

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	15/08/2016
Unique reference number	SC415347
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	Kevin Brammer
Inspector	Paul Robinson

Inspection date	15/08/2016
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

SC415347

Summary of findings

The children's home requires improvement because:

- There have been a number of staff changes, including a change of registered manager. This has compromised the consistency of the care received by young people.
- Staff do not always provide enough support to ensure that all young people attend education full time. As a result, some young people do not have the opportunity to reach their academic potential.
- Risk management plans do not take account of all of the available information to assess the level of risk to young people. This leaves staff without sufficient knowledge and the necessary clear guidance to respond effectively to risk-taking behaviours.
- Behaviour management is ineffective. Staff do not consistently challenge young people's unacceptable behaviour. This means that young people do not learn about socially acceptable behaviour.
- Key-work sessions do not cover key areas such as sexual exploitation and online safety.
- Staff do not support young people to contribute to the care they receive. This limits the young people's opportunities to be involved in the development of their placement.
- Staff do not support young people to develop the skills they need for adulthood.
- The registered manager has not challenged placing authorities to ensure that young people's needs are met.
- Management monitoring systems do not ensure sufficient oversight of the care provided to young people. As a result, young people receive an inconsistent quality of care from staff.

The children's home's strengths

- Staff ensure that young people's health needs are identified and assessed at the earliest opportunity.
- Staff support young people to engage in a range of activities that help to promote their confidence, self-esteem and social skills.
- Staff plan well for new admissions, and consider the impact on existing young people.
- Young people are encouraged to keep in contact with their family and people important to them.
- The new manager recognises areas for development.

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 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 must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>5: Engaging with the wider system to ensure children's needs are met</p> <p>In order to meet the quality standard, with specific reference to challenging placement authorities on the care being received by children and young people, the registered provider must:</p> <p>(c) if the registered person considers, or staff considers, a placing authority or a relevant person's performance or response to be 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.</p>	30/09/2016
<p>6: The quality and purpose of care standard</p> <p>In order to meet the quality and purpose of care standard, with particular reference to ensuring that the home provides young people with a pleasant domestic environment in which to reside, the registered provider must ensure that staff:</p> <p>(2)(c) ensure that the premises used for the purpose of the home are designed and furnished so as to:</p> <p>(i) Meet the needs of each child.</p>	30/09/2016
<p>7: The children's views, wishes and feelings standard</p> <p>In order to meet the children's views, wishes and feelings standard, with particular reference to ensuring that young people contribute to the care that they receive, the registered provider must ensure that staff:</p> <p>(2)(a)</p> <p>(ii) help each child to express views, wishes and feelings;</p> <p>(iii) help each child to understand how the child's views, wishes and feelings have been taken into account and give the reasons</p>	30/09/2016

<p>for the decision in relation to the child;</p> <p>(iv) Regularly consult children, and seek their feedback, about the quality of the home's care;</p> <p>(vi) Help each child to prepare for any review of the child's relevant plans and to make the child's views, wishes and feelings known for the purpose of that review.</p>	
<p>8: The education standard</p> <p>In order to meet the education standard, with particular reference to ensuring that all young people access a minimum of 25 hours of education a week, the registered provider must ensure that staff:</p> <p>(2)(a)</p> <p>(i) Help each child achieve the child's education and training targets, as recorded in the child's relevant plans;</p> <p>(iii) Understand the barriers to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child to overcome any such barriers;</p> <p>(iv) Help each child understand the importance and value of education, learning, training and employment;</p> <p>(vi) Maintain regular contact with each child's education and training provider, including engaging with the provider and the placing authority to support the child's education and training and to maximise the child's achievement.</p>	30/09/2016
<p>12: The protection of children standard</p> <p>In order to meet the protection of children standard, the registered person must ensure</p> <p>2 (a) that staff—</p> <p>(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;</p> <p>(ii) help each child to understand how to keep safe;</p> <p>(iii) have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm.</p> <p>(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.</p>	30/09/2016

<p>11: The positive relationships standard</p> <p>In order to meet the positive relationships standard the registered person must ensure that staff—</p> <p>(2)(a)(iii) Encourage each child to take responsibility for the child’s behaviour, in accordance with the child’s age and understanding;</p> <p>(iv) Help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone;</p> <p>(v) Communicate to each child expectations about the child’s behaviour and ensure that the child understands those expectations in accordance with the child’s age and understanding;</p> <p>(vi) Help each child to understand, in a way that is appropriate according to the child’s age and understanding, personal, sexual and social relationships, and how those relationships can be supportive or harmful;</p> <p>(viii) Strive to gain each child’s respect and trust.</p> <p>(2)(b) that each child is encouraged to build and maintain positive relationships with others.</p>	<p>30/09/2016</p>
<p>13: The leadership and management standard</p> <p>In order to meet the leadership and management standard, with specific reference to the overview of risk and behaviour management, the registered provider must:</p> <p>(2)(f) Understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home.</p> <p>(h) Use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvement in the quality of care provided in the home.</p>	<p>30/09/2016</p>

