

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	05/09/2016
Unique reference number	1236832
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Benjamin UK Ltd
Registered provider address	32 Woodstock Grove, London W12 8LE

Responsible individual	Claudette Deysel
Registered manager	Lisa Coburn
Inspector	Natalie Burton

Inspection date	05/09/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Inadequate
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Inadequate
There are serious widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Inadequate
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Inadequate

SC471856

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is inadequate because:

- Vetting of agency staff is insufficient. On occasion, the home has taken on agency staff without making sure they have produced certificates that demonstrate that they are suitably vetted to work with children. This fails to ensure that children are consistently cared for by staff who have been assessed as suitable.
- Some children's risk assessments and placement plans fail to inform staff of the potential risks they face. They have not been updated following serious incidents and no additional information gained. As a result, the home is failing to ensure that all necessary action is taken to reduce risk to children and staff.
- On occasion, incidents of bullying have not been addressed sufficiently. Staff and management have failed to listen to young people's views and feelings, and take action to reduce the risk of a recurrence and to ensure that children feel safe and protected.
- Staff and management have failed to consistently inform external agencies and parents of significant information. Such as, details of who young people have been with when they have been missing. This fails to ensure that sufficient action is taken to promote children's welfare.
- Staff and management have failed to ensure that children are provided with clear and consistent structure, routine and boundaries. As a result, bullying, inappropriate behaviour and ineffective routines have continued.
- Staff and management have failed to ensure consistently that children are provided with information and advice regarding the risks to their health of smoking cigarettes and the use of cannabis, or to provide support to young people to help them to stop.
- Monitoring within the home is insufficient to improve the quality of care provided to children, and identify potential trends and patterns.

The children's home strengths

- Children are provided with a very good, welcoming and homely atmosphere. The home is maintained and furnished to a high standard.
- Children are cared for by a, stable and committed staff team.
- Some children speak positively of the support and care that they receive. They say they have positive relationships with staff and can identify individuals whom they talk to when they have a concern.
- The frequency with which children go missing has reduced since their admission to the home.
- The provider has acted robustly following allegations against staff. Managers have provided support to both children and staff through mediation, to enable working relationships to continue.
- The provider has responded promptly to an external complaint. Further action is planned through meetings with external agencies and professionals to reduce the potential for further complaints.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that must be taken so that the registered person(s) meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'. The registered persons must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>6: The quality and purpose of care standard</p> <p>In order to meet the quality and purpose of care standard, the registered person is required to ensure that staff— (2)(ii) protect and promote each child's welfare.</p> <p>This is with particular regard to ensuring that placing authorities and, where appropriate, parents are informed of incidents within the home. In order for risks to be robustly identified and action taken to reduce the risk of recurrence.</p>	10/10/2016
<p>7: The children's wishes and feelings standard</p> <p>In order to meet the children's views, wishes and feelings standard, the registered person must ensure that children receive care from staff who— (1)(c) take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives.</p>	10/10/2016
<p>10: The health and well-being standard</p> <p>In order to meet the health and well-being standard, the registered person must ensure that— (1)(b) children receive advice, services and support in relation to their health and well-being.</p> <p>This is with particular regard to smoking cigarettes and the use of cannabis.</p>	10/10/2016
<p>11: The positive relationship standard</p> <p>In order to meet the positive relationship standard, the registered person must ensure that staff— (2)(a)(i) meet each child's behavioural and emotional needs,</p>	10/10/2016

<p>as set out in the child’s relevant plans; (iii) encourage each child to take responsibility for the child’s behaviour, in accordance with the child’s age and understanding; (iv) help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone; (vii) help each child to develop the understanding and skills to recognise or withdraw from a damaging, exploitative or harmful relationship.</p>	
<p>11: The positive relationship standard</p> <p>In order to meet the positive relationship standard, the registered person must ensure that staff— (2)(a)(xii) understand and communicate to children that bullying is unacceptable; and (xiii) have the skills to recognise incidents or indications of bullying and how to deal with them.</p>	28/10/2016
<p>12: The protection of children standard</p> <p>In order to meet the protection of children standard, the registered person must ensure that staff— (2)(a)(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; (b) 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> <p>This is with particular regard to ensuring that staff are fully informed of where children are staying overnight.</p>	10/10/2016
<p>13: The leadership and management standard</p> <p>In order to meet the leadership and management standard, the registered person must— (2)(e) ensure that the home’s workforce provides continuity of care for each child. (This is in particular regard to implementing a daily routine for children, to provide clear boundaries and structure.) (f) understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experience of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home; (h) use monitoring and review systems to make continuous</p>	28/10/2016

<p>improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.</p>	
<p>The registered person may only, if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). (Regulation 32(2)(b))</p>	<p>23/09/2016</p>
<p>The registered person must maintain in the home the records in Schedule 4; and ensure that the records are kept up to date. (Regulation 37(2)(a)(b))</p> <p>This is with particular regard to a copy of the staff duty roster of persons working at the home, a record of the actual rosters worked and a record in the form of a register showing in respect of each child's admission to the home.</p>	<p>10/10/2016</p>
<p>The independent person must provide a copy of the independent person's report to HMCI. (Regulation 44(7)(a))</p>	<p>30/09/2016</p>

