

1244108

Registered provider: Bay Tree House (Gravesend) Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is privately managed and is registered to provide accommodation for three young people who may have learning disabilities. Placements are medium- or long-term for young people who have suffered abuse or neglect and who may display challenging behaviour due to their emotional difficulties.

Inspection dates: 5 to 6 March 2018

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected **good**

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

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: first inspection of service

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: not applicable

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- Young people live in a homely atmosphere where staff support them to personalise their environment, helping them to settle quickly and gain a sense of belonging.

- Young people who have complex needs are making good progress and staff celebrate the small but very significant steps they take.
- Young people are developing strategies which assist them to moderate their behaviour and emotions.
- Young people have good relationships with staff. Staff are child-focused, caring and nurturing in their approach to young people.
- Staff are positive and solution-focused in their approach, seeking to find solutions and working through the challenges that they face.
- Young people are involved in decisions about their care, and in decisions made in the home. Staff consult them when planning meals and activities, and provide young people with many memorable firsts.
- Managers have positive relationships with other professionals. This is evident in care plans, and through joint decision-making to manage risks and meet the complex needs of young people placed.
- Staff value the registered manager and the support that she provides. They respect the objective and constructive guidance she provides, and the encouragement she gives to their performance. Staff report that this increases their self-confidence and motivates them to develop professionally.

The children's home's areas for development:

- The recording of some supervision meetings does not include all of the information required.
- The recording of compatibility assessments is weak, and does not provide staff with the necessary guidance to reduce risks inherent in the relationships and the impact which young people have upon each other.
- Staff handover meetings are not recorded, which results in the risk that vital information is not shared with all staff.
- The registered manager has not notified Ofsted of all significant incidents and events.
- Independent visitors do not provide a robust and impartial assessment of the necessary aspects of the service and records. Shortfalls identified at this inspection had not been previously highlighted.
- The registered manager has not ensured that all the required consents are in

place. This leaves young people in a position of vulnerability should medical treatment be required.

- Staff do not always record the outcomes of consultations with young people, and thus are unable to substantiate when the views of young people have had an impact upon decision-making about the home.

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>Regulation 36</p> <p>(1) The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which—</p> <p>(a) include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 (17)(18)(19)(20) in relation to each child;</p> <p>(b) are kept up to date; and</p> <p>(c) are signed and dated by the author of each entry.</p> <p>Schedule 3</p> <p>19. A copy of any plan for the care of the child prepared by the child's placing authority, and of the placement plan.</p> <p>20. The date and result of any review of the placing authority's plan for the care of the child, or of the child's placement plan.</p> <p>(Regulation 36(1)(a)(b)(c) Schedule 3(19)(20))</p> <p>This is with specific reference to ensuring that children's records contain copies of relevant care plans and signed consents.</p>	01/05/2018
<p>Regulation 40</p> <p>Notification of a serious event</p> <p>(4) The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person with delay if—</p> <p>(a) a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in, or subject to, sexual exploitation</p> <p>(b) an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious</p> <p>(c) there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there</p> <p>(e) there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious.</p> <p>(5) A notification made under this regulation—</p> <p>(a) must include details of—</p> <p>(i) this matter;</p> <p>(ii) the other persons, bodies or organisations (if any) who or which have been notified; and</p> <p>(iii) any actions being taken by the registered person as a result</p>	01/05/2018

of the matter; (b) must be made or confirmed in writing. (Regulation 40(4)(a)(b)(c)(e)(5)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(b))	
Regulation 44 Independent person: visits and reports (1) The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month. (2) When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the independent person— (a) if they consent, to interview in private such of the children, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as the independent person requires; and (b) to inspect the premises of the home and such of the home's records (except for a child's case records, unless the child and child's placing authority consent) as the independent person requires. (3) A visit by the independent person to the home may be unannounced. (4) The independent person must produce a report about a visit ("the independent person's report") which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether— (a) children are effectively safeguarded; and (b) the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being. (5) The independent person's report may recommend actions that the registered person may take in relation to the home and timescales within which the registered person must consider whether or not to take those actions. (Regulation 44(1)(2)(a)(b)(3)(4)(a)(b)(5))	01/05/2018

