

SC034301

Registered provider: Bristol City Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is operated by a local authority and is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to five young people who have emotional and/or behavioural care needs.

Inspection dates: 14 to 15 June 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

inadequate

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: 29 July 2016

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement

Enforcement action since last inspection

None

Key findings from this inspection

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

- The statement of purpose for the home does not clearly state what the purpose

of the home is intended to be. The home is providing both long-term and emergency short-term placements for young people. This is unsettling for the young people.

- Leaders and managers fail to ensure that all of the young people have up-to-date and clear placement plans and pathway plans in place. Staff give inconsistent messages and care to the young people as they lack clear guidance and direction.
- The management structure in the home is ineffective. It does not ensure that if the registered manager is absent there are clear lines of management in place. This means that key tasks such as planning for a new young person's arrival are not completed. This leads to inappropriate admissions, young people being admitted without placement plans in place and young people not receiving a guide to the home.
- The manager occasionally uses agency staff in the event of staff sickness. The manager does not ensure that thorough checking of the recruitment records held by the agency takes place. This means that the manager cannot be sure that the agency staff are suitable to work in the home.
- The manager does not assess the impact of new arrivals effectively. This has led to an inappropriate mix of young people living with each other in the home. Consequently, young people have been criminalised and led into risk-taking behaviour by others.
- One internal door in the home is locked at night. This is because the electronic system in this room links to the fob-operated front door, which has yet to be replaced. This arrangement is not homely.
- The manager has not implemented an effective development plan for the home that clearly documents the home's strengths and further areas for improvement.
- Recording systems are chaotic and many records are not kept up to date.

The children's home's strengths:

- The staff establish long-term trusting relationships with the young people in their care. Young people who have left the home return to visit, and maintain links with the home. The staff successfully provide stability and safety to young people who have no family support.
- Two young people made good progress during their long-term placements at the home. They have recently succeeded in moving to their own independent accommodation and are continuing to make good progress.
- The young people commented positively about the staff team and could list areas of their lives that have improved since they moved into the home. One young person said, 'I don't go missing much anymore. I have learned it is not a good thing to do.'
- The staff are vigilant and intervene effectively if they have any concerns about

the safety of a young person.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
29/07/2016	Full	Requires improvement
31/05/2016	Full	Inadequate
17/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
08/09/2015	Full	Good

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
Ensure that no measure of control which is excessive is used in relation to any child. In particular, ensure that internal downstairs rooms are not locked at any time and that locks are removed from the doors (Regulation 19(1))	07/07/2017
Ensure that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are in the range of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation. In particular, ensure that a comprehensive impact risk assessment is undertaken prior to a child being admitted to the home to ensure that the mix of children is appropriate (Regulation 14(2)(a))	07/07/2017
Ensure that staff understand and apply the home's statement of purpose. In particular, that the statement of purpose clearly states the aims of the home and whether it provides long term or short term care for young people (Regulation 6(2)(i))	07/07/2017
Ensure that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that understands 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 (Regulation 13(2)(f))	07/07/2017
Ensure that the staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child. In particular, ensure that recruitment records and qualifications of any agency staff employed at the home are scrutinised by the manager to ensure they are suitable to work in the home (Regulation 13(2)(c))	07/07/2017

Recommendations

- Ensure that the home provides a homely and domestic environment that seeks to provide a 'domestic' rather than 'institutional' appearance. In particular, ensure that the bathrooms and the front door are refurbished to reduce their institutional appearance. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

- Ensure that each child is given, as soon as is reasonably practicable after a child's admission, a children's guide. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 24, paragraph 4.21)

Inspection judgements

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

The young people at the home do not have up-to-date and clear placement and pathway plans in place. Their current targets and progress are not documented. It is difficult to establish how much progress they have made. The staff are inconsistent in their approach to caring for the young people as they lack the information they need to ensure consistency in their approach. There is little evidence that the manager actively pursues the placing authority for the plans.

Young people are not always admitted to the home following careful planning. One young person was recently admitted to the home and did not receive a welcome pack or children's guide. Important documents such as placement plans and health care information were not obtained prior to their admission to the home. This meant that the staff did not have the appropriate information about the young person's health care and medication needs, and whether they should be taking their prescribed medication.

A strength of the home is the trusting relationships that young people form with the staff. Staff know each young person well, have high aspirations for them and encourage them to do well. The young people develop a sense of permanence which means that even when they leave the home many return to see the staff and share what they are doing in their lives.

The staff promote education and job seeking. One young person has successfully obtained employment. The staff supported them to learn how to write a curriculum vitae and distribute it to potential employers. Other young people are undertaking GCSE examinations, and staff are preparing to help them to apply for an apprenticeship when they leave school. The staff stress to the young people the importance of obtaining qualifications and getting a job. Given that many of the young people refused to attend education or seek employment prior to living at the home, all of them have made good progress.

The staff succeed in establishing effective links with the families of the young people. One young person is building a relationship with their parent, which had completely broken down prior to them being admitted to the home. These relationships help to keep young people safe when they go missing.

