

1236916

Registered provider: Utopia Children's Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

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

Inspection dates: 18 December 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account

requires improvement to be good

How well children and young people are helped and protected

requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

requires improvement to be good

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.

Date of last inspection: 10 February 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement

Enforcement action since last inspection: None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home requires improvement to be good because:

- Behaviour support plans and risk assessments do not provide staff with clear instructions and guidance on how to recognise, respond to and minimise behavioural incidents and risks.
- Missing-from-home incidents have increased for one child. In all cases staff took appropriate action to safeguard the child and in most cases she was found and returned home quickly. However, although requesting that the local authority completes return home interviews, the manager has not followed this up further when they have not taken place within 72 hours of the child's return.
- Sanctions for unwanted behaviour do not always provide children with an opportunity to consider the impact that their behaviour has on themselves and others. At times, a child has been sanctioned for going missing.
- The administration and management of medicines requires improvement. This is because pharmaceutical guidelines are not consistently being followed.
- Not all serious incidents that have occurred in the home have been reported to Ofsted as required. This regulatory breach was also identified at the last full inspection.
- Leaders and managers have yet to use monitoring and review systems effectively to make continuous improvements in the quality of care in the home.

The children's home's strengths:

- The manager and the care team are nurturing in their approach and demonstrate genuine care for the children. The children said that they feel safe and happy living here. As a result, their emotional resilience, confidence and social skills have improved.
- Children benefit from living in a home that is warm, welcoming, child-friendly and well maintained. Photographs of the children are displayed around the home.
- Children are looked after by staff who are suitably vetted, trained and supported.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/02/2017	Full	Requires improvement

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet 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>13: The leadership and management standard</p> <p>In order to meet the leadership and management standard the registered person must</p> <p>(h) use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13(2)(h))</p>	28/02/2018
<p>14: The care planning standard</p> <p>The care planning standard is that children:</p> <p>(a) receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home. (Regulation 14(1)(a))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that care and behaviour management plans and risk assessments include current information about the children's needs and identify how these needs will be met.</p>	28/02/2018
<p>23: Medicines</p> <p>The registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received into the children's home. (Regulation 23(1))</p> <p>This relates specifically to ensuring that medication that is refused is disposed of appropriately.</p>	28/02/2018
<p>40: Notification of a serious event</p> <p>The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if:</p>	28/02/2018

there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious.

(Regulation 40)

Recommendations

- Ensure that when a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority provides an opportunity for the child to have an independent return home interview. ('Guide to the children's home's regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)
- Ensure that any sanction used to address poor behaviour is restorative in nature, to help children to recognise the impact of their behaviour on themselves, the staff caring for them and the wider community. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.38)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Children are looked after by a manager and a staff team who are nurturing, kind and fun, and who provide continuity of care. Since the last inspection in February 2017, one young person has left the home; the two remaining children experienced a six-month period of stability. Following a suitable assessment being undertaken, a new child has moved into the home.

For one child there has been an increase in significant incidents. These incidents include an increase in allegations, going missing from the home and self-harming behaviours. Although leaders and managers are working hard to keep the child safe, care plans, behaviour support plans and risk assessments do not provide clear direction for staff about how to manage all of the child's behaviours.

At times, the staff team's management of children's behaviour is variable. In addition, incentive plans and targets do not always provide children with opportunities to maximise their potential. Sanctions are not always restorative, and do not help the children to understand risks or explore alternative ways to manage their anxieties. At times, a child has been sanctioned for going missing.

The administration and management of medication requires improvement. Staff have not disposed correctly of medication that has been refused. During the inspection, the

inspectors identified that a refused tablet had been returned to the blister pack to be offered another time. This practice is not in accordance with current pharmaceutical guidance.

The children attend all necessary health appointments, visit their families and participate in many fun and exciting days out. Children are supported to develop their personal interests and talents, for example performing arts and horse riding. This has contributed to children growing in confidence and an improvement in their emotional and social skills. The staff interact very positively with the children. Children said that they like living in this home, and in general get along with each other well. One child said, 'We are one mad, happy family.'

The staff invest in the children. The manager and the staff team have meaningful conversations with children, just as a parent would. The promotion of education is a strength of the manager and his team. Staff are advocating well for one child who is not attending school. The staff have sought alternative education services, and challenged other professionals in relation to this.

Children are provided with a number of opportunities to have their views, wishes and feelings heard and acted on; these opportunities include house meetings. The manager ensures that the expressed views of children are shared and considered during formal staff meetings. Children are invited to attend staff meetings, where progress is celebrated and support is identified to address any difficulties.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Since the last inspection, missing-from-home incidents have increased for one child. Records demonstrate that, generally, staff take appropriate action to find the child. However, on one occasion staff did not report her missing to the police within the agreed timescales. In addition, despite repeated requests, the manager has not always been successful in following up with the local authority when it has not conducted a return home interview. As a result, where the child has been, and with whom, remains unknown.

Behaviour management plans and risk assessments require improvement. They mainly consist of a chronology of historical events. They do not detail the children's current needs, behaviours and known risks. Therefore, they do not provide staff with clear guidance to support children in managing their emotional and behavioural needs.

Staff demonstrate a good understanding of child protection policies, and safeguarding concerns have been responded to effectively and swiftly. Training records confirm that all care staff receive regular safeguarding training. Staff demonstrate confidence at dealing with safeguarding concerns. New staff and casual workers are suitably vetted before they work with children as a result of leaders and managers following safer recruitment procedures.

The care team successfully helps children to develop relationships with family members, significant others and friends. Children said that they look forward to spending time with their family and friends, which helps them to maintain important relationships. This in turn supports their sense of identity, and helps them to understand their lives.

Restraint is only used as a last resort. Since the last inspection, there has been one recorded use of physical intervention. This was for a short duration, and was appropriate in order to keep children safe. The manager's oversight of this incident was good.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

Since the last inspection, there have been some improvements in the leadership and management of the home. However, the use of monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care requires further work. Weaknesses identified at this inspection had not previously been identified by the manager and independent visitor.

An organisational business development plan is in place. However, the manager has not considered devising a development plan specific to this home that includes the views, wishes and feelings of the staff and children. As a result, the plan lacks vision about how to develop and improve the quality of care and services provided specifically in this home.

The manager has worked hard to address most of the shortfalls identified at the previous full inspection. While progress has been made, not all regulatory requirements raised previously have been fully met. The previous requirement in respect of notifying Ofsted of significant incidents has been repeated because the manager has omitted to notify HMCI about two serious incidents.

The manager provides staff with good verbal direction and support. Staff said that they feel the home is well managed and that they are supported. They said that they receive regular supervision, and their performance is appraised annually, which helps them to reflect on and learn from their practice. They receive effective mandatory and specific training to help them to meet the children's individual needs.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and 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.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, 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'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1236916

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Utopia Children's Services Limited

Registered provider address: Hazlewoods, Windsor House, Bayshill Road,
Cheltenham GL50 3AT

Responsible individual: Louis Stuart-Kelso

Registered manager: Leon James

Inspector(s)

Sharron Escott, social care inspector
Clare Davies, social care inspector

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