

SC016600

Registered provider: Bridge Communities Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately run children's home provides care for up to five children who have experienced childhood trauma and have emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The registered manager has been in post since March 2007.

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 September 2025

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

Date of last inspection: 19 August 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
19/08/2024	Full	Good
05/09/2023	Full	Good
13/09/2022	Full	Good
14/09/2021	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

At the time of the inspection, three children were living in the home and the inspector spent time talking with them and observing their interactions with staff and their peers.

Children have positive relationships with staff and know that staff can be trusted and relied on. Children talk with staff about sensitive subjects and staff respond with empathy and care. Staff adopt a non-judgemental approach, while reiterating the importance of healthy boundaries, friendships and relationships.

Children generally have good experiences in this home. However, some incidents that have occurred outside of the home have negatively impacted children's safety and their physical and emotional health. Staff tactfully approach difficult conversations with children, reminding them that they are valued and entitled to respect and safety.

Staff support children to make progress by encouraging them to attend education, therapy and medical appointments. They also promote engagement with specialist services, such as drug and alcohol workers. Staff support children to express their views, wishes and feelings in ways that work for them, for example texting, keeping journals and talking. They help children to prepare for important meetings with professionals.

Two children are making good progress with their education. One child received an annual headteacher's award for their notable progress. Another child is struggling to engage with education due to their poor mental well-being. Staff have not made sufficient efforts to provide educational activities for this child.

Staff are committed to ensuring that children remain in contact with people who are important to them. They understand that supporting and strengthening family ties is important for children's identity and well-being. Staff are happy for family members to come to the home and spend time with children. Alternatively, they take children to meet their family in the community.

Four children have left the home since the last inspection. On two occasions, managers have ended children's placements because they were unable to meet children's needs and increasing risks were impacting the well-being of other children and the overall dynamics in the home. Some children who have moved out remain in contact with staff, phoning the home to talk with them or visiting the home to catch up in person.

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

Staff have a good understanding of children's lived experiences and how they influence their emotional well-being, perception and behaviour. They are familiar with the children's needs and vulnerabilities and how this makes them susceptible to risks. Staff

talk with children about these risks and highlight how they can stay safe online and in the community.

At times, children have been highly vulnerable and staff have responded by implementing appropriate risk mitigation strategies. However, despite staff's best efforts, these are not always impactful, and children have experienced harm while missing from home. In these instances, staff have responded with love and care, ensuring children's health needs are prioritised.

Staff respond appropriately when children go missing from home. They follow children when they leave the house and if they lose sight of them, they phone and text children on their mobiles. Staff try to anticipate where children might go and make efforts to intercept them at the local train station. They involve the British Transport Police and contact the local police station to report children missing. Staff also contact children's family members and friends.

There have been periods when children have been intolerant towards each other and this has resulted in tension. Staff have supported children through these periods, ensuring they all feel heard and helping them to forge improved relationships. Conversely, there have been periods when children have quickly bonded and developed unhealthy relationships that increased risk in the home. In these instances, staff interventions did not have the desired outcome and managers decided to end children's placements.

When children are overwhelmed and emotionally unsettled, staff encourage them to talk about their feelings, which helps them to calm. The staff are particularly skilled at this and, consequently, there have been no physical interventions since the last inspection.

Managers do not consistently follow safer recruitment practice when they employ staff. They do not always explore gaps in applicant's employment histories.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Children have been exposed to increased risks online and in the community. This has tested staff's resilience and skills. Managers and the staff have made good efforts to try and keep children safe. They have been proactive and vigilant and used an appropriate degree of curiosity to better understand children's lived experiences.

Managers and the staff are strong advocates for the children, and they support them to be brave in emotive and stressful situations, for example, speaking with the police and attending medical appointments. Staff have challenged other professionals when they believe they are falling short in their duties towards children.

The registered manager is committed to children and makes efforts to help them achieve placement stability. However, she also recognises when risks are too high and the home is unable to meet children's needs. On two occasions, the registered manager has

decided to end children's placements. These were proportionate decisions based on the presenting risks.

Staff receive meaningful support from the registered manager. For example, during difficult periods, the manager increases supervision sessions for staff, to explore their emotional well-being. The manager also facilitates meetings between children and staff to help them repair their relationships and to ensure that children's views are heard and acted on.

Some staff are struggling to complete relevant qualifications in a timely manner. However, this has not impacted their practice or their ability to build positive relationships with children.

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
The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— promote opportunities for each child to learn informally; help a child who is excluded from school, or who is of compulsory school age but not attending school, to access educational and training support throughout the period of exclusion or non-attendance and to return to school as soon as possible. (Regulation 8 (1) (2)(a)(v)(viii)(ix)(x)(b)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that staff make efforts to engage children in educational activities if they are not attending school.	1 December 2025
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children's home; or 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—	1 December 2025

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)(d))

In particular, the registered person must ensure that gaps in employment history are explored during the recruitment process.

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that staff complete the relevant qualification within the specified time frame. ('Guide to the Children's Home's Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.12) This recommendation has been repeated.

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: SC016600

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Bridge Communities Limited

Registered provider address: Unit 4, Enterprise Court, Downmill Road, Bracknell
RG12 1QS

Responsible individual: Joanne Scott

Registered manager: Sarah Womersley

Inspector

Tara Webb, Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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