Recommendations

- Any individual appointed to carry out visits to the home as an independent person must make a rigorous and impartial assessment of the home's arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children in the children's home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.5)
- A record of supervision should be kept for staff, including the manager. The record should provide evidence that supervision is being delivered in line with regulation 33 (4)(b). ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.3)
- It is good practice for a note of the content and/or outcomes of supervision sessions to be kept and to ensure that both the person giving the supervision and

staff member have a copy of the record. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.4)

- Regulations 35-39 detail the records that must be kept in children's homes. All children's case records (regulation 36) must be kept up to date and stored securely whilst they remain in the home. Case records must be kept up to date and signed and dated by the author of each entry. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Young people are cared for in a warm and friendly environment, which is tailored to meet their needs. Young people report that they are supported to personalise their own rooms and are able to contribute their ideas about the decoration of communal areas, which promotes an enhanced sense of belonging. Young people enjoy a safe environment in which they feel valued.

Young people are making good progress as a result of the strong relationships they have with managers and staff. Staff and managers spend significant amounts of quality time with young people, building trust and listening to them. These close relationships have enabled young people to build their self-confidence and they are beginning to express themselves more appropriately. One young person said, 'All of the staff are brilliant. They are very patient with me. They don't tell me off, but they explain how I could do things differently. I know that they want what is best for me.' One social worker said, 'My child has made amazing progress while living here. The staff really care about him and do everything possible to keep him safe.'

Young people are taking a greater interest in their own health as a result of the support and encouragement provided by staff. They now understand how important it is to maintain a healthy lifestyle and think more carefully about their lifestyle choices. Staff ensure that young people attend all of their healthcare appointments, help young people to understand the purpose of these and have input into their healthcare planning. Young people's diets are more extensive and healthier than previously and they are supported to try new and healthy foods, resulting in mealtimes which are pleasant and enjoyable for young people. One young person said, 'Before I came here, I used to eat rubbish. The staff have made sure that I now eat healthy food and have shown me how to make really healthy meals, which I will be able to make when I live on my own.'

Resuming education has been a challenge for young people. The manager has tenaciously challenged placing and host local authorities to ensure that young people are offered appropriate education. This has met with limited success and the manager has now escalated her concerns within the placing local authorities. Young people are provided with a daily routine, which encompasses a range of educational activities in place of formal education. They are supported by staff to undertake online education.

One young person is desperate to attend school and engages well with staff in alternative educational opportunities.

Young people benefit from careful placement decisions. Managers and staff consider carefully whether the home is right for a young person and give consideration to the impact they may have upon others living in the home. Admissions are planned very carefully, and when possible involve staff and managers meeting young people prior to their admission. Young people are involved in the preparation for new young people coming to the home to ensure that they are welcomed and enabled to settle in a timely manner.

Young people contribute to all aspects of their care planning. With the support of staff, they identify their own targets and goals. Staff follow detailed care plans, which are updated and reviewed in consultation with the young people. Care plans provide practical guidance on how to meet the needs of the young people, and effective key-working sessions ensure that practical support and advice are given to young people, in addition to the emotional support required to overcome some of the challenges faced as a result of their previous experience and trauma. Young people also explore their feelings, anxieties or worries with staff, who provide strategies and guidance about ways of managing these more positively.

Managers and staff use a variety of methods to seek young people's views and opinions, ensuring that young people actively contribute to plans and decisions which involve them. Young people are reluctant to engage in formal house meetings, and staff have created other less formal opportunities to ensure that they consider young people's views. Recording of the discussions elicited through these opportunities is weak, although staff and young people are fully conversant with the issues discussed and agreed upon. Young people report that they feel that their opinions are important to staff and that these are acted upon, resulting in young people feeling empowered and valued.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Young people live in a safe and caring home, where staff are conscious of the need to do all they can to make the environment homely, while keeping young people safe. Staff are aware of their roles in protecting young people and are clear about how to report any concerns. Responses to concerns are robust and reported to appropriate safeguarding professionals. Staff work closely with local authority social workers to identify and mitigate against risks to young people, but they are not risk-averse. This allows young people to take age-appropriate risks in line with their abilities, and also allows them to learn from their mistakes, which is a valuable life skill.

