

SC023739

Registered provider: Ethelbert Specialist Homes Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is privately operated and provides care for up to three children. In line with the home's statement of purpose, it is currently being used exclusively for girls who have a history of difficult attachments and require intensive support. There were two children living in the home at the time of this inspection.

The manager registered with Ofsted in February 2023.

Inspection dates: 22 and 26 June 2023

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **inadequate**

There are serious and widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded and the care and experiences of children and young people are poor and they are not making progress.

Date of last inspection: 28 February 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/02/2023	Full	Good
16/03/2022	Full	Outstanding
27/09/2018	Full	Good
30/08/2017	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

Risks have increased for children living in the home. This includes increases in episodes of going missing, substance misuse and physical and verbal altercations between staff and children. Subsequently, there has been an increase in police call-outs to the home. This demonstrates the difficulties that staff have in managing children's emotional turmoil and associated behaviours. Children feel unsettled and this has the potential to impact on their future life chances.

Two children have moved on from this home in unplanned ways since the last full inspection due to safeguarding concerns and the provider being unable to keep them safe. Shortly after a child moved on from the home, two other children moved into the home in quick succession. Again, one of these children moved on quickly and was unable to experience a positive ending.

Leaders' decisions about when to move children into the home have had a detrimental impact for all children. For example, one child who was previously making progress has seen this progress decline due to the home being unsettled. For example, the child has gone missing from home on several occasions where before there were no such incidents. Their school attendance has also declined. The registered manager and network of professionals recognise this and are reviewing the support plans for the child. Leaders have given notice for one other child living in the home.

Children are not attending school regularly. Children's learning needs are being reviewed and leaders are working closely with education and social care professionals to review the current arrangements.

One child attends a performing arts class supported by staff. They say that they like the staff and enjoy living at the home. Furthermore, since the last inspection all children have been involved in some enjoyable and meaningful activities with staff. However, these positive experiences are compromised by the safeguarding failures identified.

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

Staff fail to take sufficient steps to protect children from harm. In one incident, children were exposed to risk from unfamiliar and unsafe adults in the local area. Leaders and the registered manager have not reviewed this incident or subsequent concerns raised by children, despite attending a safeguarding response meeting. Consequently, no learning has been identified or disseminated to inform practice. This has resulted in missed opportunities to help children to understand how to keep safe and learn about the risks relating to unsafe adults.

There is currently a serious safeguarding allegation under review by the police. Concerns about staff practice were known and escalated by the registered manager to senior leaders. Despite this, there were no formal risk or performance management plans put into place.

During the inspection, leaders became aware of another serious complaint and allegations about staff working in the home. Leaders are now working with safeguarding professionals and allocated social workers to investigate this matter.

Sometimes, when concerns are raised about staff practice or there are allegations about staff, these staff are moved to work in another children's home managed by this organisation. Although this is in line with the organisation's child protection policy, there are no recorded decisions, assessment of risk or safety management plans put in place to demonstrate that it is safe to allow them to work with children while concerns are being investigated. This has the potential to put children at risk. The head of safeguarding created a new document during the inspection to evidence how decisions will be made, and risks considered in the future.

On one occasion, safer recruitment practices lacked professional curiosity and oversight. Consequently, leaders failed to identify an important disclosure made during the recruitment processes. As a result, no support plans or measures were put in place to mitigate or explore this risk.

The registered manager has worked with police and trading standards to report concerns about local shops selling cigarettes and alcohol to children. She has also worked with police to raise concerns regarding other issues. However, the home's location risk assessment does not reflect these issues. Consequently, there is no clear guidance for staff about how to reduce these risks.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Leaders did not take effective action when a serious incident occurred that involved children and unfamiliar adults. Their failure to review and reflect on the incident has resulted in serious shortfalls not being fully identified or addressed with staff.

Since the last inspection, three staff have left the home. These positions are being temporarily filled by staff from elsewhere in the same organisation. On occasion, children are supported entirely by these temporary staff. Children say that they like these staff. However, they get frustrated because staff do not know them well. Consequently, serious incidents have not been managed effectively due to staff not knowing children or their relevant plans well enough.

The manager was newly registered with Ofsted in February 2023. She is completing her level 5 diploma in line with guidance. She is visible in the home and staff say that they feel well supported by her. However, this is compromised by temporary staff, from other homes in the organisation, covering shifts. The registered manager works hard to build positive relationships with children and other professionals.

The home's area manager provides support to the registered manager and staff. She was the home's previous registered manager and understands some of the strengths and development needs of the home. She is actively supporting and working with the registered manager to address shortfalls and improve standards. However, this work is yet to be effective due to the serious and widespread shortfalls identified at this inspection.

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, The 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
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that the staff— assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; help each child to understand how to keep safe; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies and— that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(b))	10 August 2023

The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(c)(d)(e))	10 August 2023
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that arrangements are in place to— manage and review the placement of each child in the home; and plan for, and help, each child to prepare to leave the home or to move into adult care in a way that is consistent with arrangements agreed with the child's placing authority; that each child's relevant plans are followed. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(ii)(c))	10 August 2023

The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children's home; or if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that— the individual is of integrity and good character; the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform; and the individual is mentally and physically fit for the purposes of the work that the individual is to perform. (Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3)(a)(b)(c))	10 August 2023
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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: SC023739

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Ethelbert Specialist Homes Limited

Registered provider address: 17 Leigh Road, Ramsgate, Kent CT12 5EU

Responsible individual: Leslie Davenport

Registered manager: Chloe Sinclair

Inspector

Kelly Monniot, Social Care Inspector

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