

SC034211

Registered provider: Bristol City Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority children's home is registered for up to four children and young people of either gender who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home's current remit is to accept short-term and emergency admissions and to undertake focused work with young people for no longer than 16 weeks, but this is under review.

The home is taking part in the Home Office's national initiative to accommodate young unaccompanied asylum seekers. Since the previous inspection, the home has accommodated young people from Iran, Albania and Eritrea.

Inspection dates: 3 to 4 May 2017

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

requires improvement to be good

How well children and young people are helped and protected

requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

requires improvement to be good

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: 21 December 2016

Overall judgement at last inspection: Good

Enforcement action since last inspection: None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home requires improvement to be good because:

- There are serious omissions in some of the home's risk assessments. Risk assessments for the most recently admitted young people do not routinely evaluate risks of bullying, self-injurious behaviour and going missing.
- Two out of three of the staff recruitment files inspected lack a full employment history. In one case, there is only one reference. The files were not audited when the staff started work in this home.
- Although the home's nurturing, supportive approach has achieved good outcomes for young asylum seekers who have come from extremely low starting points, these achievements have not yet been replicated with a resident who shows much more complex emotional and behavioural difficulties. This means that some of the improvements made in recent months are not yet sufficiently robust or transferable.
- One young asylum seeker has been in the home for two weeks and has not yet had the opportunity to speak with someone in his own language. This has had an impact on his ability to express his views freely. It also means that the home does not have sufficient information about his history and current care needs.
- The manager and staff team lack clarity about the purpose of one placement. The lack of a recent psychological assessment, or any updated recommendations about the type of care required, means that the home's managers have not been able to make a fully-informed decision about whether the young person's needs can be met there.
- The home has not prepared adequate care plans and health care plans for some young people. Managers have not always been sufficiently timely or assertive in obtaining missing information from previous placements.
- Lack of accessible placement planning information and any clear strategies about how targets will be met makes it difficult to ensure that all staff are aware of the complexity of some young people's needs and how best to respond to them.
- Staff have not been able to maintain clear behavioural boundaries to ensure that there is a consistent approach to challenging behaviour. This conveys unhelpful messages to the young people and reduces the potential for them to learn from their behaviour.

The children's home's strengths:

- The manager and staff have worked very hard to implement the changes required after the inspections that took place in 2016. Consequently, the home has improved in all identified areas since that time.
- The registered manager and her staff are positive about improvement, and actioned some of the requirements from this inspection before the inspection was complete.
- The quality of the environment is now very good. The home provides a welcoming, comfortable environment which truly values the young people. Staff are enthusiastic about the home and want to improve it further.
- The experienced, dedicated and diverse staff team provides nurturing, supportive care for the young people, irrespective of their background, ethnicity, religious beliefs and other individual differences. Racist and homophobic attitudes are now rigorously challenged.
- The staff have achieved exceptionally good outcomes with a group of young asylum seekers who were resident in the home at the time of the last inspection. The home continues to work extremely well with another asylum-seeking young person who has been resident for some time. Outcomes for this young person are very positive.
- The staff and manager have achieved a sustained reduction in the number and severity of serious incidents. The young people are safe in the home and do not go missing, or engage in self-injurious behaviours. There has been no offending or antisocial behaviour for a substantial period of time.
- Staff are well qualified and are up to date with essential training. They feel motivated and supported in their work. The registered manager is planning a team day to help bring together staff from different homes who are now working on the same team.
- There have been improvements in leadership and management, including assertive resistance to referrals of young people who will not be a positive match with existing residents. Staff supervision, recording of supervision and management monitoring have also improved. There is still further work to do, but the manager now has more knowledge of the home's relative strengths and areas for development.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/12/2016	Full	Good
21/09/2016	Full	Inadequate
30/06/2016	Full	Inadequate
23/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

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 children's views, wishes and feelings standard 7.—(1) The children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who— (c) Take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— (a) ensure that staff— (i) ascertain and consider each child's views, wishes and feelings, and balance these against what they judge to be in the child's best interests when making decisions about the child's care and welfare; (ii) help each child to express views, wishes and feelings; (b) ensure that each child— (ii) has access to the home's children's guide, and the home's complaints procedure, when the child's placement in the home is agreed and throughout the child's stay in the home. This is with particular reference to ensuring that young people who have no knowledge of the English language have prompt access to an interpreter who can speak with them in their own language to establish their wishes, feelings and care needs.	30/06/2017
The leadership and management standard 13.—(1) The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— (a) helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and (b) Promotes their welfare. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— (a) 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;	30/06/2017

