

SC030439

Registered provider: Somerset County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is registered to provide a permanent home and short-break care for up to six children and young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties or learning disabilities.

The home is owned and managed by a local authority.

The registered manager resigned from the post on 31 March 2019. An interim manager is in day-to-day control of the home while the local authority is recruiting a permanent manager.

Inspection dates: 8 to 9 August 2019

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

requires improvement to be good

How well children and young people are helped and protected

requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

requires improvement to be good

The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 3 October 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
03/10/2018	Full	Requires improvement to be good
26/07/2018	Full	Inadequate
26/07/2017	Full	Requires improvement to be good
14/02/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

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
13: The leadership and management standard 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— demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— research and developments in relation to the ways in which the needs of children are best met; and feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(2)(g)(i)(ii)(h))	31/10/2019
31: Staffing of children's homes The registered person must ensure that the employment of any person on a temporary basis at the children's home does not prevent children from receiving continuity of care as is reasonable to meet their needs. (Regulation 31 (1))	31/10/2019

36: Children's case records The registered person must maintain records ('case records') for each child which include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child. The registered person must ensure that all case records are kept up to date. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)) In addition, the registered person must ensure that all records identify the author of reports and are dated.	31/10/2019
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Recommendations

- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. 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)
- The use of external agency staff can be a positive choice to complement the skills and experiences of the permanent workforce. Any external agency staff should meet the requirements in regulation 32(4) regarding mandatory qualifications and the registered person should consider their skills, qualifications and any induction necessary before they commence work in the home. The use of agency staff should be carefully monitored and reviewed to ensure children receive continuity of care. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.16)
- No more than half the staff on duty at any one time, by day or night at the home should be from an external agency. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.17)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

The overall experiences and progress of children require improvement. This inspection found weaknesses in how well children are helped and protected, and leadership and

management. These weaknesses have had an impact on children's opportunities and experiences.

In recent months, staffing shortages have resulted in children not always being cared for by staff who know them well. To meet the children's supervision needs, the interim manager has assigned vacant shifts to agency and relief staff. The interim manager has had to cancel some children's short-break stays due to staffing shortages.

Since the last inspection, new care plans have been introduced. These documents provide staff with clear instructions on how to meet the children's daily needs. Care plan aims are individualised, and they are realistic and achievable. Despite this, children's daily journals do not consistently identify whether children have met their daily care plan aims. The management monitoring of these records requires improvement to ensure that children's progress is maximised.

Since the last inspection, the interim manager and team have made positive progress in implementing the development plan. Restrictions previously preventing children from having independent access to all areas of the home have been removed. Ongoing improvement work is planned. This includes the removal of door locks that are not used and developing the outside play areas. All areas within the home have been redecorated and new soft furnishings purchased. When children arrive for their short break, their rooms are furnished with their own bedding and personal items. Children feel relaxed and comfortable during their short-break stay.

Memory books and pictures displayed throughout the home show children enjoying spending time together. Children's social skills and well-being are promoted through the provision of a wide range of positive activities during their short-break stay.

Relationships between children and permanent staff are warm, caring and sensitive. Staff's interactions with children were observed to be kind, sensitive and respectful. A parent who contributed to this inspection said, 'The quality of care my child receives and the support I am provided with from the manager and staff are exceptional. I don't know what we would do without them.'

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Since the last inspection, agency and relief staff have worked in the home. Despite the interim manager's persistent efforts, she has not been successful in obtaining enough information about the suitability of agency staff. As a result, she has not formally assessed whether these temporary staff have the required skills, training and experience to work with children who have complex needs. In addition, the lone-working risk assessment does not consider the potential risks for agency and relief staff working night shifts on their own.

Children and staff regularly engage in fire evacuations, and fire safety checks are completed weekly. All children have a personal evacuation plan in place. However, the

current fire recording systems are cumbersome and require the staff to complete a range of records. Consequently, recording errors are a common feature. The interim manager has identified this as a concern and plans to introduce a new system.

The interim manager has improved the recording and auditing of medication. Since the last inspection, two medication errors had been identified and rectified. The interim manager undertook a comprehensive investigation. Records detailing the actions taken and the outcome are robust.

Staff take appropriate action when unexplained injuries are identified on a child's body. They complete body maps and ensure that safeguarding agencies, social workers and parents are informed, if appropriate to do so. The quality of safeguarding records completed by staff is variable. The manager's monitoring requires improvement to ensure that errors in these records are identified and rectified.

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

The home is currently managed by an interim manager who is also registered to manage another home within the local authority. Senior leaders are aware that the current management arrangements are not sustainable. In response, they are actively seeking to recruit a new manager and deputy manager.

Management monitoring of all records completed by staff requires improvement to be good. The quality and content of children's daily records, fire safety records and staff handover records are variable. Staff handover records are frequently incomplete. In addition, staffing rotas are not well maintained, they do not comprehensively detail when temporary staff are working, nor do they confirm who is caring for each child.

Feedback from staff, parents and social workers about the manager is overwhelmingly positive. Staff spoke positively about the changes the manager has introduced and successfully implemented. They said they are provided with good training opportunities and appreciate being empowered to share any concerns they may have.

Team meetings take place monthly and are well attended. Topics of discussion are broad and include staff exchanging information about children and their changing needs and behaviours. The interim manager ensures that staff are kept up to date with business matters, development proposals and when new training courses are available. The team works well together, and morale is good.

The interim manager communicates with the team effectively. Good use is made of the staff communication book to keep staff up to date with new administrative systems and changes made to children's care plan aims. The interim manager also uses this communication record to acknowledge and praise good practice.

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: SC030439

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: County Hall, Taunton, Somerset TA1 4DY

Responsible individual: Teresa Delaney

Registered manager: Karen Hill

Inspector(s)

Sharron Escott, social care inspector
Joy Howick, HMI social care inspector

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