

# 2798556

Registered provider: Brighter Stays Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

The home is operated by a private company and provides care for up to two children with social and emotional difficulties. Two children were living at the home at the time of the inspection.

The manager and the home registered with Ofsted on 3 January 2025.

### Inspection dates: 1 and 2 April 2025

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| <b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,</b> taking into account | <b>requires improvement to be good</b> |
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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 | requires improvement to be 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:** not previously inspected

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** not applicable

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** not applicable

## Inspection judgements

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

Shortfalls in help and protection and leadership and management have fallen short of good and this has affected the overall inspection judgement.

Since registration, two children have lived at the home. Introductions into the home for both children were welcoming. One social worker described how the staff helped their child move in 'extremely well'. They offered the child space and were gentle and thoughtful, for example, making them a welcome cake. However, when children move in, the manager has not ensured staff have all the information required from external professionals or fully considered the location of the home. This has potentially undermined stability for children.

Children have mixed experiences and make mixed progress. Staff have started to develop positive relationships with the children. However, with one child, staff have been unable to use these relationships to help them manage difficult situations. Not all staff have the skills and confidence to manage these. Leaders and managers have identified that staff are not able to meet one child's needs. Consequently, this child will experience further disruption. The other child is settled and making good progress. Their social worker said there is a 'vast positive difference' between when they moved in and now.

Children's educational progress is mixed. Since one child moved into the home, staff have helped them to start attending education daily and have positive experiences. However, one child is not in education. The staff are not consistently offering daily opportunities for their education, learning and development. For example, the child spends time away from the home with friends during school hours, despite a plan that says otherwise. Not all staff are confident to challenge this and support the child with education.

The manager and staff create a homely environment for children. The home is decorated to a high standard and is a comfortable, spacious environment. Any damage is quickly repaired so that this does not affect the overall feel. Children like their bedrooms and have their personal items with them.

Staff talk about children with care and empathy. They are considerate when thinking about children's experiences before moving into the home, and empathise with children.

Staff understand and support children's cultural and identity needs. For example, they help one child visit a local church where they can practise their religion and spend time with their family.

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

On occasions, staff use consequences in response to behaviour. However, they are not consistent in their approach. This leads to uncertainty of behavioural expectations for the child and does not help them feel settled and secure. While records of some incidents are clear and show that staff consider possible triggers and de-escalate situations, other incidents are poorly documented. The clinical specialist has developed a training plan to help staff manage difficult situations, but this is yet to take place and therefore influence practice.

There have been two occasions when physical intervention has been used. The records of these incidents are poor. They lack clarity about the incidents and how staff acted to prevent escalation. The full details of the intervention are not clear, including how staff held the child. While no concerns about the holds used were identified, the lack of clear recording undermines the manager's ability to ensure that physical intervention is appropriately carried out and is proportionate. The discussions with the child after the event on one occasion were carried out by a person who was involved in the restraint. There is no written record to show the manager has reviewed the restraint to ensure that it has been used appropriately, and to explore any lessons learned.

One child smokes in their bedroom. Staff are clear about their response to concerns of this nature. They talk to the child about the dangers of using substances. They work with partner agencies such as the local police community support officer and make referrals to wider support services. Staff carry out room searches and confiscate illegal substances or items when found. However, room searches are not consistently recorded with all the required information.

The staff have recently developed and improved children's support plans. These are now clearer in respect of risks and vulnerabilities and provide strategies for staff to follow to reduce harm. These plans sometimes use child-blaming language, which is not helpful for children.

Staff are committed to supporting children. They show curiosity about their experiences and their safety and care about what is happening for them.

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

This new home has had some challenges. The manager is motivated to develop and improve the home and is able to identify some lessons learned. However, there are a number of shortfalls which have impacted on children's experiences.

The therapeutic model that is outlined in the home's statement of purpose is not yet evident in day-to-day practice. While there are plans for staff training in therapeutic approaches, this has yet to take place.

