

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	5 July 2016
Unique reference number	SC398385
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Options BESD (1) Limited
Registered provider address	Turnpike Gate House, Alcester Heath, Alcester, Warwickshire, B49 5JG

Responsible individual	Richard Jones
Registered manager	Stewart Hogg
Inspector	Andrew Hewston

Inspection date	5 July 2016
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Requires improvement
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.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement

SC398385

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is requires improvement because:

- The manager does not always work in partnership with the placing authority to secure all relevant documentation when admitting new young people.
- Managers have not ensured that case files are up to date and well organised. This results in staff struggling to locate key documentation about young people.
- Staff do not always take effective action to intervene to protect young people from harm. Risk assessments are not consistently updated following child protection or safeguarding incidents.
- Staff do not fully understand the principle of restorative justice. There is an over-reliance on the use of monetary incentives and a lack of creativity in ways of promoting positive behaviours.
- Staff have been unable to maintain young people's involvement in positive activities resulting in young people expressing a dissatisfaction with the range of activities offered.
- Staff have not ensured that all young people attend full time education.
- Staff do not ensure that there is an appropriate assessment completed when a young person is self-administrating medication.
- Staff do not fully support young people to express their views and opinions regarding the quality of care that they receive.
- Monitoring systems do not enable the manager to identify the home's weaknesses and areas of strength. As a result, the manager is not able to effectively introduced changes to ensure that staff are better able to meet the needs of young people.

The children's home strengths:

- Staff are well supported to attend training.
- Staff have developed an effective working relationship with local police. This has resulted in, prevention work being completed which has helped to manage risk and reduce the likelihood of criminalisation.
- Physical interventions are rarely and young people do not go missing.
- Young people live in an environment that is pleasant, homely and physical safe.
- Staff play a supportive role in young people's transitions to ensure that planned moves are successful.
- Staff ensure that young people benefit from appropriate contact with family, friends and other people who are important to them.
- Regular input from the clinical therapy team helps the staff team to understand and support young people with their emotional health needs.

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

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 (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
12: The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standard, the registered person must ensure – with specific reference to responding to child protection incidence: 2 (a) that staff— (i) assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; (ii) help each child to understand how to keep safe; (iii) have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; (b) that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm.	30 August 2016
5: Engaging with the wider system to ensure children's needs are met In order to meet the quality standard, the registered person must ensure that staff with specific reference to challenging the placing authority- (b) seek to secure the input and services required to meet each children's needs (c) if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be	30 August 2016

inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans; and (d) seek to develop and maintain effective professional relationships with such persons, bodies or organisations as the registered person considers appropriate having regard to the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the children's home is to provide care and accommodation.	
7. The children's views, wishes and feelings standard In order to meet the children's views, wishes and feelings standard, with specific reference to complaints being responded to in a timely manner and any views shared during young people's meetings being responded to, the registered person should ensure that staff- (1)(c) take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives. (2)(a)(ii) help each child to express views, wishes and feelings (2)(a)(iii) help each child to understand how the child's views, wishes and feelings have been taken into account and give the child reasons for decisions in relation to the child	30 August 2016
8. The education standard In order to meet the education standard, with particular reference to ensuring that all young people access full time education, the registered person should ensure that staff (2)(a) (viii) 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.	30 August 2016
The registered person must ensure that staff maintain records for each child which are kept up to date (Regulation 36(1)(b))	30 August 2016

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further, the service should take account of the following recommendations:

- Ensure that children are offered a wide range of activities both inside and outside the home and are encouraged to participate in those activities. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 31, paragraph 6.5)
- Ensure that any sanctions used to address poor behaviour should be restorative in nature, to help children recognise the impact of their behaviour on themselves, other children, the staff caring for them and the wider community. In some cases, it will be important for children to make reparation in some form to anyone hurt by their behaviour and the staff in the home should be skilled to support the child to understand this and carry it out. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.38)
- Ensure that children who wish to keep and take their own medication are supported to, if they are able to do so safely. Staff should be mindful that children holding their own prescribed medication must only use it for themselves in accordance with the prescription. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.17)
- Ensure that children who have specific health needs or conditions, are supported to manage these subject to their age and understanding. When a child needs additional health or well-being support, staff should work with the child's placing authority to enable proper and immediate access to any specialist medical, psychological or psychiatric support required, and challenge them through regulation 5 — engaging with the wider system to ensure children's needs are met —, if this doesn't happen. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 34, paragraph 7.10)
- Ensure that children are encouraged by staff to see the home's records as 'living documents', supporting them to view and contribute to the records in a way that reflects their voice on a regular basis. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 58, paragraph 11.19)

