

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	09/08/2016
Unique reference number	1183479
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Slough Children's Services Trust Limited (09487106)
Registered provider address	Slough Children's Services Trust Limited, 1 Glass Wharf, Bristol BS2 0ZX

Responsible individual	Jackie Pape
Registered manager	Karen Ehret
Inspector	Chris Peel

Inspection date	09/08/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement

1183479

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- This inspection was conducted when neither the registered manager nor her assistant were present. The provider had appointed a suitably qualified and experienced interim manager to cover in their absence. This arrangement was working well, with good communication between the responsible individual and the interim manager and areas identified for improving the service being taken forward.
- The short break service is valued by families and professionals alike. One social worker said, 'They are a very good organisation that breaks the isolation of children and families. A lot of families have children with severe difficulties and have difficulty integrating but the home is very family-oriented. I'm glad to work with them.'
- The home has a designated night for a group of young people with particularly disruptive behaviour to attend. This has both prevented the possible breakdown of family life and enhanced the life experiences of those who attend.
- Progress is made by many children and young people across a range of developmental areas and for some this transfers into other settings. One parent described seeing positive changes in her son's behaviour. Previously, he was passive and wanted to stay inside all day; now, because 'staff have encouraged him and plan the day to go out, he is very happy going out, likes walking 10 to 15 minutes, and he wants to go to the park.'
- Staff are keen to give as much autonomy as possible to children and young people, even if this means it takes more time to complete activities. Combined with the careful setting of targets, this promotes children's and young people's confidence, increases their sense of worth (because staff give them time and they achieve more) and increases skills, particularly self-care skills. This includes dressing, washing and teeth cleaning.
- Safeguarding is a high priority for staff. They are vigilant in their supervision of children and young people and diligent in conveying 'keep safe' messages so that children and young people can, as far as possible, contribute to their own safety.
- Rates of physical interventions, already low, have decreased further over this year. This is partly due to the effective use of sanctions that have helped one young person to manage his own behaviour when warned about the consequences of it continuing or escalating. Other factors are occupying children and young people as much as possible and skilful reading of situations

and intervening early when things may develop undesirably.

- Professionals would like more families to benefit from the service that the home offers.

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 with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The registered person must compile, review and, where appropriate, revise a statement of purpose which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1; specifically to include details of the experience and qualifications of staff. (Regulation 16(1) and (3)(a))	30/09/2016
The registered person must ensure that each individual who works in the home in a care role has the level 3 diploma for residential childcare (England) or equivalent by the date which falls two years after the date on which the individual started working or, in the case of an individual who was working in a home on 1 April 2014, 1 April 2016. (Regulation 32(4) and (5))	30/09/2016
The registered person must ensure that each employee completes an appropriate induction. (Regulation 33(1)(a))	30/09/2016
The registered person must ensure that all employees receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience and have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33(4)(b) and (c))	30/09/2016
The registered person must ensure that the independent person carrying out visits to the home only inspects a child’s case records if the child and the child’s placing authority consent. (Regulation 44(2)(b))	30/09/2016

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further, the service should take account of the following recommendations:

- 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. This includes making a complaint that is dealt with in accordance with regulation 39. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality

standards', page 24, paragraph 4.24)

- The registered person should make best use of information from internal monitoring to ensure continuous improvement. They are responsible for proactively implementing lessons learned and sustaining good practice. This is with particular regard to the timing of fire safety drills. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)
- Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. In particular, it should be clear where information is held so that it is accessible both now and in the future. ('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 service offers residential short breaks for children and young people with learning and/or physical disabilities. The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to six children. It transferred from the control of the borough council to a recently established children's services trust and this was the first full inspection under the new registration.

