

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	10/02/2017
Unique reference number	1236916
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Utopia Children's Services Ltd
Registered provider address	Eden Barn, Green Lane, Hardwicke, Gloucestershire GL2 4QA

Responsible individual	Louis Stuart-Kelso
Registered manager	Leon James
Inspector	Sharron Escott

Inspection date	10/02/2017
Previous inspection judgement	N/A
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	Inadequate

1236916

Summary of findings

The children's home provision requires improvement because:

- Not all of the regulations for children's homes are met. The manager has not scrutinised effectively or critically the records of significant incidents.
- Not all significant matters, including safeguarding concerns about high-risk behaviours, are shared with external agencies and/or reported to Ofsted as required.
- The arrangements to assess whether the home can meet young people's needs suitably and whether young people can be matched safely together require improvement. Poor decision-making in these areas has resulted in young people engaging in high-risk behaviours and learning them from one another.
- The education arrangements for the current three young people require improvement. Their education provision is minimal.

The children's home strengths

- The manager and staff team are motivated and enthusiastic. A social worker agrees and described the team as 'dedicated and resilient'. She commented positively about how well the team members, particularly key workers, form relationships with the young people.
- Young people are developing and strengthening their relationships with family members. Staff support and encourage these relationships and, where appropriate, they supervise visits in accordance with young people's individual care plans.

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
<p>5: Engaging with the wider system to ensure children's needs are met</p> <p>In order to meet the wider systems standard, the registered manager must–</p> <p>(b) seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child's needs.</p> <p>In particular, as outlined in the 'Statutory guidance for children who run away or go missing from home or care' (Department for Education, 2014), all young people must have an independent return-home interview.</p>	15/03/2017
<p>8: The education standard</p> <p>In order to meet the education standard, the registered person must ensure that staff–</p> <p>(2)(ii) support each child's learning and development, including helping the child to develop independent study skills and, where appropriate, helping the child to complete independent study;</p> <p>(2)(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>(2)(iv) help each child to understand the importance and value of education, learning, training and employment;</p> <p>(2)(v) promote opportunities for each child to learn informally;</p> <p>(2)(vii) help a child who is excluded from school, or who is of a compulsory school age but not attending school, to access education and training support through the period of exclusion or non-attendance and to return to school as soon as possible.</p>	15/03/2017
<p>11: The positive relationships standard</p> <p>In order to meet the positive relationship standard the registered person must–</p>	15/03/2017

<p>(2)(a)</p> <p>(i) meet each child's behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child's relevant plans;</p> <p>(ii) help each child to develop socially aware behaviour;</p> <p>(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 with 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>(ix) understand how children's previous experiences and present emotions can be communicated through behaviour and have the competence and skills to interpret these and develop positive relationships with children;</p> <p>(xi) de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children;</p> <p>(xii) understand and communicate with or between children that bullying is unacceptable.</p>	
<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>that staff</p> <p>(2)(a)</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>(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> <p>In particular, ensure that a rigorous assessment is carried out to help determine admission decisions.</p>	<p>15/03/2017</p>
<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>that staff</p>	<p>15/03/2017</p>

<p>(2)(a)</p> <p>(iii) have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm;</p> <p>(iv) manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other;</p> <p>(v) understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person;</p> <p>(vi) take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and</p> <p>(vii) are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies;</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>	
<p>13: The leadership and management standard</p> <p>In order to meet the leadership and management standard, the registered person must—</p> <p>(2)</p> <p>(a) lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose;</p> <p>(c) ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child;</p> <p>(d) ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child;</p> <p>(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>(g) demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on—</p> <p>(ii) feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received; and</p> <p>(h) use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.</p>	<p>15/03/2017</p>
<p>35: Behaviour management policies and records</p> <p>(1) The registered person must prepare and implement a policy ('the behaviour management policy') which sets out—</p> <p>(a) how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the children's</p>	<p>15/03/2017</p>

<p>home; and</p> <p>(b) the measures of control, discipline and restraint which may be used in relation to children in the home.</p> <p>(2) The registered person must keep the behaviour management policy under review and, where appropriate, revise it.</p> <p>(3) The registered person must ensure that—</p> <p>(b) within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ('the authorised person')—</p> <p>(i) has spoken to the user about the measure; and</p> <p>(ii) has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and</p> <p>(c) within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (1a,b), (2b), (3bi, ii, c))</p>	
<p>37: Other records</p> <p>(2) The registered person must—</p> <p>(a) maintain in the home the records in Schedule 4. (Regulation 37 (2a))</p>	15/03/2017
<p>40: Notification of a serious event</p> <p>The registered person must—</p> <p>(4) notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if:</p> <p>(e) there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4e))</p>	15/03/2017
<p>45: Review of quality of care</p> <p>The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children at least once every six months and supply a copy of the care review report to Ofsted within 28 days of the date on which the quality of care review is completed. (Regulation 45 (1), (4a))</p>	01/03/2017

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that all areas are homely and have a domestic environment; in particular, give consideration to replace or remove key-pad locks that detract from the homely environment. (the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

- Ensure that all staff are familiar with the home's policy on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This children's home is owned by a private company that also owns two other children's home in the same or adjoining region. The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to three young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
June 2016	Registration	N/A