Full report

Information about this children's home

The children's home is owned and managed by a private organisation. It provides care and accommodation for four young people of both genders aged between 12 and 18 years who have emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
N/A		

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
<p>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</p>	<p>Inadequate</p>
<p>This is the home's first inspection since registration in July 2016. Insufficient vetting of some agency staff, poor individual risk assessments and a lack of proactive response to incidents of bullying mean that children are not safeguarded well enough. In addition, a lack of effective management monitoring, clear guidance, routines and boundaries, and sharing of information with all relevant persons have significantly impacted on the overall judgement of the home.</p> <p>There is a lack of sufficient action to prevent children smoking cigarettes and using cannabis. Staff do not actively discourage or enquire where and how children are accessing cigarettes and cannabis. Children have been smoking in their bedrooms, and insufficient action is taken to reduce the risk to both children and staff. Children are not made aware of the risks to their health and safety or provided with the information they need to make informed choices.</p> <p>Staff fail to provide children with a consistent and effective daily routine. While it has been the summer holidays, for the main part, since registration, staff have failed to ensure that children are provided with a daily routine that brings structure and stability. Children are regularly up at night and sometimes keep staff awake until the early hours of the morning. As a result, the children then sleep in until early afternoon. This is presenting as a pattern that has been allowed to continue.</p> <p>Children are supported to have contact with their families and other significant people in their lives. Staff help them to develop and maintain relationships with people who are important to them by ensuring they get to their arranged contact, providing transport when required. However, following a significant incident in the home which resulted in three children's placements ending with immediate effect, staff failed to inform a parent of a physical assault in a timely manner. A professional has said, 'communication with the home is a problem; it is difficult to get hold of them on the phone.' The home is failing to ensure that parents and professionals are kept fully informed and to enable parents to provide support to their children.</p> <p>Children are able to access the services and support that they need to meet their physical, emotional and psychological health needs. On admission, all children are promptly registered with the local health professionals. The organisation's psychologist attends the home on a weekly basis, and has started to begin to build relationships and individual sessions with some children. The psychologist has held debriefings with staff, and provides advice and guidance on meeting children's</p>	

needs. Children eat healthy, nutritious and home-cooked food, and both staff and children sit together at meal times, helping to build children's social skills. The home opened in July 2016 and, due to the subsequent summer holidays, children were not required to attend education. The organisation has a registered educational provision that all children living at the home can access while, if required, an alternative form of education is sought. This ensures that children maintain and, for some who have not attended education for some time, begin to participate in education.

The staff, while new to working together, are experienced in working for the organisation and caring for children. They build relationships with children by spending time with them, seeking their views on food, activities, any additional resources that they need through key-work sessions, residents meetings and general day-to-day conversations. One child reported that she got on well with the staff and felt supported by them. Staff try to motivate children to participate in activities and open themselves to new challenges, in line with the ethos of the service.

All children have made some progress while living at the home. In particular, from their admission to the home, they have all significantly reduced their 'missing' incidents. A social worker reported that the child in placement 'had made huge improvements, but that this was mainly when no other children were around'. A parent said, 'she is settled compared to where she was before. She was always running away, before.' Some children have made progress in developing their social skills, starting to engage in activities and developing relationships with staff. Staff recognise these achievements and praise young people in line with the diversion programme. This enables children to begin to grow in confidence and develop some emotional resilience.

The home provides children with an unquestionably high standard of individual and communal accommodation. Decor, personalisation and maintenance are to a very high level. Children's bedrooms are personalised and are all provided with high-quality furniture and personal items. Despite incidents, children have respected their home, and this demonstrates that the children are proud of their home. Both the welcoming atmosphere that the homely environment provides and the staff are strengths of the service.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Inadequate
<p>This inspection identified significant shortfalls in the implementation of behaviour management, bullying and risk assessments that have placed children at risk of harm. Children are regularly in each other’s bedrooms without clear risk assessment and no effective action has been taken to reduce this pattern. As a result, children are not adequately protected from the risk of harm, abuse and injury.</p> <p>The staff have received training relating to countering bullying, and the home has a clear written policy for the prevention of bullying and the action required to be taken. However, on occasion, while staff support children at the time of an incident through increased supervision and attempts to de-escalate situations, there is a lack of sufficient follow-up action to reduce the risk of recurrence or to seek the views of children, such as through key-work sessions, a consistent response from staff and monitoring of children. Incidents are recorded in different formats such as log books, incidents forms and key-work sessions. This fails to ensure that senior management has been provided with full information to ensure that effective action is taken, and makes the monitoring of incidents more challenging. It fails to ensure that all children are adequately protected against bullying, or that proactive action is taken to reduce and prevent further incidents.</p> <p>While some children, on occasion, do go missing, all children have significantly decreased their missing episodes. This is because the staff are proactive in responding to children at the point of going missing, ensuring that they monitor children’s whereabouts and follow them. Information gained, such as descriptions of adults and car registration numbers, are provided to external agencies to locate children swiftly. However, while children have return interviews, the records detailing further disclosures of information to staff regarding where children have been and who with are not followed up consistently with the appropriate authorities. In addition, staff fail to ensure consistently that children are where they are supposed to be, for example when they say they are with their family during family contact. Therefore, it is unclear if all professionals have the full information to help to keep children safe and to follow up lines of enquiry on potential child sexual exploitation.</p> <p>All children have individual risk assessments detailing identified hazards to children and the action required to reduce the risk. While the information on admission is risk assessed, staff are not using further information from incidents that occur in the home and documentation they receive from placing authorities to inform assessments and individual plans. Staff and managers are failing to pay enough attention to potential triggers for children, incidents that have placed both staff</p>	

