

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	8 June 2016
Unique reference number	SC037986
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Bracknell Forest Borough Council
Registered provider address	Easthampstead House, Town Square, Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 1AQ

Responsible individual	Sonia Johnson
Registered manager	Samantha Whitehouse
Inspector	Chris Peel

Inspection date	8 June 2016
Previous inspection judgement	Improved effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Outstanding
The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the home contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help, protection and care.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC037986

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is outstanding because:

- As one professional commented, 'This is a really child-focused service. Staff are able to **engage and work with "difficult to reach children"**. It's something about the way they know the children really well.' Individual personalities, traits and preferences are understood and responded to with a high degree of skill and application.
- There is **a wealth of methods available for children and young people to communicate, which are regularly used**. Observations made by staff are effectively used to glean the views of those whose abilities to convey them directly are limited. An example is the records made of children's and young people's enjoyment or otherwise of meals, which are used to inform menu planning.
- Staff are highly skilled in anticipating the needs of children and young people, which results in those that they look after having **fewer anxieties and relaxing into the care that they are given**. This is as true of the domestic member of staff as it is of the others as she prepares bedrooms with bedding, toys and other favoured items for particular children and young people.
- Relationships with other professionals are sound, with several making comments about **excellent communication with staff**. The manager effectively uses external professionals to address issues such as **self-harm and assaults on staff**, both of which **have been reducing in frequency**.
- The manager and staff take children and young people's physical safety and emotional well-being very seriously. Nothing is taken for granted with measures to ensure that their welfare is regularly discussed and implemented thoroughly. One parent expressed 'total confidence in the staff', adding 'my daughter is **totally safe here and I don't worry about her even when we are away**'. Many parents spoke of staff being 'genuinely caring'.
- Children and young people make progress in a range of areas, including learning to wait, to tolerate frustration and to enjoy more social activities. Parents describe how their children now 'have a little bit of a life' and that **family life is more enjoyable (and for one, only possible) because of the work of the home**.
- The building is in a 'first-rate' condition, as assessed by a contractor who happened to be present undertaking a monitoring visit at the time of the inspection.
- Staff at the home are motivated and enjoy what they do, exemplified by one of the team who said 'I feel I am going into a family, not going to work.'

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
The registered person must help the independent person to inspect the home's records (except for a child's case records, unless the child and the child's placing authority consent) (Regulation 44 (2)(b)).	15 July 2016
The independent person must produce a report about a visit which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether children are effectively safeguarded and the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being (Regulation 44 (4)(a)(b)).	15 July 2016

Recommendations

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

- Any decisions to limit a child's access to any area of the home must only be made where this is intended to safeguard the child's welfare. All decisions should be informed by a rigorous assessment of that individual child's needs, be properly recorded and be kept under regular review ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.10).
- The registered person should record their assessment that the home can respond effectively to a child's assessed needs and of the impact that the placement will have on the existing group of children ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 56, paragraph 11.4).

Full report

Information about this children's home

This is a short-break home which provides day care and residential short breaks for up to five children and young people with learning disabilities. It is owned and managed by Bracknell Forest Borough Council.

Other services operate from the same premises, including a Sleep Clinic, 'On the Move' that facilitates children and young people with learning difficulties to access community resources and a group for young people to meet and join in a range of activities. These are not regulated by Ofsted.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24 November 2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
25 August 2015	Full	Outstanding
3 February 2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
5 November 2014	Full	Outstanding

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Outstanding
<p>The statement of purpose gives one of the home's objectives as 'to make a positive difference to the personal, social and learning lives of the children and young people'. This is thoroughly demonstrated by progress made in a range of areas, with some children and young people having shown remarkable improvement in skills and behaviour. One example is a young person previously very resistant to having baths now willingly accepting them as part of her routine. Another is a young person who now enjoys activities such as cinema trips and meals in restaurants, which his parents say has resulted in him being less anxious when they go out together and better family experiences.</p> <p>It was evident from observations made during the inspection that each child and young person is known well by staff who tailor their care to individual preferences. One young person who likes interaction with adults was engaged in several activities that he enjoyed, while another who likes to spend time on her own was allowed the freedom to be alone while staff monitored her periodically. At the same time, she has been encouraged to eat meals with the others and after considerable planning and implementation of a strategy this has been achieved.</p> <p>This also demonstrates a further objective 'to promote a "friendship matters" culture'. Many children and young people attending have considerable difficulty and often little interest in making relationships with peers, nonetheless sterling efforts are made to help them share experiences and to stay overnight when there are others known to them. One mother told me her son had his first friend to visit ever recently. Children and young people particularly benefit from relationships with staff whose aim is to encourage interaction.</p> <p>One young person's preference for finger foods that he can eat himself rather than be fed has been met, and equipment has been purchased to allow others to operate a mechanical aid to feed themselves. A greater degree of independence has thus been promoted.</p> <p>The premises are welcoming with lots of displays of children and young people's work and photographs of them participating in activities. The manager has enhanced facilities to ensure that children and young people enjoy their breaks. Developments range from responding to requests for night lights or bubble play to the installation of a hoist to help one older teenager to have more time out of his wheelchair. Consultation has taken place with children and young people to find out what could improve the service that they receive. Suggestions made have been followed up, with for example requests for more stories resulting in 'story bags' being made with objects in them that relate to books that children and young</p>	

people like. Thus the sensory experience is enriched, and even more enjoyable. Arrangements for transitions out of the service are as comprehensive as possible, although the staff are dependent on adult services making plans for new provision, which is not always available. Parties are arranged and gifts given to mark the ending of their time in this service.

