

SC034211

Bristol City Council

Monitoring visit.

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 who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Since the interim inspection on 5 October 2017, the home has changed its statement of purpose to enable longer-term placements to take place, in addition to emergency placements.

Inspection date: 28 November 2017

This monitoring visit

At the interim inspection on 5 October 2017, the home was found to have declined in effectiveness. The serious shortfalls found were included in a compliance notice under the leadership and management quality standard. Five requirements and one recommendation were made. This monitoring visit has been carried out to assess progress against the compliance notice issued on 11 October 2017.

Some progress has been made in the seven weeks since the interim inspection. Two of the three children and young people who were living in the home at that time have moved into foster care. This was a positive development, because it was in line with the young people's wishes.

The remaining child, who struggles with living with others, was on his own in the home for a short period. Without other children present, he began to engage with the staff team. His behaviour started to show some improvement, which was good. Another young person was then placed in the home. This triggered a sharp deterioration in both individuals' behaviour.

The new young person's arrival coincided with the registered manager's departure. The registered manager left her substantive role on 16 October 2017. She remains

involved with the home in a supportive capacity, and she was present during this monitoring visit. However, her new role means that she is no longer in day-to-day control of this home.

As the registered manager's post has now been vacant for over 28 days, senior managers have been advised that they must consider who will be managing the home in the medium and longer term. This may mean applying to register a new manager, even if the current registered manager decides to return after her secondment.

A new acting manager has been appointed to lead the home. She is an experienced, qualified member of staff who has worked for many years at another home within the local authority. She is not yet in a position to know whether she can apply to be registered for this home.

The home has not yet met all the elements of the compliance notice issued on 11 October 2017.

1. There is a continuing shortage of staff. At the interim inspection, there had been problems in recruiting staff of sufficient quality to fill vacant posts.

Since then, the home's managers have recruited two new staff members. One person is currently on her induction. The second new member of staff is starting in January. This person is designated to work on the Staying Close project.

Two members of the team have been off sick since May 2017. A third person has been off sick for approximately two months. During the monitoring visit, two other staff were also off sick for a short period. This means that although some progress has been made in terms of appointing new staff, this element of the compliance notice is not met.

2. The use of agency and casual staff.

At the interim inspection, the shortage of substantive staff resulted in the use of casual and agency staff. This remains the case.

These staff do not always know the children well. They are not always able to manage the children and young people's complex behaviours. This places more pressure on the substantive team, because there are important tasks that casual and agency staff are not able to perform. This means that they are not equivalent to substantive staff in terms of their flexibility. This element of the compliance notice is not met.

3. At the interim inspection, two children had been placed in the home in emergencies, against the registered manager's advice.

Since the interim inspection, there have been no further admissions contrary to the

impact risk assessment. The registered manager, before she moved into her secondment, turned down a number of possible referrals on the grounds that the young people would not mix well with the existing resident. Although this is positive so far, due to the pressures on the local authority to find placements urgently, there is no guarantee that the same situation will not arise in the future.

4. The children in the home at the time of the interim inspection were not a good match with existing residents. This led to a number of serious incidents.

Some of the young people who lived in the home during the last inspection have moved on. There is now another very serious situation in the home.

Just after the new acting manager arrived in post, she was asked to consider a new referral to the home. She carried out a detailed risk assessment. All professionals involved were consulted and agreed that the new young person should be admitted. The young person was introduced to the home well.

It rapidly became clear that this young person had very considerable difficulties with the existing child in the home. The children and young people's behaviour escalated rapidly. This has resulted in some very serious incidents, described below. One senior manager described the young person's behaviour as going 'from nought to 100' within a couple of days.

There have been serious incidents in the home, some of which were hazardous to children and staff. For example, there have been sustained attacks on the staff. Serious damage has occurred. Both of the children and young people have gone missing during the last four weeks. One child has asked to leave the house in the early hours of the morning to obtain cigarettes. The staff did not feel able to stop him from doing so, as a good parent would.

One young person has stayed out overnight when missing. She was subjected to a serious sexual assault on one of the occasions when she was away from the home. This was a devastating experience for her, which could have a lasting impact.

The same young person received a phone call just before midnight, then asked to be let outside. The staff intervened when they saw her get into a car with a young man who was unknown to them. They called the police and tried to persuade the young person to return to the home.

The children and young people compete with each other and fight on a regular basis. They have also carried out attacks on the staff and done a great deal of damage. During the monitoring visit, the inspector asked for one of the four communal rooms to be locked temporarily, due to it containing a broken power socket and exposed wires. This was repaired during the visit and the room was reopened. Plastic ducting covering electrical cabling had been removed. This was also replaced during the visit, but the cables need to be chased in for safety.

