

SC033502

Registered provider: City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

A local authority owns and operates this home. It provides care for up to four children aged between 12 and 18. The children may have social, emotional and behavioural needs.

The registered manager left the home in February 2021. There is an acting manager in post who has yet to apply to register with Ofsted.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

We last visited this setting on 8 September 2020 to carry out an assurance visit. The report is published on our website.

Inspection dates: 20 to 21 April 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 12 March 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: declined in effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/03/2020	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
21/05/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good
07/03/2019	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
11/07/2018	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Some children have lived at the home for several years and regard it as their childhood home. When children move in, they experience a planned introduction. This helps new children settle into the home with little disruption to the existing group. Children enjoy spending time at the home and living together.

The home's psychologist prepares an assessment of the children both before and after they move into the home, highlighting the extra support that each child needs. This information gives staff a good understanding of the children and means that they have clear guidelines on how to adapt their practice to support the children. Consequently, staff provide individualised care and this helps the children to develop trusting relationships with the staff team.

The children make good progress from their starting points. This is despite occasional difficulties that can leave the children feeling frustrated and anxious. In these circumstances, the staff review the children's support plans to ensure that these reflect their changing needs. One professional said, '[Name of child] is doing so well. He is like a different child. He is more confident and is standing tall.'

The staff promote the importance of education. If a child is out of school, the staff provide informal training opportunities until the right school or college is found. Most children have suitable education provisions and regularly attend these. The staff continue to find a wide range of training and learning opportunities for those children who struggle to engage with formal education, including independent living skills. This approach helps to support the children as they move towards adulthood and independence.

The staff use individual sessions and group meetings to involve children in their care planning and in the running of their home. The children have helped the staff make the home's interior more child-friendly, welcoming and homely. The children's latest feedback, however, is about the exterior of the home, which looks institutionalised.

The children have independent advocates, such as personal assistants. The staff receive training to make sure that those children with additional communication needs have the support they need to take part in their care planning. However, not all of the staff fully appreciate the barriers that one child faces because of their communication needs or how frustrating this is for the child. Consequently, this child is more reluctant to engage in the home's daily routine.

The staff recognise the importance of the children's relationships with their families and they support the children to have time with those who are important to them. This helps the children to experience positive relationships. As a result, the children are not isolated from their families and friends.

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

The manager completes a detailed impact risk assessment which helps to match new children with the existing group. This makes sure that risks can be carefully managed and means that children's placements are more likely to be successful.

The staff know the children's risks and vulnerabilities. They follow the individualised strategies detailed in the children's risk assessments. As a result, children are better protected from harm and risks to their safety are reducing. For example, there has been a reduction in children self-harming because the staff's response to these risks is consistent.

There are occasions when the children go missing from the home. In these circumstances, the staff support the children to come home by remaining in constant telephone contact and encouraging them to return to the home. There has been a reduction in these incidents because of this approach.

The children take part in informal chats and structured key-work sessions with the staff. These help the children to talk about the issues affecting their lives, such as substance misuse and unsafe relationships, and work with the staff to understand how these issues may place them at risk of harm. Consequently, the children learn to take age-appropriate responsibility for their own actions.

The staff look at any trends or patterns in children's behaviour. This includes monitoring occasions when children may have misused drugs or alcohol. Staff use this information to secure external support for the children when necessary. The staff are keen to understand children's experiences and have benefited from one child attending a team meeting to educate staff about different drugs that children may use.

The staff get to know the children well and use this knowledge to de-escalate potentially volatile incidents. This means that the use of physical restraint continues to reduce. Consequently, children learn how to better manage their own behaviours and frustrations.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home has experienced a further change of manager and management team since the last inspection and the current manager has yet to apply to register with Ofsted. Although new in post, the manager has a good understanding of the children and their needs and the staff welcome her open-door approach.

There is a mixed team of both long-standing and newer members of staff. This brings an eclectic mix of skills and experience that children benefit from. The manager is focusing on the continuing development of the staff team to help its members to work more cohesively together. This brings more consistency of care for the children.

Leaders and managers take prompt action to investigate any complaints or allegations against staff. Although not upheld, a recent whistle-blowing complaint raised concerns about a manager and members of staff not following the local authority's policies and procedures in respect of the code of professional conduct and conflict of interest policy. Managers at all levels and all members of staff must ensure that they are familiar with these policies and that their practice is in line with these.

The independent visitor reports help the manager to make improvements to the home. However, the visitor has only completed virtual visits to the home, and feedback has not been sought from others, such as children's families or other professionals. This does not provide independent oversight about whether the children are safe or if their welfare is promoted.

Staff benefit from regular supervision and team meetings. These provide the staff with opportunities for reflective discussions about the children and their own development. External speakers provide additional learning opportunities for staff. This means that the staff gain the skills that they need to support children's progress and development.

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 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>In particular, ensure that managers and staff understand the local authority's conflict of interest policy and code of professional conduct policy through ongoing training and discussion.</p>	30 June 2021
<p>The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month.</p> <p>When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the independent person—</p> <p>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 the child's placing authority consent) as the independent person requires.</p> <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 (1) (2)(b) (4)(a)(b))</p>	31 May 2021

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that as some children in residential care may be worried about being stigmatised or bullied by their peers for being 'different' because of where they live, that the external front fencing and games area are designed to take account of this. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.13)
- The registered person should ensure that 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. In particular, for this home, provide all staff with deaf perspective and communication training. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 23, paragraph 4.24)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, 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: SC033502

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council

Registered provider address: City Hall, Centenary Square, Bradford, West Yorkshire BD1 1HY

Responsible individual: Mark Trinder

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Tina Ruffles, Social Care Inspector
Gemma McDonnell, Social Care Inspector

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