

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC034301
Inspector	Clare Davies
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Bristol City Council
Registered person address	Bristol City Council, Director of Legal Services City Hall, College Green BRISTOL BS1 5TR
Responsible individual	Karen Mary Gazzard
Registered manager	Emma Carole Hood
Date of last inspection	05/02/2014

Inspection date	24/10/2014
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Previous inspection	satisfactory progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	The home has not been subject to any enforcement action since the last inspection.

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	adequate
Outcomes for children and young people	adequate
Quality of care	good
Keeping children and young people safe	adequate
Leadership and management	adequate

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	adequate
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The overall judgement of adequate is a reflection of a difficult period when young people experienced bullying in this home. Monitoring reports lacked detail at the time of these incidents and leaders and managers were slow to take action to address this problem. The situation has significantly improved and there are a number of strengths that provide young people with a good quality of care. Young people are safe and generally they have positive views about living in this home. Social workers and other professionals report on how well this home meets the individual needs of young people.

A significant strength of this home is the relationships between young people, the staff and the manager. These attachments enable young people to talk with staff and raise issues of concern. Young people are cared for by staff who are genuinely interested in them, and are concerned for their safety and well-being. The staff team have a good understanding of safeguarding procedures and work effectively with other agencies. The staff team are enthusiastic about their work and feel supported through supervision and training.

Ofsted received an anonymous complaint about this home, the concerns raised

within the complaint formed key lines of enquiry through this inspection. The experienced manager has a development plan to maintain the strengths of the home and tackle areas of weakness. Shortfalls from this inspection include a lack of effective measures to counter bullying behaviour, lack of robust reporting by the independent person and the need to complete the refurbishment of the kitchen.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This home is one of a number of children's homes operated by a local authority. The home provides care and accommodation for up to five young people who may be experiencing emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/02/2014	Interim	satisfactory progress
25/07/2013	Full	good
13/03/2013	Interim	good progress
07/11/2012	Full	adequate

What does the children's home need to do to improve further?

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
16 (2001)	prepare and implement a written policy for the prevention of bullying in the children's home, which shall in particular set out the procedure for dealing with an allegation of bullying (Regulation 16 (4)(a))	30/11/2014
16 (2001)	prepare and implement a missing child policy. In particular, ensure the policy reflects the latest guidance from the government (Regulation 16 (4)(b))	31/12/2014
33 (2001)	ensure that the independent person, when carrying out a visit, shall interview, with their consent and in private, such of the children accommodated there, their parents, relatives or persons working there in	30/11/2014

	order to form an opinion as to whether children accommodated at the children's home are effectively safeguarded. (Regulation 33 (8)(a)(i))	
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Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that children do not identify bullying as a problem at the home. Staff and children understand bullying is unacceptable. Staff working in the home understand their role in helping to prevent and counter bullying by any adult or child living or working in the home (NMS 3.11)
- ensure that the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated. In particular, refurbish the kitchen as planned (NMS 10.3)
- ensure that all records of physical intervention are stored in a format that cannot be tampered with after the event. (Volume 5: Children's Homes (2.91))

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **adequate**

Young people are making variable progress through living at this placement, some more than others. A period of bullying and intimidation within the residential group had a negative impact on the majority of young people living in this home for a period of time. This situation has now been resolved as the population of young people has changed. Disagreements amongst the current group can involve verbal abuse and physical assaults. Staff are proactive to intervene to reduce these incidents and promote tolerance within group living.

Young people report that they like this home although they say there are some young people that annoy them at times. When young people are upset, the strength of relationships with the manager and staff means that they can talk with them and express their feelings. Young people who have been living in this home for more than six months have made progress. For example, an increase in their self-esteem and improvements with their behaviour. Young people are able to report on their own development, recognising progress such as their attendance in education and reduction in offending behaviour.

Young people are discouraged from smoking with regular offers of support to quit and access to literature about the health risks associated with smoking. This has little effect as young people who do smoke state that they do not want to give up. For the majority of young people, their health improves as a result of the care and attention provided by staff. Young people receive support to visit health care professionals and to take responsibility for their health and wellbeing. Personal hygiene and dental care are incorporated into targets, this enables young people to establish good daily routines.

Young people are offered a good diet through home cooked meals. They participate in choosing menus, food preparation and shopping. Young people enjoy cooking with staff, through this activity they develop life skills and a knowledge of food safety and hygiene.

