

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.

The registered manager has been registered with Ofsted since 2018.

Inspection dates: 18 to 19 September 2018

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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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.

Date of last inspection: 8 February 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
08/02/2018	Full	Good

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
5: Engaging with the wider system to ensure children's needs are met In meeting the quality standards, if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans. In particular, escalate concerns that return home interviews are not being completed.	1/11/2018
10: The health and well-being standard The health and wellbeing standard is that children receive advice, services and support in relation to their health and well-being. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff help each to access such dental, medical, nursing, psychiatric and psychological advice, treatment and other services as the child may require. In particular, ensure that children are provided with support from substance misuse services.	1/11/2018
11: The positive relationships standard The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— mutual respect and trust, an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— encourage each child to take responsibility for the child's behaviour, in accordance with the child's age and	1/11/2018

understanding. In particular, ensure that sanctions used are effective.	
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Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

The overall experiences and progress of children is variable and requires improvement to be good. In recent months, children's health, well-being and educational attendance has declined because all children are misusing illegal substances regularly while spending time with friends in the community.

Children openly talk to staff about this behaviour and staff try to help them to understand the associated dangers. However, neither leaders, managers nor staff have obtained specialist substance misuse support for the children, and sanctions for poor behaviour are not always effective or always restorative. As a result, children are not learning from or taking responsibility for their behaviour as well as they could.

Some children frequently return to the home late and in recent months there have been three occasions when one child has stayed out overnight without permission. The whereabouts of this child during these episodes remain unknown. Police have completed welfare checks, and one-to-one work has been undertaken with children. However, independent return home interviews have not always taken place.

All four children attend an education provision. Their attendance, positive engagement and attainment have been variable. One child's attendance at school has declined significantly. The manager and staff are working with the child, the school and the parents to try to resolve this concern.

Despite these poor outcomes, some children are making progress in other areas. One child has appropriately lost weight and is now eating healthily and regularly engaging in physical exercise. A second child is developing his numeracy and literacy skills and is now able to read signs and follow instructions when travelling independently to see his parents. This same child has a personal interest in mechanics and staff helped him to obtain work experience at a local garage. His employer has reported that he is a hard worker, professional and talented. Incidents of self-injury have reduced significantly for a third child.

Children are offered a wide range of activities and have enjoyed day trips out with staff, attending the gym and shopping. Despite these opportunities, children say that they prefer to spend time with their friends in the local community.

Children's relationships with the staff team are positive. The quality of these relationships has helped two children to develop positive strategies to regulate their frustrations, emotions and feelings. One child said, 'I don't get as angry now. Staff give

me a hug and I can cry.' Another child has identified that messaging a member of staff about how she is feeling has helped to reduce incidents of self-injury. Records about these behaviours are well maintained and demonstrate how staff support the children.

Three social workers who contributed to this inspection were unanimously pleased and complimentary about the services provided to their child. They said that the safeguarding arrangements are good and the quality of nurturing care provided to children is exceptional. All three social workers identified progress that their child has made since living at this home. They praised the staff team for its resilience with managing the high-risk and complex needs of the children in its care. They confirmed that their child's care plan aims and objectives are being met.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

The approach to managing risk requires improvement to be good. Despite knowing the children in his care regularly misuse illegal substances, the manager has not sought the support, intervention and resources of specialist substance misuse services. This limits the opportunities to help the children to reduce these behaviours.

Missing from home incidents increased during the summer holiday period. However, incidents of some children going missing have decreased overall. Records show that staff always follow the missing from home protocols appropriately. They search in areas that children are known to frequent. Police welfare checks are completed, and one-to-one sessions take place between the staff and children. Despite these opportunities, children are not always provided with an independent return home interview. Although requested, the manager has not escalated his concerns about this lack of provision to senior leaders in the local authority.

Risk assessments, care plans and behaviour management plans have been reviewed, and align well with the local authority care plans. Staff are provided with clear instructions about how to manage children's behaviour. Despite these plans, children continue to engage in behaviours such as misusing illegal substances, causing damage and going missing from the home.

Aside from the lack of substance misuse support, overall, the manager's approach to multi-agency working is strong. Multi-agency risk management meetings take place frequently. When illegal substances are found or extensive damage occurs, the manager will appropriately liaise with the police. In addition, when children refuse to attend school, the manager will request and attend all absence management meetings.

The manager's approach to recruiting new staff is good. As a result, children are looked after by adults whose suitability has been assessed and verified. Recruitment records are well maintained.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Since the last inspection in February 2018, a new manager has been appointed and is registered with Ofsted. He works tenaciously for the children in his care and is suitably experienced and qualified for the role.

The manager and staff team have established good working relationships with safeguarding agencies, schools, social workers and parents. Feedback from all of these stakeholders is positive. They praise the staff for their resilience and steadfastness at working with children.

The atmosphere within the home is vibrant; staff morale is good, and the staff team works well together. Children are provided with consistency and continuity of care. Staff show children affection, nurture them well and praise their achievements. All of the children can identify a member of staff whom they enjoy spending time with and trust.

Staff are provided with good training opportunities that include bespoke specialist training courses. A member of staff described a recent training course as the best she has ever attended. She said she has already used the learning from this training in practice. These training opportunities enhance staff's knowledge, skills and practice.

Team meetings are well attended; discussions focus on the children's needs and behaviours, and the management of risk. Staff are empowered to reflect on their practice and learn from others. Staff are provided with regular formal supervisions. A member of staff confirmed that he values these meetings and the support provided by the management team.

Monitoring of the home's records is good. The manager and independent visitor's monitoring of records is effective. Action is taken when omissions are identified.

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: Brian Smith

Inspector

Sharron Escott, social care inspector

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