Previous inspection reports for Breakaway can be found under the Unique Reference Number SC031537.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
04/02/2016	Interim	Sustained Effectiveness

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
<p>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</p>	<p>Good</p>
<p>The manager and staff provide a service to children, young people and their families that fulfils the ethos of the home’s statement of purpose.</p> <p>The rooms are small for the six children who could have short breaks at any one time, but this does not prevent them enjoying and participating in a range of activities. There are a number of alternative activities for children and young people to choose from, including playing on garden equipment, using the sensory room or participating in an activity set up by staff. Trips to facilities in the community are popular and were enjoyed by children and young people during the inspection.</p> <p>The manager and staff rely much less on the locking of internal doors to ensure that children and young people are kept safe. Electronic locks have been deactivated but remain in place, detracting from the homely feel of the building. Suggestions were put forward during the inspection to cover these, retaining them for use if assessed as being required to safeguard a child or young person.</p> <p>Progress is being made by almost all children and young people with regard to self-care, independence skills and achieving educational aims. Collaboration over setting and working towards targets with education providers and families has helped make notable achievements, including reducing anti-social behaviour, use of the toilet and road safety. There is a wealth of evidence of these in the records made of individual targets and how they are being worked towards. Small, achievable steps are identified so that a target of cleaning teeth may start with a child or young person tolerating having a brush in their mouth. One young person who started at that level now carries at least one brush with him, ready to use.</p> <p>These skills are often then transferred to other settings. One social worker recounted how one young person ‘was not able to show independence skills but since being at the home has been empowered because someone else was teaching him. Now he puts his pyjamas in the washing machine, which his mother thought he was not able to do. He is feeling proud of himself, getting his dressing gown and getting in the shower. It is down to quality of workers, and matching the needs of young people to the skills of staff that works well.’</p> <p>The manager is keen to develop services that promote children’s and young people’s progress further and a room in the home has been designated for the use of a homework club. A computer and other resources are being brought together</p>	

to support children and young people in achieving educational targets and, in collaboration with the local authority's virtual head, a tutor has been identified who will work in the home to the same end.

Meetings are held that help children and young people to express their wishes and feelings and give them information that enhances their stay. In a recent meeting, those attending were reminded about who their key worker is and their role. This was facilitated by photographs and social stories and recorded using the same tools, making it accessible afterwards. This is exemplary practice.

The manager and staff ensure that there are lots of opportunities for children and young people to make complaints or comments about the service. There are, for example, communication aids available specifically to facilitate this and a version of the complaints policy using symbols. However, no complaints have been recorded. There is no guidance for staff on how to identify when the behaviour of children and young people who do not verbalise or use symbols demonstrates their unhappiness and could be regarded as a complaint. So the reaction of a young person to the protocol for bath time not being followed by a member of staff was dealt with as a behavioural issue and not as a complaint.

The large majority of families appreciate the care extended to their children, but some are concerned about occasional cancellation of stays and the disappointment experienced, especially when this is at short notice. One parent thought that handovers at the end of stays could be handled better as she is sometimes left to handle a young person having a 'meltdown' when it does not go well.

During the inspection, children and young people were seen running up to the door of the home, obviously looking forward to their stay. They greeted staff and were warmly welcomed in return. Although most interactions are with adults, many children and young people recognise and are pleased to see each other. Some talk about the friends they meet to their parents when at home.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
<p>Staff work hard to establish strong, secure attachments with children and young people, the foundations for safeguarding and promoting well-being. Observations of interactions showed that staff are regarded as protective, supportive and helpful by children and young people.</p> <p>The needs of children and young people are met with a very high level of individualised care and understanding, with particular attention paid to preferred</p>	

methods of communication. Staff are consistent in the messages they give, repeating them frequently if required to ensure that children and young people are clear about what is happening next, what choices are available or why requests cannot be met. In this way, children and young people have as much autonomy as possible and their level of anxiety is reduced in situations where they have less control.

Levels of supervision are high and the premises are secure, meaning that the home is a very safe place for children and young people who are vulnerable by virtue of their restricted abilities and restricted capacity to be aware of dangers. Nevertheless, staff work hard to help them to understand risks and take appropriate action to minimise them. A striking example is the explanation of who is a stranger and what is inappropriate to do or say with people who are not known. This was conveyed in a children's meeting in a variety of ways, including social stories and other communication aids.

There has been a considerable reduction in the number of physical interventions comparing the first eight months of 2017 with 2016 as well as a smaller but noteworthy reduction in the use of sanctions. This demonstrates that children and young people are becoming increasingly safe and that social behaviour is improving. One young person who used to react to frustrations by hitting out is often now helped to regulate his behaviour when reminded of the consequences of doing so.

