

SC489036

Registered provider: Barford Children's Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately owned children's home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four children and young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 7 to 8 August 2017

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 **good**

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

Date of last inspection: 9 February 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- Relationships between staff and young people are very good. Young people have formed good attachments, and this has helped them to settle and feel safe.
- Young people are making good progress in many areas of their lives, particularly in relation to their emotional well-being. They are developing independent living skills, and they are starting to understand the impact of their behaviour on other people. Some of this progress is slow because of their complex needs and previous experiences.
- Staff know the young people well, and they are very committed to them. Staff understand young people's needs and they use individual strategies to meet these effectively.
- Young people benefit from living in a homely environment. Their day-to-day experiences are positive, and they engage in lots of activities. They also have pets, for which they are responsible.
- Young people are safe. Their risk-taking behaviour has reduced, and in some cases ceased.
- Staff have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding young people. They have clear written guidance to assist their practice.
- Staff are well supported. They benefit from good supervision and relevant training.
- The manager is an effective leader, who leads by example. She is child-focused and tenacious in pursuing the best outcomes for the young people.
- Partnership working is good. Other agencies are used to good effect to provide additional services to support young people and promote their good outcomes.

The children's home's areas for development:

- Although staff have an annual appraisal, this is not as thorough as it could be. The views of other professionals and young people are not referred to, and the record of the meeting is short. This does not reflect the importance of an annual appraisal in ensuring that staff are competent and for their continuing development.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
09/02/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
17/10/2016	Full	Good
14/12/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

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

Recommendations

- All staff must have their performance and fitness to carry out their role formally appraised at least once annually. This appraisal should take into account, where reasonable and practical, the views of other professionals who have worked with the staff member over the year and children in the home's care. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.5)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Young people are making good progress in this home. Because of the complexities of their varied needs, this progress at times is slow, and there have been backward steps, but overall their progress is positive. A social worker said, 'This is a really good placement. Staff are meeting her needs really well. They have gone at her pace and not rushed her.' Another social worker said, 'I am happy with the standard of care. On the whole, she is getting on really well.'

A real strength of this home is the relationship that staff have with the young people. Staff know the young people well, they are committed to meeting their needs and they support them with enthusiasm as well as care. The atmosphere in the home is warm, relaxed and friendly. It replicates, as far as possible, a family environment. Young people are happy and settled here. One young person said, 'This is the best thing that has happened to me. If I need help it is there if I want it. Staff haven't given up on me.'

Young people benefit from positive experiences on a day-to-day basis. Their interests are encouraged, and they engage in a variety of activities such as horse riding, going to the cinema and having trips out. They also have a number of pets, and this is of real importance to them, as they are learning to take responsibility for caring for another living being.

Young people's views are important, and they have a big influence on what happens in the home. Young people meet weekly to discuss menus and activities, but they also discuss their care plans and targets on a monthly basis, so that they feel fully involved in important decisions that influence their lives. Some young people need their plans to be more pictorial, and the staff use social stories to improve their accessibility. Young people say that they feel listened to and that staff take their views seriously. Their self-esteem and self-worth are enhanced by this.

Young people's health is improving, both because they are encouraged to have regular check-ups with universal services, but also because their risk-taking behaviour is

reducing. One social worker said, 'She looks better and her whole demeanour has improved.' Young people's emotional well-being is also improving because they feel happy and settled. They also have access to specialist services, either in the community or through the company's therapist. This enables young people to discuss issues that are affecting them. Staff also benefit from consultations with the therapist, who provides them with additional strategies to use, as well as enhancing their understanding of particular behaviours. The therapist commented, 'The level of engagement is really high and consultations are well attended. They make good use of me.'

All the young people have some form of educational provision. For some, their attendance is sporadic, despite the efforts of staff. The school has provided a tutor to help some young people to engage better. There is good liaison between the home and the school, and they work well together to promote educational success. Some of the young people had poor educational experiences prior to coming to this home, so in relation to their starting points, they are making progress. For example, a young person has taken some examinations, and the very act of sitting these is significant.

Transitions are managed well. The manager is keen to ensure that any new resident is a good match with the existing residents. She is tenacious in her actions to obtain the relevant information, and she promotes best practice in her admissions procedure. This includes, where possible, a placement planning meeting on admission, so that full information is shared. One young person recently admitted to the home in difficult circumstances said, 'Staff are lovely.' Staff welcomed her late at night, talked to her about the home and tried to make her feel at ease. Young people are also developing their independence skills, at a pace that is appropriate to their age, needs and circumstances. There are targets to develop skills to travel independently to college, for example, as well as to plan, shop for and prepare meals.