and children at risk and children’s mental health assessments. As a result, they are not taking effective action to reduce risk for children

Staff implement the home’s token programme, which promotes and rewards positive behaviour through the use of incentives and rewards. A staff member stated that this system is effective, although the inspector found that staff are failing to reflect consistently with children to help them to learn from incidents that have occurred. A failure to ensure that children have clear boundaries means they are not clear what is expected of them and negative behaviour escalates within the home. While some action has been taken, this has not been consistently effective, and children continue to display inappropriate behaviour such as smoking in their bedrooms, being in each other’s bedrooms and refusing to leave, and keeping staff and peers up late into the night. This fails to ensure that children begin to take responsibility for their actions and learn to resolve conflict positively with their peers and adults.

Recruitment of permanent staff within the home is robust. However, insufficient checks on some agency staff disclosure and barring certificates have resulted in staff working at with children without suitable vetting. This is potentially unsafe for children.

Children say that they feel safe at the home and that they can identify someone whom they can talk to. The provider has implemented the home’s safeguarding procedures, following allegations made against staff. Senior management responded quickly to support both staff and children and to inform the appropriate external agencies, and are currently completing internal investigations, including in-depth mediation with staff members and children. This is a strength of the organisation.

A robust location risk assessment informs staff of potential risks to children. The identification of these risks and the actions taken, such as a coded gate, which children are knowledgeable of have helped to keep children safe.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Inadequate
<p>The registered manager has been in post since registration, is currently undertaking the level 5 diploma in leadership and management and has over nine years’ experience. However, there is a lack of effective management oversight and direction. Internal monitoring takes place in the home, but it is insufficient and lacks effectiveness in identifying shortfalls and ensuring action is quickly taken to address them. As a result of this, the home is not able to ensure that children are</p>	

as safe as possible. External monitoring by an independent visitor has occurred, although these reports have not been received by Ofsted, so it is unknown if this monitoring has identified the shortfalls found at this inspection. In response to the organisation's awareness of the shortfalls raised during the inspection, immediate action has been taken. For example, with immediate effect the organisation has stopped using the agency until full vetting of workers has occurred and an action plan is in place to address all the shortfalls.

The statement of purpose sets out the aims and objectives for the home, and a children's guide reflects these. The staff have a sufficient understanding of the ethos of the home and, while new in forming as a team, are experienced from work within other homes within the organisation. However, the lack of clear guidance, ineffective responses to some incidents, and a failure to make sure that records are up to date and provide clear assessments fail to ensure that all staff are fully knowledgeable to work consistently to meet the full needs of the children.

Staffing levels are good and the majority of staff possess the experience necessary to look after vulnerable young people. The staff team speaks positively of the support that it receives from management at the home and senior management within the organisation. Staff and managers from other homes within the organisation support young people and staff following some incidents at the home. This enables managers to debrief the staff involved with incidents. A staff member said, 'It is a good organisation to work for. They do so much for the children, such as school proms. When I have needed support, there is always a senior manager who will answer their phone, and they know what they are talking about. This helps a lot.' Managers provide all staff with reflective supervision every month. However, while staff feel supported by the organisation, there is a lack of effective action as identified, to ensure that the staff are provided with all the information and guidance they require to meet all the young people's needs.

The staff report that training provided by the organisation is very good. One member of staff said, 'Training is really good. It is mainly face-to-face training, rather than online training, and it is provided by professionals within the organisation who know what they are talking about.' This ensures that the organisation provides the staff with the skills to meet the children's identified needs. However, staff have failed to implement their learning and skills to effectively manage children's behaviour consistently.

Management has built some positive relationships with external agencies, such as the local missing police lead and the designated officer. In addition, in response to an external complaint received, the management is proactively organising a meeting to ensure that any further concerns are appropriately managed. The manager has ensured that Ofsted has received information regarding significant events within the home and of the action taken to safeguard children. However, communication with some parents and placing authorities has, on occasion, been lacking, therefore not ensuring that all relevant people are fully informed of

significant information.

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 whom 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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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted

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