Young people actively take part in decision making about their lives. This includes day to day issues such as food, clothing and decoration of the home in addition to personal matters of placement planning and review. Resident meetings and discussions with key workers enable young people to have their say. The manager provides a written response to the issues raised in residents meetings, this informs young people that they have been listened to. Young people requested a suggestion box and this is now in use. The request to have televisions in each bedroom has been declined. However, young people are able to watch DVDs as a compromise.

Where appropriate, young people maintain contact with family and friends. Staff

recognise the significance of these relationships and assist young people in keeping connections with people and places that are important to them. Young people gather photographs and keepsakes, these precious items promote their identity and contribute to an understanding of their life and why they are living in care.

Young people attend a range of educational provision to meet their individual needs. Specific arrangements are made for those not in full time education with a creative approach from a range of resources. For example, one to one support, college courses and engagement with youth charities such as The Prince's Trust. Regular meetings are held to provide young people with access to education.

Quality of care

good

The quality of care provided at this home is good. The manager and staff work effectively as a team, together they are committed to deliver good quality care. Often complex behaviours displayed by young people challenge the staff to maintain consistency and to be effective in managing difficult behaviours. There are strong relationships between young people and staff members. These interactions are built upon and used to influence positive changes in behaviour, some young people take longer to respond than others.

A social worker reports that a young person has, 'improved enormously since being at this placement'. The home received a written compliment from a social worker, thanking the staff for all their work and stating what a privilege it is to work in partnership with them. 'The contribution made by the staff to (the young person's) development will be felt by him, positively, for the rest of his life.'

Young people know that the staff care about them and are concerned for their welfare. The house rules and boundaries are considered fair by young people even though they like to push against them. Young people know how to raise a complaint and records confirm they have done on matters such as, stolen items, noise from other young people and bullying. Each complaint has been dealt with appropriately with young people satisfied with the outcomes. For example, where items have been stolen they have been replaced and locks changed on bedroom doors to prevent any reoccurrence. Young people have moved bedrooms to reduce noise and incidents of bullying have declined.

Staff understand the importance of education and learning opportunities for continuous development for young people. Placement planning is clear with good collation of monthly records in one document. This provides a good overview of young people's progress and any difficulties or behaviours requiring intervention. Social workers report positively about this home. 'Brilliant communication, I am very satisfied', says one social worker. Another reported, 'a good staff team, good communication, they know what is going on for each young person'.

Staff are trained to provide first aid and manage medication. There are safe systems for the storage and recording of medication. Staff have the skills to talk with young people about their sexual health and the dangers of substance misuse and alcohol. Staff are proactive to discuss risk taking behaviour and in referring young people to specialist agencies. Within the local authority, young people receive support from psychological and mental health services. This can be directly or through staff consultation. This collaborative approach identifies how best to meet individual, and often complex, needs.

Staff encourage young people to enjoy their leisure time and to engage with community activities. Personal interests are supported and some young people enjoy caring for pets within the home. The home is located in a residential area with good access to public transport to get to the city and leisure facilities such as, the cinema, parks and swimming pools. Young people like the house and their bedrooms. The communal rooms are pleasantly decorated and welcoming however, the kitchen requires an upgrade. Plans and discussions have taken place since April 2014 where young people have contributed to the design and colour scheme. Young people and staff are frustrated with the delay as they want to have a kitchen without broken cupboard doors and drawers. The kitchen remains functional and is a gathering place for staff and young people to chat.

Keeping children and young people safe adequate

Young people are safe in this home. Staff and social care professionals report that there were difficulties in managing persistent bullying amongst young people at one point however, this has now changed with a different residential group. Challenging behaviour continues and young people benefit from the boundaries set by staff. Arguments and difficulties are addressed through discussion and a restorative approach. Young people have been able to reflect on their behaviour through writing letters of apology and contributing to the home environment such as tidying up or making a cake for everyone. Bullying behaviour is addressed through individual discussion and residents meetings. The manager and staff report that such behaviour is regularly discussed though they acknowledge there was a period when the policy and sanctions had minimal effect.

