

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC409506
Inspector	Rosemary Dancer
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Bedford Borough Council
Registered person address	Bedford Borough Council, Borough Hall Cauldwell Street BEDFORD MK42 9AP
Responsible individual	Marcellina Taylor
Registered manager	POST VACANT
Date of last inspection	10/12/2013

Inspection date	09/06/2014
Previous inspection	adequate
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection

This home was judged adequate at the last full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judge that it has **sustained effectiveness**.

Short break stays at this home enhance young people's lives overall. Most young people look forward to their stays at the home and enjoy the time they are there. Real strengths of this home include the quality of the relationships, and the knowledge and skills of staff to meet the young people's needs. One parent stated, 'My son has very limited language but knows all the staff well and smiles when I speak about them and enjoys me talking about them.' Another parent stated, 'Staff have a good rapport with my child and have developed a real understanding of his needs and there is a commitment of staff to make their stays as fun as possible.' Another said, 'I am very happy about the care this home gives to my son. It is a warm and caring environment and my son is happy when he stays.'

The staff work well in partnership with parents and other agencies; this supports care packages to be met. There is good support from the staff to enable young people to develop socially and emotionally. However, continued staffing shortfalls impact on the scope of work staff are able to carry out. For example, it is not always possible for young people to experience community activities. This means that these experiences are not open to them as often as they could be. Additionally, stays for children continue to be cancelled on some occasions because there is not sufficient staff to care for them safely.

Overall, young people are kept safe by staff, who understand their needs well. A young person said he feels safe at the home and likes all the staff. However, there have been occasions where risk assessments have not been fully followed. For example, in one case it had been identified that two staff who, have been trained in restraint techniques, were required to accompany a young person in the community. While two members of staff went out with the young person only one was trained in the technique. Due to the permanent member of staff's understanding of the young person's needs and skill in de-escalation techniques the child was kept safe while in

the community on this occasion. A parent stated, 'The staff are experienced in dealing with unpredictable behaviours. They clearly enjoy their job, which reflects in the care they provide.' However, risk assessments must be adhered to.

There are continued difficulties appointing a permanent manager to manage the home. The agency manager in post at the time of the last inspection has left and a further agency manager has been appointed on an interim basis; he is applying to be registered with Ofsted. The continued period of uncertainty about the management arrangements and the inevitable disruption a change of manager causes have been highlighted by parents and staff as a source of frustration. A parent indicated the home could improve by appointing, 'a permanent manager to ensure continuity and to provide staff with the support they need.' A member of staff spoke of, 'working excess hours, days off, double shifts, coming in off leave to ensure that children are not sent home and lose their respite.' However, even with this commitment from staff respite stays are cancelled which is a cause of disappointment to young people and their parents.

Staff are supervised by the two deputy managers but over the past couple of months some staff are not receiving supervision as often as they should do. Under the current circumstances it is imperative that staff receive regular good quality supervision to ensure they are well supported and able to continue to carry out their roles effectively.

There has been progress in meeting the requirement and most of the recommendations from the last inspection as follows. A further interim manager has been recently appointed and has commenced the application process with Ofsted. At the time of this inspection the manager demonstrated he had commenced monitoring the work of the home to identify and react to any emerging patterns or trends. He was preparing his report for submission to Ofsted. However, as there has not been a manager's monitoring report submitted to Ofsted for almost a year a requirement has been made. Positive behaviour is supported well and this helps young people to learn more appropriate responses to frustrations they experience. The records of supervision sessions provide a good view about the quality of the meeting although for some staff the frequency has not been as required. Staff are receiving good quality training which is relevant to meeting the needs of the children and young people they care for. The manager has developed a team plan that is aimed at developing the service and this is to be presented to the team for comment before its implementation.

The recommendation regarding files for children has been partially met. Files are organised so that they are easier to navigate; however, despite staff's best efforts not all paperwork is received from young people's social workers in a timely way. In these circumstances there needs to be a system to escalate such concerns so that staff can work to the most recent care planning information. The recommendation regarding staffing of the home has not been met although there has been some progress through a recruitment campaign that has just closed. A requirement has

been made, however, as identified above staffing issues continue to impact: on staffs' ability to meet young people's social needs to the extent they would like to; the agreed frequency of short breaks being met as planned; the ability of staff to work at all times in line with risk assessments and the morale of the dedicated staff team.

Information about this children's home

This home is run by a local authority and is registered to provide short breaks for seven children with learning disabilities.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/12/2013	Full	adequate
24/10/2013	Full	inadequate
11/02/2013	Interim	good progress
14/08/2012	Full	good

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
25 (2001)	ensure that there is at all times, having regard to the number and needs (including any needs arising from disability) of the children accommodated there; and the need to safeguard and promote the health and welfare of the children accommodated in the home a sufficient number of suitably qualified, competent and experienced persons working at the children's home (Regulation 25 (1) (a) (b))	20/06/2014
34 (2001)	ensure a report in respect of any review conducted by the registered manager is supplied to HMCI (Regulation 34 (2))	30/06/2014

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take

account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that when children take part in activities the assessment of risk to the child is taken into account; with specific reference to adhering to assessments about the employment status of staff involved with the child in the activity (NMS 7.5)
- ensure staff are provided with regular supervision by appropriately qualified and experienced staff (NMS 19.4)
- ensure the result of all statutory reviews and reviews of placement plans are recorded on the child's file; with specific reference to escalating requests for these when they have not been forthcoming (NMS 25.8)

What inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspections we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

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.