Among the tools available for children and young people to communicate are a post box for comments and suggestions, talking mats to express choices, a range of tools using symbols such as charts to indicate feelings and 'my review' booklets for views to be expressed prior to meetings. This is augmented by the continuous observations made by staff to gain insight into children's and young people's wishes and feelings. This is an area of exemplary practice in which further efforts are constantly being made to improve communication, and individual members of staff given the task of exploring additional methods.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding
<p>On the first day of the inspection, a safeguarding refresher training session was held for staff. This drew on their experience and understanding as well as providing helpful information from research and local safeguarding children board material.</p> <p>Since the last inspection an incident of concern involving an agency member of staff was dealt with effectively with prompt action to ensure the safety of children and young people. This was followed up with an external agency to ensure wider safety.</p> <p>Risk assessments are in place for individuals, for activities undertaken and for the manual handling of each child or young person who requires this.</p> <p>Impact risk assessments are drawn up following referral but provide limited information about potential risks and do not record measures to be put in place that will reduce the potential for them to affect other children and young people.</p> <p>All bruises and other injuries are meticulously recorded and parents and professionals are informed as necessary. This allows concerns to be followed up; not only potential non-accidental injury but also handling techniques that may need to change.</p> <p>Emotional security is provided through structure and routine, within which new experiences can be approached. A mother said that her daughter, 'thrives due to the structure; she will have a shower and wash her hair here but won't at home. They are able to take her out for a carvery and swimming, which is not otherwise possible. She feels safer here and is calmer due to the structure they have and the staff's understanding of her.'</p>	

Staff manage challenging behaviour extremely well. A professional described how they 'anticipate them and know the triggers. They plan to manage these and communication is very good; we bounce ideas together and explore different issues such as what behaviour means.'

As a parent commented, 'They completely know my son's personality now, the body gestures and noises that indicate something is wrong. They have strategies to deal with him to avoid him getting upset and having a meltdown.' In this way children and young people become increasingly settled and are safer.

During the inspection it was noted that the door to the sensory room was locked in order to ensure that a young person who needed to get ready for school did not go in and be difficult to get out again. However, doors should only be locked for assessed safeguarding needs.

Monitoring procedures are in place to ensure the safety of children and young people. These include regular health and safety checks of the premises, fridge and freezer temperature checks and fire equipment and fire drills including evacuation. The home has been awarded a five star hygiene rating.

Keep safe information is frequently provided to children and young people, with community police recently meeting with a teenagers' group and another evening planned around child sexual exploitation. Displays about this work are put up for all to view. Children who are less able to communicate are also given messages through the use of symbols and simple written information. As one member of staff suggested, it is the consistent approach to privacy that gives the strongest message to children and young people that their dignity and safety is of paramount importance.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
<p>This is a very effective leadership which ensure consistently high standards are maintained to meet the needs of the children placed. In recent months there has been some slippage in auditing of policies, ensuring external monitoring complies with regulation and reviewing all aspects of premises and records. These have had minimal impact on children and young people.</p> <p>The manager leads a team that is keen to improve the experiences of children and young people. Team meeting minutes are full of purposeful discussions about this. The sole entry made in the sanctions log reflects in some detail on how the behaviour that prompted it could be avoided. This has resulted in changes to how the young person is helped to achieve self-care tasks and to fewer incidents of concern.</p> <p>There have been no occurrences of physical intervention or episodes of going missing from care since the last inspection. Nevertheless, awareness and training is</p>	

maintained and strategies are in place to avoid a recently placed young person from absconding. However, the recently reviewed 'missing' policy does not include the requirement for an independent return to care interview to be held.

The development plan includes several ideas to improve the service with many allocated as actions for individual members of staff in appraisals. These include widening children's and young people's food choices, supporting their hobbies and interests and improving consultation for those who have difficulty communicating their views. Those staff spoken to express enthusiasm for the tasks that they have undertaken and have already taken steps towards achieving them.

The manager has used reports prepared by independent persons ('Regulation 44 visits') to make further improvements such as developing the way in which cultural needs of children and young people are reflected in placement plans. The independent persons, however, do not ensure that all issues covered by the format are addressed over time and a statement as to whether children and young people are effectively safeguarded and their well-being promoted (required by regulation) is not explicitly made; this regulatory oversight does not detract from the usefulness of the reports. Additionally, consent for the independent person to view case files has not been sought.

Strong links are maintained with the local authority's children's specialist support team, which shares many of the same clients. Joint meetings are held through the year and the teams share the same line management structure. Termly meetings with the local school for children with special needs in addition to child in need meetings leads to the sharing of strategies, ideas and targets where these overlap the services. This leads to an integrated approach that benefits children and young people with consistent and predictable methods being used across the settings.

An audit programme is in place that helps to ensure that files are in good order, with just the occasional oversight of documents not being dated. There is no record made of actions identified in audits subsequently being completed.

Supervision is regularly undertaken and staff report that this is helpful for them. Individual sessions are augmented by reflective group sessions, facilitated by an external consultant. These have proved valuable occasions for staff to deal with the emotional impact of the work and raise practice issues, having a positive impact on the service. For example, instigating advocacy for alternative provision to be considered for one young man who only 'tolerates' his stays and a change in his routine to introduce more elements that he enjoys.

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 looked after children 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 that 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 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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