Staff have access to a variety of training. However, not all staff have completed training to meet the particular needs of the children, such as diabetes management. Furthermore, not all staff have received the same training in physical intervention. This means there is the potential for different approaches in time of crisis. While there are plans for staff to receive training in the near future, this has yet to take place.

The manager has not had sufficient oversight or maintained effective monitoring of the care and support provided to children. There is a lack of oversight of incidents and how these are managed. The manager has struggled with the recording systems and staff have not ensured that records are clearly maintained to a suitable standard. Senior leaders have an action plan to address these shortfalls, but this is new and the impact is not yet known.

Leaders and managers have taken action to address complaints by neighbours. Staff recognise how important it is for the children to feel a sense of belonging in their community and the importance that having positive relationships has on their sense of stability. Their efforts to resolve issues are ongoing.

Staff feel well supported by the manager and senior leaders.

Records to demonstrate safer recruitment processes are not thorough. Processes do not fully safeguard children from unsuitable people being employed. One member of staff was employed before a second written reference had been obtained, and copies of qualifications are not held on file.

## 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, The 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      |
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| <p>The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that—</p> <p>helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose;</p> <p>ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child;</p> <p>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(c)(h))</p> | 29 April 2025 |
| <p>The registered person must prepare and implement a policy ("the behaviour management policy") which sets out—</p> <p>how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the children's home; and</p> <p>the measures of control, discipline and restraint which may be used in relation to children in the home.</p> <p>The registered person must keep the behaviour management policy under review and, where appropriate, revise it.</p> <p>The registered person must ensure that—</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | 29 April 2025 |

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| <p>within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes—</p> <p>the name of the child;</p> <p>details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure;</p> <p>the date, time and location of the use of the measure;</p> <p>a description of the measure and its duration;</p> <p>details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure;</p> <p>the name of the person who used the measure ("the user"), and of any other person present when the measure was used;</p> <p>the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and</p> <p>a description of any injury to the child or any other person, and any medical treatment administered, as a result of the measure;</p> <p>within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")—</p> <p>has spoken to the user about the measure; and</p> <p>has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and</p> <p>within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure.</p> <p>(Regulation 35 (1)(a)(b) (2)<br/>(3)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(viii)(b)(i)(ii)(c)(iv))</p> |                      |
| <p>The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety.</p> <p>The registered person may only—</p> <p>employ an individual to work at the children's home; or</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <p>29 April 2025</p> |

if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home,

if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3).

The requirements are that—

the individual is of integrity and good character;

the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform;

the individual is mentally and physically fit for the purposes of the work that the individual is to perform; and

full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2.  
(Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3)(a)(b)(c)(d))

## Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the child is supported to regain their confidence in education and is engaged in suitable structured activities. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 28, paragraph 5.15)
- The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, accurate, up-to-date, objective and clear recording. Records should not use child-blaming and potentially stigmatising language. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)
- The registered person should ensure that they understand what will be required of them before they accept responsibility for a child's placement, to avoid disruption and instability for the child in future and for other children in the home. Furthermore, they should ensure that information is gathered from other relevant agencies and, if appropriate, the child's family with regard to children who may move into the home. This should include ensuring that delegated authority is accurately established at the earliest opportunity. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 56, paragraph 11.5)
- The registered person should ensure that a child who has been restrained should be given the opportunity to express their feelings about their experience of the restraint as soon as is practicable, ideally within 24 hours of the restraint incident, to someone

who is independent of the restraint. Children should be encouraged to add their views and comments to the record of restraint. Children should be offered the opportunity to access advocacy support to help them with this. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.60)

## **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:** 2798556

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** Brighter Stays Limited

**Registered provider address:** Bradshaw Johnson Chartered Accountants, 11 Bancroft, Hitchin SG5 1JQ

**Responsible individual:** Anthony Howell

**Registered manager:** Elizabeth Chisanga

## Inspector

Carrie Twinn, Social Care Inspector

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