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is registered to provide care for up to three children or young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home is privately owned and forms part of a large social care organisation.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
23 March 2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
15 September 2015	Full	Good
26 March 2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
11 July 2014	Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Requires improvement
Young people are not receiving all the help and support they need to thrive educationally, emotionally and physically. This includes a dip in reviewing young people progress, joint working and decision-making. This has left young people's overall experience requiring improvement. Poor staff retention means young people are not experiencing consistency in their care from a staff team that knows them well. This means young people feel less secure, affecting their sense of belonging and the quality of their relationships with staff. For one young person this has felt like a sense of loss and abandonment. Young people are offered a range of social and recreational opportunities in and outside the home. This includes judo, football, horse riding, walking, and movie nights. Despite these recreational activities, staff do not consistently encourage young people to try out new activities and interests or give sufficient motivation to get young people to re-engage. This hinders young people becoming physically active and experiencing healthy growth and development. Although staff appreciate the value of education, young people's overall achievements are variable. Some young people make meaningful progress through staff supporting daily attendance. For one young person this support has enabled them to sit a number of GCSEs. Feedback from school is equally positive. 'Communication with staff is good, we know exactly what is going on at the home, if there is a problem we work together to fix it'. However, other young people continue to struggle with staff not putting in place enough resources to reflect differing learning needs. Insufficient account is made to reflect changes in care planning to ensure that educational progress is not compromised. Consequently, little is done to remove barriers that influence young people's attainment and results in a loss of motivation. Staff do not consistently promote young people's access to specialist services. For example, staff have failed to ensure that one young person received a follow-up appointment with child and adolescent mental health services following a self-harming incident. This left the young person without the opportunity to access therapeutic intervention that helped to safeguard their emotional well-being. Staff encourage young people to take responsibility for their medication. However, this is not supported by a rigorous risk assessment before a young person takes on this increased responsibility. This means the safety of this decision is not fully	

assessed or understood.

Young people's meetings take place regularly. However, staff fail to use the opportunity as a means to empower young people to participate in decisions about their care. For example, a suggestion made by a young person over eight months ago on how to improve the format and functioning of young people's meetings has not been actioned. Similarly, a young person suggested that they did not feel able to comment in the meetings about what staff could do better. Again, this has not been addressed. This lack of meaningful engagement means young people do not feel in a position to express their views or to feel involved in decisions, which directly affect them.

Staff show a disregard to concerns and complaints made by young people. For example, when a young person made a complaint about their care it took nearly six months to receive written notification of the outcome of their complaint. This leaves young people feeling their views do not matter and that any potential inequalities in their residential experience goes unaddressed.

Staff are enthusiastic about transition planning and recognise their role in supporting a young person with this experience. For example, staff have supported one young person to visit their new foster placement four times, with further visits planned. This has allowed the young person to develop relationships with the foster family, ensuring that the young person views the move as positive and that they feel fully involved in the process.

Staff understand the importance of young people maintaining contact with their family. When a young person does not live near to their family, staff support contact by facilitating transport and ensuring that telephone contact is maintained. This means that young people are able to have appropriate levels of contact with their family, helping them to deal with the separation.

Staff ensure that the home is well maintained, clean and safe. Staff encourage young people to put photographs of themselves on the walls of communal areas and to personalise their bedrooms. This means that young people live in an environment, which is pleasant, homely and physical safe.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
Staff do not consistently update risk assessments following child protection incidents. As a result, risk assessments fail to reflect the changing needs of the young person. This creates delays in ensuring that staff stay well informed over how to keep young people safe and protected of harm.	

Staff fail to take swift action when young people make disclosures of potential self-harm. Staff fail to recognise particular vulnerabilities or factors that trigger such incidents. For example, when a young person indicated they were going to self-harm the staff failed to intervene swiftly to reduce the risk. This left the young person without the necessary emotional support needed to counter the risk taking behaviour.