(b) ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate; (c) ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; (h) Use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. This is with particular reference to ensuring that: ■ When managers update risk assessments, they include all identified risks to the young people's or the staff's safety. Risk assessments should include, for example, the risks of bullying, self-harm (including negative relationships with food) and also, the risks of going missing. ■ Staff from different establishments work effectively together, informed by consultation with other professionals, to establish and maintain clear and consistent behavioural boundaries. ■ Any deficits in the young people's information and paperwork on file are identified and actioned promptly.	
Fitness of staff 32.—(1) The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. (2) The registered person may only— (a) employ an individual to work at the children's home if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). (3) The requirements are that— (d) full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. In particular, ensure that all staff working in the home have complete information on their files in relation to their full employment history. Also, ensure that all staff files contain two written references and all other documentary information in line with Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (3) and Schedule 2))	30/06/2017
Children's case records 36.—(1) The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which— (a) include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child; (b) are kept up to date; and (c) are signed and dated by the author of each entry.	30/06/2017

In particular, ensure that all children and young people in the home have case records that include all the information in Schedule 3. These records must be accessible to the young people concerned and to others who have a professional need to see them. (Regulation 36 (1) (a) (b) and (c))	
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Recommendations

- Ensure that expectations of standards of behaviour should be high for all staff and children in the home. These standards should be clear and unambiguous. Children should be supported to develop understanding and empathy towards each other. Positive behaviour and relationships should be reinforced, praised and encouraged; poor behaviour should be challenged and discussed. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 39, paragraph 8.11)

Inspection judgements

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

Over the last 11 months, senior managers, the registered manager and staff have worked extremely hard to improve the quality of care and the environment in the home. The improvements made resulted in a rating of good at the third full inspection of last year, which was held on 21 December 2016.

Although the home's current rating is 'requires improvement to be good', this does not mean that there has been any deterioration in the areas that have already improved. The home's rating has changed because the population of young people is now different and the home has not demonstrated that it can reliably provide the same very good level of care to all of the young people who currently live there. However, with some further work, this is achievable.

Three out of the four very settled, cooperative and highly motivated young people who lived in the home during the last inspection have now moved on into their own accommodation. These young people received exceptionally good care in relation to very low starting points. For example, they were able to access healthcare provision that had not been available to them while in refugee holding camps overseas. They were helped to access education, probably for the first time in many years. These young people were also linked to the city's asylum seekers' team, which meant that they were able to access resources that were helpful to them as they adjusted to life in the United Kingdom. Although their care planning information was basic, this was to be expected for young people who had arrived in crisis from another country.

The fourth young person who was resident at the home in December is still living there. He is now 18 and continues to make very good progress. This young adult has now completed his second year in college, studying English. His language skills have improved, he cooks for himself and he has experienced working in a barber's shop. The staff have provided very good help and support to enable this young man to progress towards a supported lodging placement. He is due to move on later this month.

In addition to this young man, the home now looks after two new young people. One of the new residents is a very recent arrival from Albania. This young person was admitted in an emergency, after he walked into a police station to seek help. He has been resident for two weeks. He has not yet had access to an interpreter face to face, although he has used telephone translation services and a computer programme to help him communicate with the staff. This has a potentially serious impact on his ability to express his needs freely. Electronic methods are useful, but do not allow staff to pick up subtle nuances in communication.

The limited placement planning documentation on this young person's file was completed with the help of a telephone translation service. The staff have very little knowledge of his educational history, healthcare needs or cultural and religious beliefs. Consequently, there is a theoretical risk that this young person's needs may not be met.

In addition, the young person has not had access to the children's guide to the home, because it has not been translated into, or explained to him, in his own language. As it is available electronically, this could easily be done through an online translation programme. This young person is entitled to the same level of service as previous asylum seekers who have lived in the home, who had regular access to an interpreter. The registered manager has now requested an interpreter, in response to this inspection. A requirement has been made.