Assessments and plans address all known risk factors and provide guidance and practical strategies to staff to reduce or prevent risks to young people. These are regularly reviewed to ensure that the most up-to-date information is considered. Staff share the assessments and plans with young people, providing support and education about young people's risky behaviours. One young person spoke about how his key worker has

helped him to understand the risks involved with substance misuse and the young person described how this has proved to be a deterrent. One social worker said:

'I know my child is safe here. Staff understand his risk-taking behaviour and invest time and care in supporting him to understand the impact of his behaviour and to reduce this. Communication is excellent and staff ensure that I am appraised in detail about his life, both inside and outside of the home.'

Safeguarding policies and processes are clear and implemented effectively. Staff knowledge and understanding of safeguarding matters is supported by regular training. Staff are competent in recognising actual and potential harm and make appropriate referrals to the safeguarding agencies. The manager consults the designated officer appropriately. The manager has not always notified Ofsted of significant incidents and events as required.

Staff utilise de-escalation techniques and are confident in conflict management. As a result, the use of physical intervention is low in frequency, duration and physicality. Young people contribute to their own behaviour management plans and know what is expected of themselves and others. One young person said, 'Staff know when I am getting frustrated and know what to do to calm me down before I go over the top.'

Staff respond appropriately when a young person is missing from care. Actions to be taken in such an event are detailed in each young person's care plan and the manager is diligent in ensuring that return to care interviews are carried out. Staff are familiar with local and organisational protocols and liaise effectively with placing authority social workers when young people do go missing.

The manager ensures that diligent and effective health and safety measures keep young people safe, but do not compromise the warm and homely environment. Fire evacuation and equipment checks are undertaken at appropriate intervals ensuring safety for all. One young person proudly explained the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire.

Staff recruitment practices include all of the required checks and references, ensuring that those who work with young people are fit to do so.

Young people say that they feel safe and that staff are able to protect them. They know who they can approach should they have a concern and all of the young people were keen to point out that they feel comfortable with and can approach any staff member. Young people are aware of how to make a complaint and know what to expect when doing so. Staff ensure that young people have access to an independent advocate should they need one.

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

This is a new and evolving service led by a manager who is passionate and committed. She knows the young people well and harnesses services to meet their needs. Her

approach is young-person-focused and her presence is visible to them. Young people spoke about the manager in glowing terms, confirming that she makes them feel safe and important.

Staff describe the manager as supportive and reflective, and these characteristics result in a culture of meaningful support and supervision by a manager who closely monitors young people's progress and acts upon concerns in a timely manner.

Staff report supervision to be effective, providing an opportunity to reflect upon their practice and relationships with young people. One staff member described supervision as an opportunity to take an overview of his work, and the impact that this has upon the young people.

The recording of supervision meetings is a weakness which is replicated in other aspects of the service. Staff handover meetings are robust and effective, but these are not recorded, which could mean that vital information is missed in the future.

Care planning is detailed; however, the manager had not ensured that all necessary consents are provided, although this was rectified during the inspection visit.

Staff meetings take place on a regular basis; however, the recording of these is weak. This results in the risk of vital information not being shared with staff members who are absent from the meetings, and inhibits consistency of response and actions when caring for the young people.

The home operates a thorough core training programme, which is completed by all staff members within a designated timeframe. Safeguarding training incorporates a particular focus on radicalisation, child sexual exploitation and young people involved in gangs.

The locality risk assessment is thorough and demonstrates a wide understanding of the risks imposed within the area, and includes guidance for staff when considering activities and outings in the local area, both supervised and unsupervised by staff.

There have been two complaints since the service became operational, both of which were dealt with thoroughly and sensitively by the manager, ensuring that complainants were fully appraised of the actions to be taken to prevent recurrence.

The manager works closely with the independent visitor and acts appropriately upon recommendations made. However, external monitoring does not provide a robust and useful evaluation of the service. Some of the shortfalls demonstrated during this inspection had not previously been identified by the independent visitor, which diminishes the value of the visits as a tool for the manager when striving for continuous improvement.

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: 1244108

Provision sub-type: children's home

Registered provider: Bay Tree House (Gravesend) Limited

Registered provider address: 8 Shrubbery Road, Gravesend DA12 1JW

Responsible individual: David Lewis

Registered manager: Clare Lewis

Inspector

Jacqueline Georghiou, social care inspector

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