All the young people are placed some distance from their home local authority. They are supported to maintain their links with family and friends despite the distance involved. Staff provide transport and supervision, where necessary, for visits home. They also provide transport for regular appointments, and to enable a young person to take her GCSEs at her previous school. This ensures that young people are not disadvantaged because of the location of their placement.

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

Young people feel safe at this home, and they have become safer as a result of the actions of staff. Although there have been occasions when young people have been missing from the home, this has not occurred in the last five months. Staff are very clear about the actions to take should this occur, and each young person has their own risk management plan, dependent on their assessed level of vulnerability. The police are always sent a benchmark risk assessment, including a photograph, when a young person is admitted to the home, so that they can act quickly in response to any such incidents.

All known risks are thoroughly assessed. Risk management plans are regularly reviewed and updated in response to incidents or further emerging risks. Risk-taking behaviour is

gradually reducing. For example, incidents of self-harm have decreased, and young people are not misusing substances, going missing or becoming involved in criminal behaviour.

Behaviour is well managed. Staff know the young people well, and they have a good understanding of the triggers and signs that indicate that young people are becoming anxious or unsettled. This enables staff to be proactive in de-escalating situations and thereby preventing aggressive behaviour. Consequently, negative consequences and physical intervention are rare, but when these are used, it is in appropriate circumstances. The manager has good oversight of all such incidents, and discusses them with staff to help them reflect on and improve their practice.

Bullying is well managed. When this has occurred, the manager and staff have been quick to respond to minimise the impact and prevent a reoccurrence. There is evidence of good and prompt direct work to help young people understand the impact of their actions. This has been successful in preventing further incidents.

Staff have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding young people from harm. This includes their response to allegations about staff. The manager has a good relationship with the designated officer for the local authority, and contacts him for advice and support if necessary. All safeguarding incidents have been managed promptly and effectively.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager provides effective leadership that inspires the staff to provide a good standard of care and support. She is child-focused, aspirational, experienced and knowledgeable, and she is currently in the process of completing the relevant qualification. She leads by example, and she enjoys working directly with the young people. This ensures that she knows them well and develops a positive relationship with them. It also provides staff with a good role model of practice.

The manager has a number of methods that enable her to monitor the progress that the young people are making. She looks at records of all incidents and direct work on a weekly basis. In addition, each young person has a care team meeting every six weeks. This includes the social worker, the key worker, the manager, the young person and any other relevant professionals. This is an effective way of ensuring that everyone in the young person's network is fully aware of what is happening and can contribute to future plans.

The manager uses a number of regular, rigorous and comprehensive systems to ensure that she is fully aware of what is happening in the home, and the strengths and shortfalls. This includes external and internal monitoring systems that feed into the development plan for the home to drive improvement. She tries to obtain feedback from other professionals through the use of questionnaires, and she also has feedback from young people through their regular meetings, as well as questionnaires. The impact of young people's expressed wishes and feelings is evident through the 'you said, we did'

feedback. This includes furnishings for and decoration of the home, holiday destinations, types of activities, the purchase of pets, more 'family time' in the home and young people's involvement in staff interviews.

Partnership working is a strength. There are a number of agencies that provide a service to improve young people's outcomes. This includes the police, therapists, health and education professionals, young people's social workers, child sexual exploitation workers and the youth offending service. Relationships are good, and social workers speak positively about communication, information sharing and the flexibility of responses. This does not prevent the manager from challenging stakeholders when there are deficits in their practice, and they do not appear to be working in the best interests of the young people.

Staff are committed, knowledgeable and well supported. One member of staff said, 'I really enjoy working here.' Staff describe the manager as 'really good, approachable, helpful and supportive'. They undertake relevant training to enable them to meet the needs of the young people with confidence and competence. The staff are supervised on a regular basis, and they also have an annual appraisal. The records of the appraisals are very short and there is no evidence that the views of other professionals or young people are taken into account to inform the appraisal. As this meeting is an important tool in assessing the competence of staff and their future development needs, this is a shortfall.

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: SC489036

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Barford Children's Services Limited

Registered provider address: The Old Coach House, Drinsey Nook, Lincoln LN1 2JJ

Responsible individual: Emma Carrington

Registered manager: Lyndsay Bryden

Inspector(s)

Ros Chapman: social care inspector

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