Some outcomes for this young person have been positive. The staff have worked hard to help him to settle in the home and find activities that he enjoys. During the inspection, a member of staff was asked to take him to register at a local community centre, where he will be able to access English lessons as well as other educational resources and legal advice. He has started to enjoy some activities with the staff, such as running and playing snooker, and has been taken to local resources to find help and support.

The other young person who was admitted to the home since the last inspection has been resident for three and a half months. She is a local child who has been looked after for 18 months, mostly outside her home area. This young person has suffered some very traumatic experiences and, consequently, has particularly complex needs. Her outcomes are variable because although some aspects of her life have improved, there is little evidence at present that the home is able to meet her very specific needs.

There is a great deal of information about this young person recorded on the local authority's electronic records system, but the staff have not drawn this information together to construct an effective working care plan or risk assessment to keep on a paper file in the home. For example, there is insufficient information in her risk

assessments and care plan, and there is no healthcare plan on file.

In discussion, some staff seemed unclear about what records were on the local authority's system, how the young person came to be looked after and details of her history in care. The home urgently needs care planning information, including a healthcare plan that all staff and the young person can access easily, read and sign.

Although permanent staff members can access the social work records, any casual staff, who do not have their own computer log-ins, would not be able to do so. In addition, computer failure would mean that there would be very little information on file for any of the staff, or the young person herself, to access.

Although senior managers have considered a comprehensive electronic records system for the residential services, no decision has been made about introducing this. Although the local authority is officially 'paperless', residential services have to comply with the Children's Homes Regulations, and this means that some material has to be printed out and filed, in line with Schedule 3.

The lack of a healthcare plan has already had an impact on this young person's care. A local optician declined to see her because there was no accessible information about when and where she had last been assessed. The inspector suggested obtaining this information from a previous placement, and this was actioned during the inspection. The staff had not been sufficiently assertive or timely in seeking this for themselves. A requirement has been made.

This young person's educational outcomes have been poor, but this is not the fault of the home. She was attending school 93% of the time prior to becoming looked after in November 2015, but since then, has not been in regular education. This is due to the number of placement disruptions and moves around the country. Some of her previous placements have not passed on relevant education and other important information to the social worker or the home. The staff have consulted with the young person, and in response to their request have tried on several occasions to introduce them into mainstream school. This was not successful due to the young person's emotional difficulties.

Tuition is now being arranged, but the young person has only been offered five hours. The inspector was told that a lack of local tutors and the Easter break, followed by exam commitments, has contributed to the lack of educational provision for this young person. No requirement has been made in relation to education, because these challenges have been beyond the home's control and the staff have done their best to help support the young person back into school.

Some outcomes for this young person have been positive. For example:

- There has been no risk-taking behaviour since she arrived in the home.
- The young person has been trusted to have carefully managed periods of free

time with her friend and plan a meal out with her and her family. This contact with her friend has gone well and the young person has kept in contact with staff and has been reliable when asked to be ready to be collected.

- This young person was previously restrained several times a day, but since arriving in this home, there has only been one simple escort-type intervention.
- The young person has started to warn the staff when she needs space to help her to regulate her own emotions. Consequently, she does not have as many outbursts as she did on arrival.
- The young person has been supported to attend a local youth club to see whether any of their activities appealed to her.
- She is also learning to use public transport and is managing her own budget well.
- She is still in placement three months after arrival, whereas before admission she had multiple placements in a short period of time.

The social worker is very pleased with the young person's progress in the home and says that this is the most settled period that she has had in recent months.

The managers and staff have continued to update the accommodation to provide a modern, comfortable home. The accommodation is now domestic in style and provides a vastly improved environment for the young people. Since the last inspection on 21 December 2016, new domestic-style doors have been fitted, which have further enhanced the home's presentation. The home has received a number of interested visitors from other establishments, and the registered manager is justifiably proud of what she and the staff have achieved. The manager commented, 'Everyone is green with envy about our doors!'

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

The home has weaknesses in risk assessment, behaviour management and staff recruitment documentation. These have not had a negative impact on the young people's welfare and safety, but if not actioned, they have the potential to do so.