Full report

Information about this children's home

This privately owned home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to three young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties and aged from 11 to 17 years at any one time.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/10/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
12/05/2015	Full	Good
10/02/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
02/07/2014	Full	Adequate

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Requires improvement
<p>Poor staff retention has an impact on young people's ability to develop trusting and secure relationships with staff. The quality of these relationships means that staff are not able to implement the boundaries and routines required to promote positive behaviour, address barriers to young people's educational engagement and ensure that young people make good progress.</p> <p>Young people are starting to form relationships with the new manager and staff and this is contributing to young people forming a sense of belonging. Young people feel that staff listen to them and invest time in them are caring for them. For example, one young person said, 'the staff are lovely, you can tell the staff don't just do this job for the money, they actually want to be here'. Improvement in staff relationships is helping to increase young people's sense of self-worth and belonging. This means that young people are beginning to feel valued and cared for.</p> <p>Young people report that while they understand how to make a complaint, they rarely feel the need to, as 'it is a good home, good staff and a good manager'. However, young people are not involved in the planning of their care. Staff are</p>	

therefore not fully aware of the individual needs of young people or how best to support them. As a result, young people do not receive personalised care, which has an effect on their progress and experiences.

Staff do not consider the individual independence needs of young people. Staff members' failure to implement consistent routines and boundaries means that they are ineffective in engaging young people in developing skills in budgeting and self-care. This means that staff do not support young people to develop the skills and knowledge that they need for independence.

Staff are sometimes slow to address the barriers to young people's engagement with education. As a result, not all young people are in full-time education. This means that young people do not get adequate opportunities to learn and to gain the qualifications they need for adulthood. However, staff support has enabled one young person to reintegrate back into education after a sustained period of absence. Staff have supported the young person to develop a positive attitude to their learning and as a result, they are attending full time and making good progress. In addition they have worked with another young person, utilising their one-to-one time during a recent holiday to explore his interests and future ambitions. The outcome of this is that the young person has an increased understanding of the importance of education and is expressing a motivation to attend school.

Staff support young people to stay healthy. They promote healthy lifestyles and ensure that young people have access to universal health services. This means that young people are in good health.

Staff work closely with the organisation's clinical therapy team to deliver improved outcomes for young people. Through support, staff develop a good understanding of the emotional needs of young people and the different ways in which behaviours are displayed. For example, when young people arrive with behaviours that can include urinating on the carpet, staff work with the therapist to come up with strategies that help to reduce and eventually stop the emotional triggers that give rise to these behaviours. However, formal records do not always reflect the work completed by staff, making it difficult to fully assess the effectiveness of interventions. As a result, staff are not good at developing a consistent approach that shows how they are meeting the emotional health needs of young people.

Staff support young people to engage in a variety of activities that help to promote their emotional and behavioural development. One young person said, 'the activities are decent, we get to do loads of things'. Young people talked positively about the activities that they are involved in, which include rugby, football, mixed martial arts, going to the cinema and shopping. Staff recognise when a young person needs extra support to engage in an activity, attending with them and giving them positive praise. Similarly, they understand the value of young people having free time, and they use structured activities to promote this. This means

that young people access a range of social and recreational activities, which improve their health, social skills, confidence and self-esteem.

The staff are sensitive to the ethnicity, sexuality, faith and belief of young people. To respect young people's gender identity staff will seek out the various support networks including the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual (LGBT) Foundation. These opportunities help young people to access specialist advisers and to make informed decisions about their sexuality.

Staff are good at promoting contact between young people and their families. Young people are given encouragement to stay in contact with their family and people important to them. This is supported by staff who facilitate transport or identify venues, so that contact is meaningful and allows family links to be strengthened. The management of family contact has ensured that young people do not feel isolated and families feel empowered and included in the children and young people's lives.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
<p>Young people report that they feel safe and well protected. However, management oversight of risk assessments is not effective and means that risk is not fully monitored or tracked. Risk assessments are also not reviewed regularly by staff, especially when they are updated. This hinders the staff team's understanding of how to manage risk and to keep young people safe. For example, a failure to undertake room searches contributed to one young person self-harming.</p> <p>Staff respond swiftly to safeguarding incidents, with good joined-up working with the placing authority and local police representative. However, they do not always ensure that records detail the chronology of events sufficiently. This means that opportunities to learn how to prevent such incidents from recurring are missed, placing young people at further potential risk.</p> <p>Some young people's risk-taking behaviour has decreased significantly since admission. Specialist health input from the organisation's own clinical team has supported staff to address one young person's high levels of aggression and sexualised behaviour; this has resulted in a decrease in the use of physical interventions. When physical intervention is required, staff reflect on the incident and in consultation with the clinical team identify plans to help prevent this from recurring. Staff have developed individualised four-step calming strategies for young people. This enables them to understand how best to support a young person when they are becoming angry or upset. This approach supports young people to develop strategies to self-regulate their emotions.</p>	