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Requires improvement
<p>This is the home's first inspection since it was registered in June 2016. The home is registered to care for up to three young people who have complex emotional and behavioural difficulties. Decisions made by leaders and managers to admit to full capacity have been taken too quickly, resulting in some poor outcomes for young people. Since the home was registered, five young people have lived here. Placements have not always ended positively, with two young people being asked to move to another home, either by their placing authority or by leaders from this home.</p> <p>The admission and assessment process is not rigorous enough. Although leaders and managers have considered whether young people are suitable to live together, they have sometimes minimised the significance of the risky behaviours that some young people exhibit. Consequently, significant incidents have occurred as a result of young people learning from, and then also engaging in, high-risk behaviours that they have seen their co-residents display.</p> <p>Leaders and managers have reflected on the home's functioning and young people's experiences since the home opened. They recognise that they admitted young people too quickly, and then did not allow sufficient time for the new manager and staff team to establish their roles and to enable the home to stabilise, before admitting more young people. Decisions are currently being made to remedy this situation, in an attempt to provide a more settled time and a reduction in incidents.</p> <p>Behaviour management requires improvement. Daily targets are, in the main, too generic. They do not include young people's individual needs, their current behaviours and risks. As a result, strategies used by staff to promote positive behaviour (targets, incentives and sanctions) do not encourage young people well enough to make different choices and to take responsibility for their behaviours.</p> <p>The education arrangements for the current three young people require improvement. The registered manager has been a strong advocate in trying to resolve this deficiency. Although not successful, he has been persistent in pursuing educational services for the young people. He has liaised well with the local authority and the virtual school head to ensure that the young people's educational requirements are given priority. A young person's social worker confirmed that there had been an unacceptable delay in securing an education provision for the young person. However, after a three-month period, this young person is now starting to attend school again.</p>	

Staff provide young people with good support to develop and strengthen relationships with their families. Staff help young people to visit their families and will often supervise visits if required, in accordance with young people's individual care plans.

Young people are supported to try new activities and to develop their hobbies. Some young people have started to play rugby and have enjoyed visits to the theatre.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
<p>Care planning and risk management plans require improvement as they do not detail comprehensively strategies for staff to manage or reduce risks successfully. As a result, staff are not always effective in helping young people to stay safe. Care-planning targets are not focused on promoting young people's personal development. As a result, young people's progress is slow and they are not being stretched to reach their potential.</p> <p>Positive behaviour by the young people is not promoted consistently by the staff team. Some young people frequently swear, and this behaviour often goes unchallenged by the staff. As a result, young people are not learning to speak to each other or adults with respect. As a consequence, young people are developing poor social skills.</p> <p>Missing from home incidents have reduced; however, the manager has not ensured that all young people have individualised 'missing from home' protocols which have been approved by or agreed with the local police. This means that there is not an agreed and/or shared understanding of each agency's expectations and responsibilities.</p> <p>Records identify that, when the young people returned from going missing, they were not given the opportunity for a return-home interview with an independent person. The manager had not actively challenged placing authorities with regard to their statutory responsibility to conduct these interviews. In addition, the manager and staff team have not explored where the young person had been or with whom or considered exploitation indicators. As a result, staff are not able to learn from incidents or help to reduce the risk of these incidents continuing to happen.</p> <p>The manager has liaised with a wide range of agencies to gain an understanding of the risks within the local area. He has used all of this information to devise an</p>	

informative and up-to-date locality risk assessment.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Inadequate
<p>This home is led by an enthusiastic, but new, registered manager. The provider is well established and, overall, has a good track record of delivering positive outcomes for young people. However, the support given to the new manager has not been effective enough to help him to deliver these outcomes yet in this home. Insufficient learning has been taken from the provider's other registered children's homes and implemented in this home. As a result, not all of the regulations for children's homes are met.</p> <p>The manager's review of incidents has not been sufficiently challenging to identify weaknesses, and to learn lessons to remedy and improve the practice of staff. Not all significant incidents are reported to the appropriate authorities, including the regulator. The manager failed to share pertinent information with the local safeguarding hub, despite receiving information about a safeguarding concern involving a young person. The manager did inform the young person's social worker, but failed to follow up the lack of actions taken thereafter.</p> <p>With the exception of one visit, independent monitoring of the home takes place monthly. Reports demonstrate a lack of challenge and rigorous scrutiny by the visitor. The provider has arranged a meeting with the visitor to determine how their expertise can be used more effectively in the future.</p> <p>The current staffing levels and the staff's lack of training in key areas mean that young people's challenging behaviour is not always managed well. Not all staff have completed all of the mandatory training required by the provider, and neither are they provided with specialist training that will help them to respond more effectively to the young people's current needs and behaviours. For example, staff have not received training in supporting young people who misuse substances or have complex attachment needs. This lack of training restricts the ability of staff to understand and meet the needs of the young people they look after.</p> <p>Staff say that they feel well supported and listened to by their manager. They appreciate the manager working alongside them. Staff confirm that they attend regular team meetings and receive informal and formal supervision. However, staff are not always provided with an opportunity to discuss their work after a significant incident or missing-from-home episode. As a result, opportunities for staff to develop their skills are restricted.</p>	

The registered manager has not yet completed a formal review of the quality of care provided in the home. A written report of this review is required to be provided to Ofsted at least once every six months. The first report of this type is now overdue.

Action to remedy areas for improvement identified at a health and safety audit in 2016 has been slow. Consequently, portable appliance testing has not been carried out and this leaves those living in the home at risk of harm.

Overall, the physical environment is welcoming, which is commendable given the number of significant incidents that have resulted in damage being caused at the home. However, key-pad locks on the young people's bedroom doors detract from the homely environment that the manager has been a strong advocate to maintain.

The manager has not ensured that the register used to document young people's admission and discharge from the home is well maintained. Important information, required by regulation, is missing.

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
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