The home has health and safety assessments in place for the premises and garden. The interim manager has identified that further consideration needs to be given to the safe siting and use of some play equipment. Visual checks of play equipment are made by staff before they are used by children and young people and arrangements are being made to give them training to amend risk assessments as a result of their observations.

Monitoring systems are in place as required by regulations. There are a few gaps in fridge and freezer temperature records and checks of fire alarm points and emergency lighting were not undertaken for two consecutive weeks, but this has had no direct impact on children and young people. Fire evacuation drills are held regularly, but all those undertaken since the beginning of the year have been at a similar time in the afternoon. These should be varied so that the potential for difficulties at different times can be assessed and to give staff, children and young people practice of evacuations when engaged in other activities.

Safer recruitment protocols are followed when considering the appointment of new staff, although records of DBS disclosures do not state the level of check obtained or whether they were clear or not.

There are records that staff have spoken to parents about the independent person viewing case files under regulation 44 but no signatures evidencing consent and no

record of agreement of placing authorities.

The vast majority of parents spoken to had no concerns about their children's safety while being cared for at the home, although one mother said that her daughter had scratched and hit herself out of frustration – a concern the interim manager agreed to look into.

All staff undertake regular safeguarding training; one commented that she was more observant regarding things like bruising as a result. Social workers report that safeguarding concerns have been appropriately and promptly raised with them. One praised staff for being vigilant, noticing injuries not picked up elsewhere, saying: 'The home were on form and I was able to act.'

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement
<p>The manager and staff have very good links with other agencies, liaising particularly well with education providers and children's services staff. This leads to improved information sharing, better planning and discernible differences for children and young people. Social workers appreciate that staff provide them with insights and a quality of information they may not otherwise have. One commented that staff 'give us good guidance with the children, inform us of incidents; it's beneficial because I get to know about my children.'</p> <p>New permanent staff have joined the team and for the most part their induction experience has been good. However, the process needs to be tailored for specific roles to ensure that all staff have the support and guidance to equip them for the tasks they have to perform.</p> <p>There are significant gaps in records of supervision and appraisals, with one staff member apparently having had no supervision sessions and others just one or two since the beginning of the year. Despite this, the majority of staff spoken to feel well supported and say that they can approach their supervisor at any time. This is not universal, though, with a staff member saying that managers can be abrupt.</p> <p>The home has had a policy of not using agency staff, because children and young people often require someone who knows them well to work with them and some may react badly to a change in whom they are expecting to see. If there are staff shortages and shifts cannot be covered either by permanent or bank staff, then this results in breaks being cancelled. Calling on an agency may prevent this from happening and the interim manager and the responsible individual are looking at this being a contingency arrangement.</p>	

Children and young people referred for short breaks are carefully considered for the service, including having a written impact risk assessment that details potential issues for them, other services users, staff and the wider community. Remedial measures are considered and the suitability for the home decided. This ensures that the well-being of all involved is taken into account and secured as far as possible.

Children's guides have been updated and now include all the information required. Three formats are offered to suit the level of communication a child or young person has, helping to provide a tailored service.

The statement of purpose was updated during the inspection. It now includes information about the use of sound alarms. Although it refers to the qualifications of staff, the statement is not specific as to how many have the required level 3 diploma for residential childcare (England) or equivalent. The home's records about which staff have obtained the qualification, who is undertaking it and when it is anticipated the training will be completed are unclear.

The home's development plan sets out ways in which the manager intends to improve the service offered, including the homework club and general refurbishment. Considerable work has already been done to achieve these, including the recent refitting of the kitchen.

The manager and staff dealt appropriately with an incident of a young person sustaining injuries while alone in a bedroom, notifying all necessary parties. Lessons were learned in consultation with the young person's mother, with bespoke padded covers made for bed ends and a sound alarm being introduced. However, scant information is available in the case file about the incident or subsequent events. Although there are records elsewhere, these are not cross-referenced, so anyone unfamiliar with the home's practice would not know where to look for further information or even that it exists.

Changes have been made to the format of recording for restraints that ensures that information regarding compliance with the regulatory requirements for timescales is captured. The same requirements apply to measures of discipline and control but the format of recording of sanctions had not been changed. This was rectified before the end of the inspection. All requirements and recommendations have therefore been met.

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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