The young people learn independent living skills with the support of the staff. They are encouraged to learn to cook, tidy their rooms and do their laundry. Since the previous inspection two young people reached the age of 18 and moved out of the home to their own flats. The moves were managed well by the staff. Both young people are

succeeding in living independently, having made good progress in all areas of their lives following a long-term stay at the home.

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

A recent inappropriate admission of a young person to the home resulted in other young people feeling unsafe. The young person was eventually placed at another home. This took some time to happen due to the difficulty the placing authority had in finding an alternative. The staff struggled to manage the behaviour of the young people. Young people say that the concerns they voiced to staff about the impact this young person made on them were not listened to. This resulted in the young people making a complaint to the manager and calling the police. One young person has consequently been criminalised and charged with four offences.

Agency staff are occasionally used to cover staff absence in the home. The manager relies on the recruitment checks undertaken by the agency. These checks are not scrutinised to ensure that the agency staff are suitable to work in the home.

One downstairs room in the home continues to be locked at night. The manager states that this is because the mechanism that operates the front door through key fobs is located there. She is concerned that the young people may open the door at night and let people into the home. There has been no assessment to establish whether this is the safest course of action.

The young people said that since one young person has moved out of the home, they now feel safe. All of the young people could identify a member of staff that they could always speak to if they felt worried or unsafe.

Young people do not go missing as often as they used to. When they do, the staff take effective steps to try to find them. Risks to the young people are understood and acted on. There are effective and established links with the local police and other groups such as BASE, which is an organisation that supports young people who are victims of child sexual exploitation. One young person said 'staff always look for me.' Safeguarding incidents are followed up properly. Referrals are promptly made to the relevant professionals to ensure the safety of the young people.

The use of physical restraint in the home is rare. Staff promote positive behaviour through incentive plans and praise. If a young person makes a mistake, this is discussed in a key-worker session to help the young person learn from it. A restorative justice approach is used to address conflicts between the young people, or when they damage the home. This helps young people to learn the consequences of their actions, and helps them learn how to resolve conflict and to understand that repairing damage costs money.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The registered manager is experienced and is due to complete the level 5 qualification in leadership and management this month.

However, there has been a period of instability in the home. The manager has had a period of absence. Due to plans and documents not being up to date and chaotic recording systems, staff lacked clear direction or leadership during this period. One of the assistant managers has been absent for an extended period and there has been a high level of staff sickness. Two young people who had long-term placements at the home left the home to live independently, and inappropriate new placements were made. During the manager's absence, senior managers decided to admit a young person to the home whose behaviour staff were unable to manage, and who had a negative impact on the other young person in the home.

It is not clear who is to take on a leadership and management role in the absence of the manager and assistant manager. This results in no member of staff taking overall responsibility to ensure the smooth running of the home, and to ensure that plans and documentation are in place, up to date and clearly document the progress of the young people. One member of staff said, 'When the manager is off it doesn't work.' Without the up-to-date placement plans and pathway plans, staff lack direction and consistency in their approach to working with the young people, who commented, 'The staff don't talk to each other. They should have more meetings. Some staff say bedtime is one time and other staff say different.'

The quality of care provided in the home is not monitored. There is no development plan in place that identifies the strengths and areas for improvement. The manager can state what she would like to achieve, but this is not documented or shared with the staff. Monthly monitoring visits are undertaken by an independent person. A robust and challenging report is produced as a result of these visits, and actions are set. It is notable that in the most recent report the independent visitor highlighted that actions were not met in a timely way, due to the absence of the manager.

The statement of purpose for the home is not clear. It is a very generic document and is not individualised for the home. It does not state whether the home provides long- or short-term emergency placements for young people. This has resulted in young people who have been in the home for some time being disrupted by the emergency placement of other young people who just stay for two days. When young people are admitted, due to no one member of staff taking responsibility or having accountability for tasks, they do not always receive a welcome pack and the children's guide to the home.

The staff report that they feel well supervised and trained. Training matrices demonstrate that all the staff have received training in areas such as first aid, physical intervention and safeguarding. All the staff are qualified to level 3. Many of the staff

have worked at the home for a number of years, thereby providing consistency and continuity to past and present young people.

Placing social workers comment that the home communicates regularly and effectively with them. One placing social worker said, 'It is easy to speak with managers. There is good communication and staff are welcoming and helpful.'

Recent refurbishment means that the appearance of the home is much improved, and it is now generally homely and well decorated. One young person said, 'the home looks the best it has ever done.' Budget restrictions by the local authority, who operate the home, means that the planned work to replace the front door, which is operated by key fobs and is of an institutional appearance, has not been completed. The planned work to refurbish the bathrooms is also on hold. The manager is hopeful that these improvements can be undertaken in this financial year.

The staff have developed positive relationships with neighbours, and regularly communicate with them. Due to these established relationships, a recent incident when a neighbour's car was damaged by a young person did not result in a complaint but was settled through an amicable resolution.

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 differences 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 whom 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: SC034301

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: Emma Hood

Inspector(s)

Tina Maddison, social care inspector

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