

1269072

Registered provider: Utopia Children's Services Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home provides residential care and accommodation for three children up to the age of 18 with social and/or emotional difficulties.

The manager of the home was registered by Ofsted in June 2021.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

Inspection dates: 10 to 11 August 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **requires improvement to be good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 9 December 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
09/12/2019	Full	Good
25/02/2019	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
26/06/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The children make good progress in all areas of their lives. Staff are committed to creating positive experiences. Children receive individualised care and spend quality time with staff. As a result, the children benefit from trusting relationships and feel a sense of belonging.

Since the last full inspection, the home has benefited from redecoration and the introduction of new soft furnishings. The home has a picture wall in the living room, which displays photographs of the children and staff and of children who previously lived at the home. One child commented that he really likes the changes the new manager has made and that he likes to help with decorating. The welcoming environment means that the children feel comfortable in the home.

Children have access to education. The encouragement from staff helps children achieve full attendance at school, attend extra-curricular clubs and transition into new provisions. The home has an in-house education co-ordinator to advocate for the children's needs and improve communication. As a result of this good support, the children make progress with their learning.

There is a child in the home who smokes. They have previously been supported to access specialist services to quit. However, there are no current plans in place to encourage them to reduce smoking or make healthier lifestyle choices. This could have implications for the child's long-term health.

Staff support the children to express their views. For example, they have monthly progress meetings with their key worker to make targets for the next month and are encouraged to chair their own review meetings. Children are also encouraged to provide regular feedback to staff at 'children's chat' meetings. The registered manager then reads the meeting notes and responds in writing to any requests. This provides children with the opportunity to reflect on their progress and to feel that their wishes and feelings matter.

Staff are creative in providing stimulating activities for the children. Children enjoy spending time with the home's pets, help staff to maintain the vegetable patches and spend time with friends in the community. More recently, the children have also enjoyed a holiday with staff. This helps them develop social relationships and confidence in the community.

Children are helped by staff to spend time with loved ones. Families are welcomed into the home and staff travel with the children to support the time families spend together. This helps the children to rebuild positive and meaningful relationships with those who are important to them.

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

Children's risks and vulnerabilities are understood by staff. However, the written assessments to manage and reduce risk are not clear. For example, one child's missing-from-home risk assessment does not specify when staff should contact the police. In addition, children's risk assessments do not adequately identify all risks, for example, one child self-administers medication and this is not assessed. This could lead to inconsistencies in staff practice and may compromise the children's safety.

The home has built good working relationships with other professionals. There are plans in place for the children to receive life-story work and therapy sessions. This will help the children to understand their experiences and reinforce personal identity.

Children's positive behaviour is recognised and rewarded by staff. Inappropriate behaviours or actions are discussed and, when necessary, the children receive appropriate sanctions. This motivates them to make positive informed choices in the future. However, sanctions are not always recorded. This means that managers and staff are unable to monitor patterns and trends to ensure sanctions are fair and effective.

The registered manager ensures that staff who are recruited to work in the home are subject to all necessary checks. This helps to ensure that staff who work in the home are safe to do so.

Staff are confident in their roles and well supported by managers. Staff benefit from good-quality supervision and team meetings that focus on children, working relationships and team dynamics. This allows staff to reflect on their practice, develop a relationship with the registered manager and build a good understanding of children's needs.

Children live in a physically safe environment. Staff carry out regular health and safety checks to ensure the safety of the home.

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

The new registered manager is suitably qualified and experienced. She is enthusiastic about the service and is child focused. There has been a good handover with the outgoing manager. This means that the registered manager has a good understanding of the service.

The current staff team is stable. Staff work additional shifts when necessary to ensure the children experience continuity. This ensures the children are always cared for by adults with whom they have positive and established relationships.

One child's case file does not contain all the required information. As a result, staff do not have the information that they need to provide coordinated care.

Children do not know how to make a complaint. It is not clear in the children's guide what action would be taken to respond to a complaint made by a child. Furthermore, a concern raised by a child was not followed up by the registered manager. This is a missed opportunity to support children to raise concerns and be listened to and valued by staff taking actions and reflecting on practice.

Leaders and managers carefully considered the impact a new child might have on the other children already living in the home. However, they did not review staff training to ensure that staff had the skills to meet the child's specific health need. The manager did not ensure that staff were equipped with the most up-to-date knowledge.

The administration records of medication are not consistent. There are occasions when staff have not followed the instructions on the prescription and there are recording errors on the medication sheets. The manager completes medication audits, however, did not identify or respond to the shortfalls. While this has not had any serious consequences thus far, it has the potential to do so.

Not all staff have completed mandatory training. For example, not all staff have completed training in medication or managing allegations against staff, and not all managers had completed supervision training. This compromises consistent care and professional development.

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
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— 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. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)) This relates to ensuring that children's risks are accurately reflected in their written documentation, and that risk assessments clearly advise staff about how to respond to risk.	20 October 2021
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(2)(c)) This relates to ensuring that staff undergo the necessary training to support them in their role in working with children.	20 October 2021
The care planning standard is that children—	20 October 2021

receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)) This specifically relates to the registered manager ensuring that care staff have the skills in place to support the children admitted into the home.	
The registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received into the children's home. In particular the registered person must ensure that— medicine which is prescribed for a child is administered as prescribed to the child for whom it is prescribed and to no other child. (Regulation 23 (1) (2)(b)) This specifically relates to ensuring that medication is administered to children as prescribed.	20 October 2021
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which— include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child; and are kept up to date. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)) This specifically relates to the need for a child's care plan to be kept up to date.	20 October 2021

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children are aware of the complaints procedure and be reminded of it as necessary. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.13)
- The registered person should ensure that the children's guide helps children to understand how to make a complaint in line with the home's complaints procedure. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 24, paragraph 4.22)
- The registered person should ensure that all incidents of control, discipline and restraint are subject to systems of regular scrutiny to ensure that their use is fair. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.36)

- The registered person should ensure that staff have the relevant skills and knowledge to be able to help children understand, and where necessary work to change negative behaviours in key areas of health and well-being such as the use of tobacco. (Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.18)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, 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: 1269072

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Utopia Children's Services Ltd

Registered provider address: Unit 9, Wheatstone Court, Waterwells Business Park, Davy Way, Gloucester GL2 2AQ

Responsible individual: Tracy Poole

Registered manager: Carleen Dobson

Inspector

Sophie Hills, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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