

1264438

Registered provider: Blue Mountain Homes Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

A private provider operates and runs this home. It provides care for children and young people whose plan is for them to live in a medium- to long-term residential setting. The home was registered in December 2017 and the manager has held registered manager status since that time.

Inspection dates: 21 to 22 August 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: this is the children's home's first full inspection

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

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>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—</p> <p>children are effectively safeguarded; and</p> <p>the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being. (Regulation 44 (4)(a)(b))</p>	05/10/2018
<p>The registered manager must undertake such continuing professional development as is necessary to ensure that the registered manager has the skills needed for managing the home. (Regulation 29(4))</p> <p>Specifically, this refers to providing the registered manager with regular professional supervision by a person with appropriate experience.</p>	05/10/2018
<p>The registered person must ensure that all employees—</p> <p>undertake appropriate continuing professional development;</p> <p>receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience; and</p> <p>have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (4)(a)(b))</p> <p>Specifically, this refers to ensuring that new staff are supervised regularly in line with the home's statement of purpose.</p>	05/10/2018
<p>The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the</p>	05/10/2018

<p>children’s home that—</p> <p>helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and</p> <p>promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) and (2)(h))</p> <p>Specifically, this refers to demonstrating how the following actions will be monitored:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Improve the quality of restraint records to ensure that they fully meet the regulations. ■ Ensure that staff consistently implement risk-management strategies and that any new concerns shared with the registered manager are quickly communicated to the staff team. ■ Take prompt action to repair the damage to the playroom door and wall, replace the automatic door closure and improve the homeliness of the playroom and dining room. ■ Review the development plan to show a clear focus on continually improving the experiences and outcomes for children and young people, with details of the actions taken to address weaknesses and the timescales for completion. 	
<p>The care planning standard is that children—</p> <p>receive effectively planned care in or through the children’s home; and</p> <p>have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are</p>	<p>05/10/2018</p>

within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home's statement of purpose. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) and (2)(a))

Specifically, this refers to obtaining full and accurate information and producing robustly written impact risk assessments that provide a clear rationale to support the making of placements and the potential impact on the existing group of children and young people.

Recommendations

- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. 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)
- When a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority must provide an opportunity for the child to have an independent return home interview. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children and young people receive good-quality, bespoke care and support from a motivated and nurturing staff team. Most of the children and young people have previously experienced trauma and abuse. Although they have moved into the home at short notice, they receive a warm welcome and are settling in. The children and young people like living at the home. A social worker said that a child who recently moved to the home told them: 'I don't need a social worker anymore. I'm alright.'

Children and young people enjoy good engagement with the staff, with whom they have forged good relationships. The staff act as positive parental role models who offer them good advice and guidance. Meaningful key-worker sessions between children, young people and staff underpin their plans and build on the positive and trusting relationships. Constructive feedback that staff record and share with the children and young people reinforces each child's and young person's worth and builds their self-esteem. Social workers report good communication and frequent updates from the staff team of the progress of, or any concerns about, each child and young person.

The views of children and young people are listened to and acted on, if appropriate, which helps them to feel valued. They know how to complain and how to make representation if they feel unhappy. The one complaint made by a young person who no longer lives at the home was confirmed in the complaints record to be resolved to their satisfaction.

Children and young people's access to primary and specialist healthcare services provide those who attend with sound health advice and support to live healthy lifestyles and make informed choices about a range of issues. Some young people refuse to attend their health appointments, but the staff continue to encourage their attendance. Children and young people benefit from a staff team culture that places a high value on education. Plans to help the children and young people access bespoke educational provisions are under way after the summer holidays.

The children and young people can maintain appropriate relationships with family and friends with the support of the staff team. Positive friendships are encouraged, and children and young people can invite friends to the home. Good support and preparation for children and young people to learn independence skills, irrespective of their age and ability, improve their confidence and help them to do more for themselves.

Children and young people are afforded opportunities to experience lots of fun and varied age-appropriate activities that widen their outlook. Examples include bike riding, swimming, camping, sports, cinema, visiting restaurants, and taking trips out of the local area.

Since the registration of the home in December 2017, several unsuitable placements have ended. Despite the hard work and commitment from the staff team to maintain the

placements, they were unable to meet the young people's complex and unpredictable needs. A social worker said: 'I found the staff to be very welcoming and friendly. They were also very committed to this young person and tried very hard to make the placement work. This meant trying to move on from difficult incidents with his behaviour. The manager built a particularly close relationship with the child and spent many hours and significant time supporting him and the staff team to manage his behaviour. The placement lasted as long as it did thanks to this manager.' A missing-from-home professional said: 'There have been some very complex young persons in this home which they have dealt with very well under extremely difficult conditions.'

That said, and although it is early days, the current group of children and young people are settling in well. A significant reduction in the number of missing-from-home incidents, frequent serious incidents and unrest in the home has arisen from the changes to the group dynamic. Lessons learned, and the temporary reduction of further placements, secure the current group of children and young people's chances of long-term stability.

