary staff with clear, concise and current information on how to meet the children's current needs.

Recommendations

- The registered person must specify the procedures to be followed and the roles and responsibilities of staff when a child is missing from care or away from the home without permission and how staff should support the child on return to the home. In particular, this refers to each child's plan detailing time scales to search and report the child as missing from home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.28)
- The home's records on each child represent a significant contribution to their life history. Children and their parents and carers should be supported to understand the nature of records kept by the home and how to access them. In particular, records maintained by staff should reflect the child's time spent living at the home, their progress and achievements. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.5)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children said that they like living at the home and speak fondly of the care and support they receive. They said that the staff give them the time and space they need. Children said that they feel safe, that staff listen to them and that they have fun. All three children are encouraged to pursue their own personal interests and hobbies. They like the activities that they take part in. One young person has identified his career path as a result of the work experience opportunities that the home has organised for him.

The registered manager and care team have a good understanding of the children's needs. Staff are resilient, empathetic and tolerant. Behavioural incidents do occur, during times of emotional distress; children are provided with the support and guidance they need. During these turbulent times, staff work successfully with children, maintaining boundaries and expectations. Relationships between children and staff are good and the atmosphere within the home is good humoured and fun.

Children are supported well to maintain relationships with their families. One family member said:

He has done so well. The staff have been brilliant with him. He is encouraged to attend activities that are healthy and fun. The staff keep us updated on his progress and drive him to see us on a regular basis.

Children's placement plans, risk assessments and behaviour-support plans are under review. This is because the registered manager has identified that the current documents are too cumbersome and lack clear, concise and current information for new and temporary staff. This is a recording concern rather than a practice weakness, as permanent staff demonstrated a good understanding of children's individual needs.

Children are exceeding the expectations of family members and social workers as a result of the opportunities they receive and the quality of care provided. A tutor said, 'When he came to us, his attitude towards learning was poor.' Education reports confirm that this same child is in the top set in three subjects and has completed a formal qualification a year earlier than is required.

The registered manager and her team are strong advocates for children's rights. They consider the needs of the children when they are placed in the home and/or move out. One young person who has recently moved into supported living benefited from careful planning and support. Her move was successful.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

The registered manager and staff team have a good understanding of the children's backgrounds and how these impact on their current behaviour. Children's needs and behaviour are understood and are managed well.

Behavioural incidents do occur. These include children going missing from home, children engaging in risk-taking activities and, on occasions, children have caused damage and harm to the environment, themselves and others. However, these incidents have been managed well and have reduced significantly in recent months. One social worker said: 'They don't give up on the children. They are exceptionally good at maintaining boundaries and reinforcing expectations... he is achieving socially and emotionally.'

Children benefit from the good working relationships that the registered manager and staff have with other agencies and professionals. The registered manager is proactive in ensuring that the children receive all of the services that they need, which in turn supports them to achieve their potential and have aspirations. One parent said, 'My child's educational achievements are testament to the registered manager and staff team's support and encouragement'.

The registered manager has liaised with a wide range of agencies to gain knowledge and understanding of the risks in the home's local area. These are detailed in a locality risk assessment. However, she has not considered the operational hours of emergency services and public transport services in the local area. These may impact on the health, safety and well-being of the children.

The effectiveness of leaders and registered managers: requires improvement to be good

This is the home's first full inspection since registration in August 2017. The home is managed by an experienced and suitably qualified registered manager. Since registration, the home has provided care and accommodation for four children. One child has experienced a successful move to independent living.

The leadership of the home requires improvement to be good. This is primarily associated with the monitoring of the records that are completed by staff. The registered manager's monitoring has not identified omissions and variances in records pertaining to missing-from-home incidents and daily records maintained by the staff for children. The registered manager recognises that the current recording and reporting systems are cumbersome and they require streamlining. To date, these shortfalls have not impacted negatively on the safety and well-being of children.

Following a review that identified weaknesses in the care planning process, the registered manager is developing new placement plans, behaviour-support plans and risk assessments. The registered manager has recognised that the current documents are not clear or concise and do not provide all staff with clear instruction and guidance on how to meet the children's current daily needs. This means that new and temporary staff

are not aware of individual's routines and personal preferences. Missing-from-home protocols are in place, but these documents lack clarity on time scales within which to search for and report a child missing.

The registered manager is a strong and effective leader. She is described by other professionals as assertive and proactive within her role and responsibilities. Her determination and motivation to provide good-quality care and opportunities for the children is commendable.

The registered manager has high expectations of the children, herself and the staff. These expectations are communicated through house meetings, and formal and informal supervision sessions. The care staff said that training opportunities are good and help them to improve their skills and understand the needs of children, which supports their professional development. As a result, they are better informed to meet the needs of the children.

The registered manager and staff team have built and maintained good relationships with parents. One parent said: 'I do not have any complaints. The registered manager and care team are excellent, they keep me updated with what is happening, his health has improved and he is motivated to try new activities and develop his interests.'

The registered manager ensures that staff, social workers, parents and notifiable agencies receive regular and informative updates about the children's progress and experiences. All significant events are routinely reported to the required authorities and social workers.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and 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 whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, 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'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1256639

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Utopia Children's Services Ltd

Registered provider address: Hazlewoods, Windsor House, Bayshill Road,
Cheltenham GL50 3AT

Responsible individual: Louis Stuart-Kelso

Registered manager: Sarah Gilkes

Inspector

Sharron Escott, social care inspector

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