

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC409506
Inspector	Rosemary Dancer
Type of inspection	Full
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	Tara Geere
Registered manager	Vacant Post
Date of last inspection	09/06/2014

Inspection date	30/12/2014
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Previous inspection	sustained effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

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

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	adequate
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The impact on young people from having a short break in the home is positive. Young people have good quality relationships with staff and each other and they enjoy coming to stay in the home. A parent stated:
'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 there.'

Young people are cared for by staff who care about helping them to progress and who understand how to keep them safe. Young people make good progress in their social and emotional development and they are well supported in learning to manage their behaviour more effectively. Young people also make progress in their self-care skills and in communicating their wishes and feelings.

There are some shortfalls identified as a result of this inspection; these do not have an impact on young people's safety. Shortfalls relate to the overall support for and training of staff, the maintenance of up to date case records and updating some risk assessments, the recording of restraints, the arrangements for young people who transition into adult services, the missing from home policy and procedure and consulting parents and others as a part of the internal monitoring system.

Full report

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
09/06/2014	Interim	sustained effectiveness
10/12/2013	Full	adequate
24/10/2013	Full	inadequate
11/02/2013	Interim	good progress

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
28 (2001)	ensure children's case records are kept up to date; with reference to reviewing risk assessments and personal evacuation plans for children in a timely way (Regulation 28 (1) (b))	30/01/2015
17B (2001)	ensure the written record of a restraint includes a description of the measure and all records are legible (Regulation 17B (3) (c))	30/01/2015
34 (2001)	ensure the system for the review of the quality of care provides for consultation with children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities. (Regulation 34 (1) (3))	27/02/2015

Recommendations

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

- ensure children are supported during the transition to their new placement when they are due to cease stays in the home (NMS 11.8)
- 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)
- ensure information about the child is recorded clearly and in a way which will be helpful to the child when they access their files now or in the future; with specific reference to ensuring that clear recording is made and maintained about the progress a child has made in the home (NMS 22.5)
- ensure the home's procedures are compatible with and have regard to Runaway and Missing from Home and Care protocols and procedures maintained and managed by the police (NMS 5.6)
- ensure staff are provided with regular supervision by appropriately qualified and experienced staff (NMS 19.4)
- progress the training plan developed for each member of staff (NMS 18.1)
- ensure all staff have their performance individually and formally appraised at least annually and this appraisal takes into account any views of children the service is providing for. (NMS 19.6)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Young people come to stay in the home under a short break arrangement. The young people have diverse and complex needs and because these are known, understood and catered for they develop their skills. For example, there are improvements in their self-care skills. From this progress they gain a sense of achievement and their self-esteem and confidence improve.

Some young people have reduced their challenging behaviour. As a result they deal with issues that are troubling them more effectively and settle well into life in the home during their stays.

Young people learn to communicate their wishes and feelings more effectively and subsequently these are known and better understood. Young people make day-to-day choices about their time in the home, for example choosing the room they would like to sleep in and the food they prefer to eat. As a result they feel their wishes and views are valued.

Parents retain the responsibility for ensuring their child's overall health and education needs are met and these areas are well supported by the home. For example, during their short break they benefit from eating healthily or at least from being encouraged to try new foods. Good links with parents and schools ensure that children's learning is promoted during their short break.

The experience of staying away from home benefits young people. It provides them with opportunities to experience being away from their families and to learn different routines and activities. A parent stated: 'This home has managed to get my son to leave the building to go for walk after many years of trying to get him out. They have been patient and caring and have succeeded in getting him out.'

For some children the development and maintenance of relationships with peers is positive; some young people enjoy being in each other's company. Young people also develop good relationships with the staff and have confidence in them. These safe and caring relationships form the basis from which young people grow and develop. Young people have some positive engagement in the wider community and as the staffing levels have increased the home's ability to accommodate this is improving.

Young people acquire practical life skills as a result of staying in the home. While some progress is seemingly small it is actually significant for the young person when considering their complex needs. A parent stated: 'Independence is encouraged and the focus on life skills is brilliant.'

Quality of care

adequate

The relationships that young people develop with staff are a strength of this home. Young people have sense of trust in the staff and feel secure; they benefit from these supportive and nurturing relationships. Young people are happy to go and stay in the home. A parent described how their child wants their suitcase packed ready to go when he knows he is having a stay.

Young people's views are listened to through a range of means. Staff use a young person's favoured means of communication to ensure that key work sessions, resident's meetings and day-to-day discussions are all ways in which young people can communicate their wishes. From this work young people's wishes are known and understood, for example, their choice of bedroom and their favoured foods and activities.

Care planning for young people is adequate and covers each young person's assessed needs. Young people are cared for in line with their plan. However, there is little recorded evidence to show the progress young people have made. This means that the opportunity for monitoring and building on strategies that have been effective is limited. Additionally, not all social workers provide the home with the results of reviews of care plans. This impacts on the home's ability to ensure that plans are fully up to date and cover all changes decided upon during a review. While the home does make efforts to chase these up the response from some social workers has been poor; this was a recommendation made at the last inspection.

