

## Children's homes – Interim inspection

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| <b>Inspection date</b>           | <b>05/12/2016</b>  |
| <b>Unique reference number</b>   | <b>SC037986</b>  |
| <b>Type of inspection</b>        | <b>Interim</b>   |
| <b>Provision subtype</b>         | <b>Children's home</b>   |
| <b>Registered person</b>         | <b>Bracknell Forest Borough Council</b>  |
| <b>Registered person address</b> | <b>Easthampstead House,<br/>Town Square, Bracknell,<br/>Berkshire RG12 1AQ</b> |
| <b>Responsible individual</b>    | <b>Sonia Johnson</b>   |
| <b>Registered manager</b>        | <b>Samantha Whitehouse</b>   |
| <b>Inspector</b>                 | <b>Chris Peel</b>  |

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|---|-------------------------------|
| <b>Inspection date</b>  | <b>05/12/2016</b>             |
| <b>Previous inspection judgement</b>  | <b>Improved effectiveness</b> |
| <b>Enforcement action since last inspection</b>   | <b>None</b>                   |
| <b>This inspection</b>  |                               |
| <p><b>The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.</b></p> <p>This home was judged <b>outstanding</b> at the last full inspection. At this interim inspection, Ofsted judges that it has <b>sustained effectiveness</b>.</p> <p>The manager and staff at the home continue to provide an excellent service to children and young people, one that is highly valued by parents and professionals alike. Children are helped to enjoy experiences that they may not otherwise have and to make progress. Families manage better because of the short breaks that their children access. These may have averted the need for full-time residential care.</p> <p>One professional described not seeing 'quality of staff support like it is here' before, also saying 'the response to children and young people, and level of care, time spent to think about how best to communicate – it is amazing, the time they take'. A parent commented, 'The home is our lifeline and makes a huge difference to us – we are transformed into a family who are in the best place we have been for years.'</p> <p>When that much-appreciated support has to be withdrawn, the impact is high. The same parent spoke of family members being exhausted and stressed when a two-day short break was cancelled. This was due to the admission of two emergency placements of young people, one of whom was unknown to the service. Although this was in the best interests of the young person admitted, the home is not set up to receive such placements and it had an impact on the running of the home as well as the service for others. During this period, supervision sessions for staff were postponed, recording and monitoring of sanctions and physical interventions were late in being logged and checks on fridge and freezer temperatures were missed.</p> <p>Staff confirmed that they were happy to have 'pulled together' in order to temporarily accommodate the young people, for whom no other options were considered to be available. The young people found it hard to contain their distress, exhibited in challenging and aggressive behaviour. The manager and staff absorbed this and were unwavering in helping the young people to manage the separation from families and the uncertainty of what their futures would be. The work to support them to move on to permanent provision was particularly good, with careful preparation emotionally and practically, using social stories and clear timetables, although recording of their use was limited. Staff shared information and experience with counterparts from the new homes, for which one of the</p> |                               |

managers commended them as it led to a smoother transition than might have been expected.

The manager is very keen to illicit the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people. She has introduced several methods to capture this in order to make short breaks enjoyable and beneficial. An attractive display demonstrates some of the things that children requested and how staff have responded. This includes more bubble play and opportunities for wheelchair users to spend time out of them.

There have been no formal complaints since the last inspection. However, the complaints policy does not address how the behaviour of children and young people with limited communication skills might be seen as displaying discontent and consideration given to whether this behaviour is indicative of a complaint.

Staff use 'goal ladders' to help children to set and achieve targets in the development of new skills. These are not proving as effective as they once were. The manager has recognised this and delegated a member of staff to investigate alternatives to promote children's continual development.

Staff provide children and young people with stimulating activities and opportunities to have new experiences. A striking example is the hobbies and interests month, which included opportunities for children of all abilities to have a range of taster sessions including camping and playing musical instruments and exploring existing interests such as airplanes and crafts. An excellent scrapbook that records this work includes photographs of the star a young person asked to make. Staff took her to purchase the materials and helped to create the piece. The young person benefited from enjoying the activity, from achieving her aim and from a sense of self-efficacy, making a request that staff helped her to fulfil.

One young person responded to a question in Ofsted's online survey that asked, 'What is good about your children's home?' by replying, 'They let me do things I like to do.'

This evidence, supported by observations made during the inspection, demonstrate that children and young people greatly enjoy their short breaks: there are smiles on being greeted to the home and laughter during activities. This is facilitated by a staff team that is developing an approach that gives children and young people greater autonomy, through their close engagement with the children and young people.

One member of staff described this in a response to the survey, saying, 'It has been a personal challenge for me, to step back and encourage the children to do things for themselves, as initially you feel the need to help the child. It is about learning the capability of the individual child and trying to gently stretch that and praising when that is achieved.'

Over time, managers have given careful thought to allowing children as much

freedom as possible within the home. Staff ensure children's safety rather than relying on locks and shut doors, except where there is an evident risk. The starlock (which was unused) has now been removed from the sensory room in response to a recommendation made at the last inspection.

The manager has ensured that all the requirements and recommendations have been responded to appropriately. All have been met or are nearing completion. The recently introduced impact risk assessment for the most part demonstrates that the home is able to offer placements to children without undue impact on others. Identified risks have not always been explicitly stated, but known to the staff who read the assessments, and the reasons why the information gathered has led to the decisions made (such as when a child is first allocated a day to attend) is not always clear.

Guidance about the administration of emergency medication for one young person was not clear about which of three possible medicines was being referred to. The manager considered that staff would be aware of the particular one because instructions in the medication administration protocol were sufficiently explicit. Nonetheless, such ambiguity should be avoided.

Logs for sanctions and physical interventions do not routinely record discussions held with staff who have implemented them or dates to show compliance with regulatory timescales. A senior manager has not monitored those the home's manager has been involved in to ensure that they were appropriate and proportionate. Nevertheless, the records are clear about the circumstances of each incident and staff implemented a sanction or restraint.

## Information about this children's home

Bracknell Forest Borough Council owns and manages this short-break home. It provides day care and residential short breaks for up to five children and young people with learning disabilities.

Other services operate from the same premises that Ofsted does not regulate. These including a Sleep Clinic, 'On the Move', which 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.

## Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement    |
|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| 24/11/2015      | Interim         | Improved effectiveness  |
| 25/08/2015      | Full            | Outstanding             |
| 03/02/2015      | Interim         | Sustained effectiveness |
| 05/11/2014      | Full            | Outstanding             |

## 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 ensure that a record is made within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control or discipline and within 48 hours that the user has been spoken to about the measure; signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and within five days an addition is made to the record that the child has been spoken to about the measure. In particular, records must show that these timescales have been adhered to. (Regulation 35 (3)(a-c)) | 31/01/2017 |

### Recommendations

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

- Emergency admissions should not be taken unless the home's statement of purpose and its capacity and support systems mean that it has the capability to care for children admitted at very short notice while continuing to offer high-quality care to children already living in the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.6)
- Children who cannot or choose not to verbalise, have the right to have their views, wishes and feelings heard and respected in the same way as other children. This includes making a complaint that is dealt with in accordance with Regulation 39. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 24, paragraph 4.24)
- During a short break, staff are responsible for maintaining a child's ongoing health treatment, including the management of medication on arrival and departure from the home and recording and sharing information about when medicine was administered. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 36, paragraph 7.20.) This should include ensuring guidance for the administration of a child's emergency medication are unambiguous.
- The record of supervision record should provide evidence that supervision is being delivered in line with the home's statement of purpose. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.3)

## **What the inspection judgements mean**

At the interim inspection 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**

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 focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

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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