Both the children and young people's vulnerability and behaviours place them at considerable risk of harm. The acting manager tried to implement a plan to keep them separate, but could not do so because there were not enough substantive staff available to manage both in different activities. This underlines the importance of having a sufficient number of permanent staff members.

Senior managers have reinforced the staff team with a third person on shift between 10am and 10pm. As both children and young people are on one-to-one staffing, this, in theory, should be sufficient. In practice, it is not. The children and young people sometimes wait for the third person to go home and then their behaviour escalates.

The senior managers also put in waking night staff. This had to be stopped when those staff became targets for some of the children and young people's negative behaviours.

Permanent staff members said that this level of support would be more effective if the additional staff put into the home were in substantive posts and were not casual or agency staff. Some children and young people's behaviour escalates in response to having people who they do not know in the home.

It is now an urgent priority to separate the two young people. Senior leaders, residential staff and the practice manager for both social workers all agree that they are not safe together. In spite of concerted efforts, the local authority has not yet managed to identify a suitable placement for one of the young people, so that this plan can be put into place. This element of the compliance notice is not met.

5. At the interim inspection, one child, who had been placed in an emergency, had to be given a room with a broken fire-door closure.

At the monitoring visit, this door remained in need of repair, but the home has not admitted any more children to this room. One of the staff members' sleeping-in room doors also now has a damaged fire closure, caused by the children and young people kicking it during an incident. The registered person must ensure that these fire safety measures are repaired.

6. Staff recruitment files

Although not part of the compliance notice, the inspector examined a staff file for a recent recruit to the staff team. At the interim inspection, staff recruitment files lacked important documents to provide full background information about some applicants. This file lacks a full employment history, and there is no certificate of good conduct from the staff member's home country.

The impact of the lack of a certificate of good conduct is reduced by the fact that this person has lived in this country for a long period of time, but the lack of employment history has been raised repeatedly in successive inspections. The requirement has been repeated.

7. The staffing situation has had a knock-on effect on management monitoring, supervision and updating key documents including care plans and risk assessments.

At the time of this monitoring visit, the acting manager had been in her new role for about four weeks. There are very positive aspects to her practice. She is ambitious, enthusiastic and fully committed to the home. She has already re-established supervision for the staff team. All the staff currently working in the home, other than those on sickness absence, received supervision during October.

The acting manager has improved the care planning documents for both children and young people. They are now much more detailed. They are up to date, although it would be useful to have the last review date recorded on the front of each plan. The registered manager suggested this during the monitoring visit and said that she would add this information.

Risk assessments have also improved. They now include past areas of risk. The risk assessments still require further work, because they do not contain a description of the child's behaviour, but they are much better than they were at the full inspection in May.

This element of the compliance notice is not yet met, so the requirement under Regulation 36 has been repeated, with some amendments to reflect the progress made.

At the interim inspection, the home's statement of purpose was out of date and did not reflect the needs of the children placed there. This was amended and sent to Ofsted. The new statement of purpose now accurately describes the service that the home offers. This element of the compliance notice is met.

Three out of the five requirements have been repeated, as has the recommendation from the last inspection. The local authority's senior leaders have been made fully aware of Ofsted's views about the seriousness of the situation for the children and young people in this home.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
04/10/2017	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
03/05/2017	Full	Requires improvement
21/12/2016	Full	Good
21/09/2016	Full	Inadequate

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
13: The leadership and management standard* 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 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; ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child; understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home; demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on research and developments in relation to the ways in which the needs of children are best met; and feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received; and 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 there are sufficient staff in the children's home to care for the children and to allow enough management time for the registered manager's tasks to be completed. The registered person must ensure that the use of agency staff is kept to a minimum. They must continue to work towards appointing sufficient permanent staff to allow for seasonal variations in staff availability, sickness and other	03/01/2018

factors. The registered person must ensure that all staff asked to work with children who have complex needs have the skills to do so safely. The staff must work together as a team to ensure that children receive consistent care. The registered person should take urgent steps to separate children whose behaviour, when they are together, places them and others at risk. The registered person should ensure that all fire doors have properly functioning closure devices. (Regulation 13 (1) and (2))	
32: Fitness of workers 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 if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that 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 all other documentary information in line with Schedule 2. Ensure that staff who have lived overseas have a certificate of good conduct from those countries. (Regulation 32 (3) and Schedule 2)).	03/01/2018
36: Children's case records 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; are kept up to date; and are signed and dated by the author of each entry. In particular, ensure that all children have case records that show when updates have taken place. Also, ensure that risk assessments describe what the child actually does that may be hazardous. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c)).	03/01/2018

*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendations

- 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 home regulations including the quality standards', paragraph 8.11)

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this visit was to monitor the action taken and the progress made by the children's home since its last Ofsted inspection.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC034211

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Bristol City Council

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

Responsible individual: James Beardall

Registered manager: Patricia Harding

Inspector:

Heather Chaplin, social care inspector

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