The staff team's recording of self-harming incidents is not sufficiently detailed to help identify patterns and triggers for self-harm. As such, staff do not fully understand the impact on the young person. This means that experiences that can adversely affect a young person's physical and emotional health are not formally understood. This in turn hinders the manager's ability to assess whether the existing risk assessments and behaviour plans are sufficient to ensure a young person's safety.

Staff are not effective at managing risks associated with child sexual exploitation. Staff have not undertaken any meaningful intervention with one young person identified as being at risk of sexual exploitation to help them to understand why their behaviour is placing them at risk. As a result, the young person remains at risk of potential exploitation.

The registered manager has not ensured that behaviour management plans are of a consistent quality. One young person's behaviour management plan is incomplete; with staff recording, that information is not available. Staff do not make enough effort to gather further information to complete the plan. The inconsistent quality of behaviour management plans mean both existing and new staff do not have a clear understanding of how to manage and support a young person's behaviour.

Staff do not fully understand the principle of restorative justice. There is an over-reliance on the use of monetary incentives and a lack of creativity in ways of promoting positive behaviours. This leaves young people without the guidance needed to learn how to resolve conflict positively.

Staff have established good links with the police. This has resulted in some preventative work being completed with young people to address risk-taking behaviour to help them avoid criminalisation. The home's point of contact in the police said, 'We have a fantastic relationship with the staff and the young people too, we work well together, we have done some great work, and it is a really good home.'

Staff are clear about missing from care procedures, and feel confident about how to respond to such incidents. Because of these efforts, young people do not go missing from the home.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement
The registered manger has been in post since 2009. He is qualified to level five-diploma level in leadership and management and has considerable experience and knowledge. Of the six permanent staff members, five have completed the level three diploma in residential social care. The remaining member of staff is actively working towards their award and is expected to complete their qualification in the required time. The manager uses admission impact assessments for all new referrals. This helps to reduce the risk of accepting young people that fall outside the statement of purpose. Staff complete initial placement meetings within seventy-two hours of the start of a young person's placement. As such, staff are able to begin assessing and understanding young people's needs at the point of admission. However, when staff identify gaps in information, efforts by staff to address this with the local authority are ineffective. While the manager does challenge placing authorities, this challenge is not always as robust as it could be. There is limited evidence that the manager has utilised the local authority's escalation procedures when responses have not been satisfactory. This means that staff do not always have all the necessary information available to them to understand a young person's needs and to support them to address these. Monitoring systems do not enable the manager to identify areas of weakness in the home, and to assess the quality of care provided to young people. As a result, the effectiveness of the manager to ensure that young people are helped, protected and able to make good progress requires improvement. Staff use a range of different administration systems for the same information. This means that the manager and staff are often unclear about where to access the information that they need to work effectively with young people. Staff do not ensure that care plans and case files reflect the views, wishes and opinions of young people. This means that young people are not fully contributing to the development of their care. The manager has not ensured that case recording is of consistent quality, with significant events and information not always documented and reviewed The manager makes sure that new staff undergo a robust induction programme that includes off-site mandatory training in safeguarding, child protection, and managing young people behaviour. In addition, new staff are given the opportunity to read files and shadow shifts prior to working with young people. One member of staff stated, 'I felt really well prepared, I couldn't believe how comprehensive it was'. This promotes staff's ability to care for young people.	

Staff attendance at team meetings is good. The manager makes sure that there is a detailed agenda, which ensures that team meetings are a forum to promote positive staff practice. Input from the clinical therapy team supports staff to adopt a therapeutic approach to working with young people, helping staff to understand and support young people with their emotional health needs.

Staff are passionate about working with the young people. One member of staff said, 'I love this job, it does not even feel like work, I just want to do everything I can to help them'. Feedback from one social worker was that, 'staff are unbelievable, they know the young person inside and out and have helped them to achieve so much it is amazing'.

The manager makes sure that staff receive supervision on a regular basis. One member of staff stated, 'I enjoy my supervision. I get a lot out of it; it is really in-depth'. This means that staff are able to reflect on their practice and to identify ways in which to better engage and support young people.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of children looked after is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place. However, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference that adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, 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.

This 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 Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

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