Staff are skilled at the use of social stories to support young people to maximise their learning about a range of issues. For example, the importance of self-care routines and developing healthy relationships. Staff understand young people's individual needs and a child-centred approach is taken to supporting each child to grow and achieve. Small achievable goals are set and these support them to learn new skills and make progress.

Young people have a range of activities to choose from within the home. They enjoy using the computer, playing in the garden and doing arts and crafts. Activities outside the home had been difficult to arrange due to previous staff shortages; this situation has now eased with the recruitment of new staff to the home and a more planned approach is being developed.

Young people's health needs, which for some are complex, are met adequately through the implementation of individual health plans. Staff are trained to ensure that young people's day-to-day health needs, such as administering medication or responding to emergencies, are met during their stay in the home. Staff are alert to ensuring that young people's dignity and privacy is assured. For example, young people's personal care needs are handled sensitively. Staff have sound working relationships with the community nurse who supports the development of behaviour management plans.

There are also sound working relationships between the home and the local schools that the young people attend. Staff liaise with the schools so that young people's learning can be supported during their short break.

The home's environment provides young people with individual and communal spaces that are well maintained. The furnishings are adequate and staff make good efforts to make the environment as homely as possible.

When young people move onto adult services this is not well planned by the social workers. Often the home has very short notice that a young person is moving on into an adult service. Subsequently young people are not supported in their move in a way the staff would like to support them. It also means information about their needs and preferences are not passed on to the new service, in a timely way, to ensure that they have the best opportunities to settle in well.

Keeping children and young people safe adequate

The majority of young people coming to the home for a short break have limited communication skills. However, parents feel their children are safe. During the inspection young people were relaxed in the home and enjoying their time with staff and each other. Staff understand, and are alert to, young people's needs. They see safeguarding young people as their priority. They understand the risks to safety and well-being their disability and disadvantage brings. Staff are aware of, and understand, the procedures to follow when they have a concern about a young person.

As not all case records were up to date and some risk assessments had not been reviewed there is the potential for staff to be unaware of changing needs. However, the impact of these shortfalls were minimal as staff are kept well informed about any changes in needs verbally.

Behaviour is managed effectively by staff. The positive reinforcement approach taken is effective in supporting young people to behave more positively. Most young people have little concept of the meaning of a sanction and consequently these are not used. On occasion it is necessary for staff to intervene physically to prevent harm to a person or serious damage to property. These interventions are carried out effectively and are low level interventions. However, some of the records of these incidents are illegible and some do not provide a clear view about what happened during the intervention.

Young people do not experiencing bullying while in the home and supervision levels of the young people ensure that the risk of them going missing is minimised. However, there is a lack of guidance for staff about the action to take should a young person go absent or missing and the links to the police are not well developed.

The environment is safe for young people because regular health and safety checks are carried out. In the event of a fire each young person has a personal evacuation plan that guides staff in supporting young people to leave the building. While these are subject to review, not all had been reviewed at the frequency stated.

Young people are protected from unsuitable people having contact with them during their short break. There are suitable security systems to ensure that there is no unauthorised access to the premises. Effective staff recruitment processes are implemented to ensure the suitability of adults working with young people. All visitors to the home are required to have a valid reason for their visit, their identity is checked and they are signed in and out of the building.

Leadership and management

adequate

There is a permanent manager in post who is in the process of submitting an application to register with Ofsted. Staff expressed their confidence in the manager who has been in post for four months. In her short time in the home the manager has gained a good view about the areas the home needs to develop and she has commenced work on an improvement agenda.

Requirements made at the last inspection have been met. The internal and external monitoring of the home has improved since the last inspection. These systems have begun to more effectively support the development of the quality of care provided. However, children, their parents and placing authorities are not consulted with as a part of the internal monitoring; this means that these important views are not currently informing the review of the quality of care.

The staffing situation has improved. This has meant that the use of agency staff has significantly reduced and the rota is covered by permanent staff who the young people know well. This improvement has not yet had a significant impact on the service as new staff are settling into their roles. Recommendations in relation to staff supervision and gaining the results of statutory reviews have not been fully met. However, staff feel they are well supported in their roles and they understand the needs of the children well so the impact of these shortfalls is not significant.

The work of the home is underpinned by a Statement of Purpose that clearly sets out what the home aims to achieve. Young people are provided with a child-friendly version of the statement that helps them to understand what to expect during a stay. The home is adequately resourced and well maintained and provides a safe environment for the young people who come to stay in it.

Staff who work in the home are child centred and passionate about their work. A number of parents described how caring and passionate the staff are; summed up by one parent who said staff are, 'extremely patient and caring.'

Regular team meetings are held and these provide staff with an arena to discuss developments in the home and to share information about young people. Staff appraisals were not completed this year but the manager has developed an internal appraisal system to be implemented for all staff. The manager has also carried out a training needs assessment for each member of staff. These are aimed at ensuring that staff are up to date in their training and fully equipped to care for the young people to a high standard.

Records for young people are kept securely and confidentially and are used by staff in their work with the young people. Case files are audited periodically but some are not up to date. For example, information from social workers regarding statutory reviews is not provided in a timely way to inform the internal care planning.

The manager is proactive in developing positive relationships with other agencies and professionals. The home has long standing relationships with health and education services which means an integrated approach is taken to young people's care.

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.