The staff are trained on how to respond to safeguarding matters, supported by policies and procedures. Young people have good relationships with staff, this enables them to talk openly about any worries or concerns. The manager and staff team are knowledgeable on the vulnerabilities of young people and the risks they may pose to themselves and others. Risk assessments are regularly reviewed and amended as required. Complex needs of young people are met through additional staffing and a current reduction on the young people in placement. Matters of child protection are reported and managed in a multi-agency forum. This ensures that key professionals are involved and that safeguarding procedures are followed.

There have been very few episodes of young people going missing from care since the last inspection. When these incidents do occur, appropriate action is taken to ensure their safe return. Comprehensive protocols are available, personalised for each young person if they go missing. This home refers to the local authority policy for children missing from home or care. This policy does not incorporate the guidance from the Department of Education issued in January 2014 and therefore lacks detail on preventative approaches. In practice, staff are very attuned to young people and take action to try and prevent young people placing themselves at risk. Therefore this out of date policy has limited negative impact on young people accommodated in this home.

There are effective links with other agencies such as the police. Local officers visit socially, and when there has been some disruptive behaviour. This enables police officers to build relationships with young people and provide successful intervention. For example, police officers have spoken to young people about the likely consequences of their behaviour if it continues. These warnings have avoided the need for criminal charges. Young people who have had experience of the youth offending service are no longer involved. Staff are proud to report on improved behaviour for some young people and their emotional maturity.

Positive behaviour is promoted through praise and rewards. Daily targets for each young person, have a financial incentive. Achievement is celebrated and young people welcome this attention, responding positively. Staff are trained in the de-escalation of heightened behaviour and techniques for physical intervention. Comprehensive records are made when staff physically intervene. This enables the staff and manager to review and consider any learning points for future incidents. Each record is accompanied by a report on the views of young people. These accounts are reflective for young people and include comments such as, 'you kept me safe' and 'I am sorry'. Recording of physical intervention is good providing a clear audit trail of events in one folder. However, these records are not in a suitable format. Guidance states that these records must be held in order that they cannot be tampered with after the event.

The environment is physically safe. Staff and young people know what to do on hearing the fire alarm. There are regular checks and maintenance of the fire safety systems as preventative measures. Staff are trained in matters of health and safety to promote a safe environment.

Leadership and management

adequate

The Registered Manager is very experienced having been in post for eight years. She is suitably qualified holding a level 4 qualification in leadership and management. The manager is well respected by young people, staff and other professionals. Through monitoring the quality of care the manager identified the negative impact that bullying behaviour and intimidation was having on the group. The local authority

were slow to respond in finding alternative placements however this has now been resolved. Full staffing levels and a reduction in occupancy by one placement supports the current group of young people.

External monitoring failed to report on the incidents of bullying in April and May 2014. The visits undertaken by an employee of the local authority lacked scrutiny on the quality of care and did not fully reflect young people's experiences at the time of the visits. Since July 2014 the quality of reporting from these visits has improved with a sharper focus on how young people are effectively safeguarded.

Since the last inspection the recording of any complaint is much better with clear records and outcomes. Overall record keeping has improved providing a good contribution for young people to understand when they access their files now or in the future. The manager has a good grasp of the strengths of this home and areas for development. Regular monitoring and working to a development plan inform the manager of progress and any areas that are not proceeding as planned. For example, the refurbishment of the kitchen has been planned however the funding has yet to be finalised by the local authority.

The established staff team is balanced well in terms of age, gender and life experiences. There has been no recruitment since the last inspection, this ensures a core group of adults provide stability to young people. Staff absences are covered by regular sessional staff who are known to young people, they create an extended staff team who are fully conversant with the homes policies and procedures. Staff report how they enjoy their work and feel supported through training events and supervision. Team meetings and team days provide opportunities to discuss and reflect on practice. Professionals in child psychology and mental health are available to staff at meetings. This level of consultation enables staff to explore their engagement and support with young people who have complex needs.

The manager has good systems in place for reporting incidents to other professionals and to notify significant events to Ofsted. The manager is proactive to implement changes to keep up with new legislation and practice developments. The training programme support this and staff have attended numerous events to support their professional development. Training such as; sex and relationships, medication, Signs of Safety, diffusion and diversion, understanding trauma, sexual identity and fire safety. Staff report that training opportunities are good and they are supported to continue with their learning having all completed the level 3 qualification in caring for children and young people.

This home has developed good relationships with other agencies and key professionals within the local authority. Social workers state that they are kept very well informed of any changes and they report positively on this home and the quality of care provided.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.