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

Careful recruitment and vetting procedures minimise opportunities for unsuitable adults to have access to the children and young people. Allegations against staff are handled appropriately. This is done in conjunction with the designated officer, which ensures a transparent process that supports and protects children and adults respectively.

Young people are helped to take controlled risks when they go out on activities and meet up with friends in the community. This helps to promote their independence. The staff make welfare calls or go out and meet the young people as a way of monitoring their well-being, which acts as an effective safeguarding mechanism. The high number of going missing incidents that were once commonplace have significantly reduced because most involved young people who no longer live at the home. On the occasions that children and young people have absented themselves from the home, the staff make every effort to find them and report them missing to the police. Although the police carry out safe-and-well visits, the identity of the professional who does the return home interviews has not been agreed between the home and placing authorities. This does not ensure that children and young people have an independent person to talk to about the reasons for not returning home.

Children and young people discuss their worries with staff, which shows an emerging level of trust. A restorative and conflict-management approach helps children and young people to take responsibility for their behaviour and reduces police involvement. They are steadily learning to self-regulate and make positive changes. Incentives recognise good behaviours and individual 'acts of kindness', when children and young people behave in selfless ways towards others. Improvements in the children and young people's relationships with staff enable the staff to engage them in discussions about keeping safe. Physical intervention is used as a last resort, and only after attempts to de-escalate challenging behaviours are unsuccessful. Although the restraint records detail the events leading up to the restraint, they do not make clear the location of the

physical intervention and the details of staff debriefs to ensure that they fully comply with the regulations.

Staff training in safeguarding children and young people helps them to recognise and respond to abuse and harm. Most staff demonstrate well their understanding of safeguarding and managing risky behaviours. Good risk management and monitoring of the children and young people help to protect them from the harm associated with child sexual exploitation, radicalisation, self-harm and other identified risks relating to their vulnerabilities. However, despite the risk-management documents and the monitoring of the children and young people together, not all risks have been recognised, acted on in practice and shared with the staff team quickly to minimise an escalation of incidents.

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

The home was registered in December 2017. The registered manager is new to the management role, but she has previous residential experience that includes deputy and acting up in manager roles. She is currently working towards the level 5 leadership and management qualification.

The registered manager has ambition and high expectations for the children and young people in her care and promotes their individuality and progress. She is very knowledgeable about the children and young people and is highly supportive of the relatively inexperienced, but motivated and caring, staff team. A suitably experienced deputy manager ably supports the registered manager. Since registration, several staff have left, and new staff have been recruited. Current staff vacancies are in the process of being filled to maintain the appropriate staffing levels and continuity of care.

However, shortfalls directly linked to the leadership and management of the home have impeded the speed at which the service has been able to grow. Primarily, the formal verbal undertaking made by the provider during the registration process to support the registered manager in her new role has not been fulfilled. For instance, the registered manager has not received any formal, recorded supervision to ensure her support and continued learning and development. The provider is now taking remedial action to address this concern.

Insufficiently robust and careful matching of children and young people has led to mismatched placements and subsequent incidents, and a very challenging and difficult time for the staff team, children and young people. The impact risk assessments do not provide a clear rationale to support the making of the placements. A lack of professional curiosity has potentially limited the receipt of accurate information from placing authorities, which would determine the registered manager's decision to accept or reject certain placements. Yet the registered manager has rejected placements due to compatibility issues. She has learned lessons from the experience of making previous placements. She said: 'It's been a real learning curve for me.'

Regulation 44 visits provide a good quality assurance role. However, the independent visitor does not make the safety and welfare statement explicitly clear in the reports.

The staff members feel very well supported and positively mentored by the registered manager, who recognises the emotional impact of the work on the staff team. One staff member described the registered manager as, 'the most supportive manager that I've had. She is there for the rest of the staff team. They can ring her. We have come a long way this far. It's so nice to see.' The registered manager facilitates regular staff training, team meetings, daily handovers and impromptu support and advice to staff that helps them to care for the children and young people. However, the staff do not receive formal recorded two-weekly supervision as set out in the home's statement of purpose.

Some of the records lack clarity and do not ensure fully contextual information. Overall, the home is clean, tidy and well presented, but the lounge and playroom lack a warm ambience. The damage caused to one of the door frames, broken automatic closure on one of the doors and damage caused to the wall have not been repaired with sufficient haste. The manager's development plan would benefit from a full review of the home's strengths and weaknesses to show a clear focus on continually improving the experiences and outcomes for children and young people, with details of the actions taken to address weaknesses and the timescales for completion.

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 difference 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: 1264438

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Blue Mountain Homes Ltd

Registered provider address: Flat 17, Leeland Mansions, Leeland Road, London W13 9HE

Responsible individual: Pradeep Manaktala

Registered manager: Cheryl Wallace

Inspector(s)

Jacqueline Malcolm, social care inspector

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