Before they came to this home, some young people were taking serious risks, such as self-injurious behaviour and going missing. It is very positive that some of these behaviours have not manifested themselves recently, but it was premature to remove the record of these previous problems from the risk assessment altogether, as though they had never happened. These potential risks should still be included, but with a comment

that they are not a current issue for the young person.

Risks associated with young people making allegations have not been cross-referenced with the need to follow the local authority's safeguarding procedures. Currently, to counter allegations, staff rely on there being a witness to every incident. This is not realistic, because some young people are taken out in the car by lone members of staff. This places those staff at risk of exposure to allegations which cannot easily be refuted.

In addition, the risk assessment does not include some developing behaviours, for example bullying, and attempts to exert control over situations and staff through a preoccupation with food. As a result, there are no clear strategies for the staff team to follow and it is essential that the risk assessment for the young person concerned includes these details. The registered manager acted on this during the inspection. A requirement has been made.

A lack of clear behavioural strategies has contributed to recent situations where staff have not been able to maintain boundaries. One young person has been allowed to take control on occasion, which does not help to increase her sense of security. The young person asked to be shown an empty bedroom, and when the staff member unlocked it the young person moved into it without permission. The risk assessment for this child does not give clear direction with regard to strategies that should be used to manage this sort of behaviour safely. Differences in the behaviour management styles within the staff team allowed this development to go unchallenged. By the time the manager became aware of it, it was too late to intervene. The young person has effectively been 'rewarded' for inappropriate behaviour.

It will now be even more difficult to set boundaries in the future, but the home must find a way to do so in order to help this young person to make progress. The staff team has a fortnightly consultation with a psychological service, and the manager said that they would make use of this resource to develop clear strategies for managing different scenarios. The registered manager has organised a team day for the near future, which aims to bring the staff together to review how they manage certain behaviours.

Discussion took place about whether it was productive to request police attendance on one occasion, for what was an unpleasant, but ultimately a fairly low-level incident. The staff do not want young people to be criminalised, but were understandably wary of the situation escalating further. They requested the police in case matters deteriorated, rather than because they actually did deteriorate. There needs to be clarity, in consultation with the police, about appropriate use of their resources.

The staff were concerned by the speed at which the incident escalated, and thought that it would escalate further. Discussion took place with the registered manager about using the home's consultation service to review with the staff how the serious incidents that took place with some previous residents last year have had an impact on them as a team. For example, one of their colleagues was very seriously assaulted and has only just returned to work. Unless the staff feel fully confident in managing unpredictable and very physical behaviours, they may be vulnerable to further harmful incidents, as well as

stress and anxiety.

Some of the home's risk management is good. For example, there are effective risk assessments in place for the impact of young people on each other, the home's location and risks of fire.

The home has behavioural management plans in place for the young people. The plan does say that supine restraints may be used as a last resort, under extreme circumstances. No prone or supine holds have actually taken place in the home, but both these methods have the potential to impede young people's breathing. The home may wish to review this advice to staff. An inaccurate reference to Ofsted within the behaviour management strategy, in relation to supine restraints, was removed at the inspector's request.

It is very positive that there has been only one physical intervention since the last inspection. This occurred because a young person refused to leave the office and had to be gently escorted to the door.

The home has had no formal complaints, but there has been a steady stream of criticisms raised by a minority of young people, all of which, so far, have been very easily refuted. It would not be beneficial to the young people to classify these as formal complaints, but they do need to be recorded and monitored closely to ensure that there is no pattern emerging. The home has worked well with other professionals who have taken these concerns at face value, to advise them of the correct situation. The local authority has a robust formal complaints procedure which the young people may access if necessary.

Three staff recruitment files were inspected and are generally well organised. The staff concerned have worked for the local authority for many years and were recruited by managers at other homes. In two out of the three files seen, there was an incomplete employment history. One member of staff had only one reference in place. Both staff had been employed by the local authority for many years, but their appointments were after the implementation of the Children's Homes Regulations and Schedule 2, so the files should have complied. A requirement has been made.