Incidents of young people going missing are responded to well by staff, with placing authorities and the police notified swiftly. Staff are proactive in engaging with young people who are at risk of going missing from care and they try to identify incentives to prevent them doing so. However, the manager fails to ensure that placing authorities adhere to their responsibilities at these times. Return interviews are not consistently completed at the earliest opportunity. As a result, young people do not have independent support to enable them to talk through any difficulties and risks of exploitation.

Staff have failed to utilise key-work sessions to develop young people's understanding of internet safety and the risk of exploitation both online and within the community. Consequently, young people are not given the skills, knowledge and insight to keep themselves safe.

Staff are inconsistent in managing young people's behaviour. A lack of sanctions and limited use of restorative justice mean that young people do not increase their awareness of the effects of their behaviour. Furthermore, staff do not utilise reward structures to encourage young people to achieve short- and long-term goals, which has an impact on engagement with education, development of independence skills and young people's understanding of what is appropriate behaviour.

Staff respond swiftly to reports of bullying by young people. For example, when a young person was displaying such behaviour, staff completed a number of targeted key-work sessions as well as seeking clinical input on how best to work with the young person. The outcome was that the bullying behaviour stopped. Because of such actions, young people feel that staff listen to them, take their concerns seriously and respond appropriately.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement
<p>The manager started in post in April 2016, became the registered manager in July 2016, and has appropriately completed the level 5 diploma in leadership and management. Of the eight staff, three have completed the diploma level 3 or above in residential childcare. Four of the team are currently undertaking the course and expect to have completed this by November 2017, which will be within the appropriate timescale. One member of staff is currently in her probation period and subject to successful completion will enrol on the diploma course.</p> <p>Overall, the registered manager has a good grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. However, he has not taken sufficiently effective action to address all identified shortfalls. Despite this, the manager is enthusiastic and motivated to implement changes. It is clear that he is developing a supportive environment in</p>	

which to develop staff practice to ensure that young people receive consistent, individualised care.

In line with the statement of purpose, staff utilise a therapeutic approach to the care of young people. As a consequence, young people who have struggled to settle in previous placements have settled, are developing good relationships with staff and starting to reduce sexual, aggressive and self-harming behaviours. This is helping young people to make positive progress.

The registered manager ensures that staff receive regular, good quality and reflective supervision. As a result, staff feel well supported, enjoy their jobs and feel able to seek advice and guidance to improve the care they provide to young people.

Young people are not particularly proud of the quality of their accommodation. The manager has not ensured that young people are provided with a consistently homely and pleasant and environment in which to live. For example, damaged furniture and poor maintenance in some communal areas is not satisfactory. These weaknesses in provision detracts from the warm, caring approach provided by staff.

The manager and staff have developed good links with the local police to reduce the risk of criminality and to ensure that a preventative approach to young people going missing is achieved. For example, a police representative visits the home fortnightly and is available for telephone consultation. The impact of this is that young people's perception of the police has improved. When young people display challenging behaviour, early input from the police has reduced not only the potential need for physical interventions but also the risk of criminal prosecution.

Staff have also developed good relationships with the placing local authorities. For example, one social worker said, 'I am really impressed, they are very prompt, contact and communication is good, I can only give you good feedback'. An independent reviewing officer said, 'we always get regular updates, the communication is great and we know exactly what is going on'. This means that when a child or young person requests a change to their care plan, the local authority is supportive of this, as they are confident in the staff's assessment of risk and need. For example, a young person asked to have increased free time in the community, the staff advocated for the young person, and the social worker agreed to this. As a result, the young person feels listened to and supported by staff. However, when the placing local authority has failed to take the necessary steps to ensure a young person's safety, the registered manager's challenge was not sufficient. For example, when one young person who no longer resides at the home was having repeated unauthorised absences, the registered manager failed to challenge the local authority's assessment and management of the risk that the young person experienced. As a result, the young person was potentially at increased risk of harm.

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 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 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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