New young people are inducted into the fire evacuation procedures, but there has not been a routine drill involving everyone in the home since December. There were two fire drills in that month, so the home has had the recommended four drills in the past year. The last night-time drill was held in November, which is also within the recommended 12-month timeframe. Discussion took place about the possibility of spreading fire drills more evenly through the year.

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

Leadership and management requires improvement to be good, because the previously-mentioned shortfalls in documenting young people's care requirements and updating risk

assessments were not identified and actioned before this inspection. There have been improvements in other aspects of the home's management, for example, in supervision recording and training monitoring.

The local authority has a 'paperless' policy, but this cannot be rigidly applied to residential services where not all of the staff have access to online information. Whereas field social work staff have an electronic records system to which the residential homes have access, the homes themselves do not currently have an electronic records system. Until such a system is put in place, the printed records in the home should comply with regulation 36 and schedule 3 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2015. The registered manager said that the home is to take part in a pilot study to evaluate an electronic recording system.

In the meantime, the home should have printed off and on file the current key documents that relate to each child, such as a detailed care plan, healthcare plan, chronology, education plan, education reports and a pathway plan, when applicable.

The home has a very experienced registered manager who holds a management qualification at level 4. She is currently undertaking level 5, although the challenges of the past year within the home have meant that slow progress has been made.

One very experienced member of staff has left, and the manager is currently recruiting. This means that the home is still not fully staffed, although with three young people in residence, there are sufficient staff on duty each day to manage their needs safely. This represents a huge improvement in comparison with the first two inspections of 2016.

The local authority continues to review and improve its residential staffing strategy. The inspector was told that the system of peripatetic staff proved too inflexible and has therefore been replaced with a plan for an additional 0.5 whole time equivalent permanent post for each of the homes.

Staff supervision has improved considerably over the past year. There have been recent pressures on the management team due to staff being relocated to help another service. This has had an impact on management time available. Supervision sessions tend to be every six weeks rather than monthly, but they do take place and staff feel well supported. Staff supervision notes have also improved considerably. They now reflect the content of the meeting to provide accountability and effective scrutiny. Team meetings have been held regularly and the registered manager has arranged a team day for the near future.

Staff training provision is good and continues to improve. In comparison with last year, the registered manager now has much more effective systems in place to track this for her own staff. It has proved more challenging to identify training needs for some staff who have transferred to the home from other homes in the local authority's estate, but the manager is working on this to ensure that she has a complete record of her staff's training needs.

All staff now hold a qualification at level 3 in the care of children and young people. It is good that one of the registered manager's shortlisting criteria is that applicants must already hold a qualification at level 3.

At the time of this inspection, the home's remit was to provide a crisis intervention service for young people for up to 16 weeks and prepare them for their next steps, whether into longer-term care or into independence. On the first day of the inspection, senior managers met to decide whether this remit should continue. A decision was reached that the home would change its function to become a longer-term resource. This will require a change to the statement of purpose, but it does not affect the home's conditions of registration.

The registered manager has become more confident in challenging the commissioning team appropriately and when necessary. She has resisted the admission of several other young people on the grounds that they would not be a suitable mix, which is very positive. This is an improvement on the home's situation a year ago, when there appeared to be little choice about who was admitted.

At the previous full inspection in December 2016, the home had one remaining requirement under the leadership and management quality standard. This was because care planning documents were not always kept up to date, and as a result the manager had not been aware of an important safeguarding development. Although this inspection has shown that there are still problems with the quality of internal care planning documents, the particular concern that led to this requirement being made has been actioned.

The overall quality of management monitoring continues to improve, with the exception of the omissions noted above. The manager conducts regular weekly, monthly and six-monthly reviews of care to contribute towards her regulation 45 reports.

The home receives monthly visits from an independent person. The resulting reports are well written and help to drive the home's improvements. Although several senior managers have assured the inspector that the reports for all the local authority's services have been sent to Ofsted, there is no objective evidence that they were sent, because the original emails are inaccessible. No requirement has been made on this occasion, but it would be advisable to retain proof of submission in future.

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 difference 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 who 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: SC034211

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Bristol City Council, Director of Legal Services, City Hall, College Green, BRISTOL BS1 5TR

Responsible individual: James Beardall

Registered manager: Patricia Harding

Inspector(s)

Heather Chaplin, social care inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Text phone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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