

SC030439

Registered provider: Somerset County Council

Interim inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority children's home provides short breaks, shared care and permanent accommodation for up to five children who have a learning disability and complex needs.

The registered manager resigned in February 2021. A new manager was appointed and applied to register with Ofsted but resigned in September 2021. An acting manager was appointed temporarily but this person has also now resigned.

Inspection date: 22 March 2022

Date of last inspection: 7 July 2021

Judgement at last inspection: Requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: None

This inspection

The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection

This home was judged requires improvement to be good at the last full inspection. At this interim inspection, Ofsted judged that it has declined in effectiveness.

Two children live in this home currently, and their experiences differ considerably. One child has lived here for three years and has made good progress, but the outcomes and progress for the other child are poor. The approach to her care is unacceptable.

At the time of this inspection, the Responsible Individual is leading the home, in the absence of a Registered Manager. However, the Responsible Individual has been unable to enable staff to respond positively to plans or direction in relation to one child and consequently the quality of care for this child is poor. This situation is detrimental to the child's emotional well-being and has a negative impact on her perception of herself, her sense of belonging and her feelings of security in the home.

The staffing situation for this child lacks direction and a cohesive approach. The current arrangement is unacceptable. Agency staff and substantive staff do not work together to devise strategies to deliver good care to the child, to engage her and support her and to help her to feel safe. Leadership is lacking, and no one is in day-to-day control of the home.

Key-working arrangements for the child are concerning. Careful consideration has been given to which member of staff is most suitable to work with the child, taking account of the staff's background, knowledge and experience. However, staff are resistant to working with the child and Leaders have been unable to move this position. The current arrangement must not continue. A requirement was made about the skills and experience of staff following the last inspection; this has been restated.

Arrangements to manage allegations that may be made about the staff fail to protect the child because they do not follow the usual referral process. As a result, allegations are not always subject to independent, external scrutiny by the local authority designated officer.

Since the last inspection, staff have received training in the safe handling of medication. Unfortunately, this training has not been effective, and errors in medication administration continue to occur.

The property is not a domestic-style dwelling, and it is not conducive to modern residential childcare. The structure of the building, with its central office atrium and accommodation wings, creates a distinctly institutional feel. To further compound

this, doors between each area are locked. Entry is gained by numerous fob locks or keys. Consequently, staff carry around bunches of keys and use walkie-talkies to communicate. Some fixtures and fittings, such as hospital style waste bins, paper towel holders and industrial-style linoleum flooring, detract from a homely feel. A requirement was made about the environment following the last inspection. However, insufficient action has been taken, and the requirement is restated following this inspection.

On one occasion, the child left the home during the night without the knowledge of staff; this was despite two waking night staff being on duty. Following this incident, additional audio devices have been installed, and additional sleep-in staff are in place. In addition, an external shutter on the child's bedroom window has been permanently lowered.. This restriction detrimental to the child's needs for space, light and air during the day. A requirement about restrictive practices was made following the last inspection. This is restated.

The child's social worker has created a good-quality, detailed plan setting out how the child's needs should be met. This information has not translated into care practice in the home and has not informed the home's own documentation. For instance, staff responses to incidents involving the child are, on occasions, inappropriate, and the police have been called unnecessarily on several occasions. In addition, on occasions, the staff's response to the child's behaviours has exacerbated the situation. The child has been consulted about some aspects of her care, but this is insufficient and too tardy to inform the home's care plan effectively. A requirement about seeking children's contributions to their care plan and about the quality of care was made following the last inspection. This is restated following this inspection. An additional requirement is made about effective care planning.

The independent visitor now regularly meets with children during their monthly visits. This was a requirement at the last inspection and has been met.

The three recommendations raised at the full inspection have not been reviewed at this inspection and will remain in place for review at the next full inspection.

Following this inspection, a decision has been made to issue a notice to restrict the home's registration. As a result, the provider cannot allow any more children to stay in the home during the restriction period.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
07/07/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good
25/11/2019	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
08/08/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good
03/10/2018	Full	Requires improvement to be good

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
The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; and use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— understand and apply the home's statement of purpose; ensure that staff— understand and apply the home's statement of purpose; protect and promote each child's welfare; make decisions about the day-to-day arrangements for each child, in accordance with the child's relevant plans, which give the child an appropriate degree of freedom and choice; ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child; and enable each child to participate in the daily life of the home. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(i)(ii)(ix)(c)(i)(ii)) This specifically relates to improving the homeliness of the environment, taking into consideration the use of institutional-style fixtures and fittings in bathrooms, tired décor throughout the home, use of walkie-talkies, carrying of	5 May 2022

keys and travelling through one child's accommodation to access communal areas.	
The children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who— develop positive relationships with them; engage with them; and take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff— ascertain and consider each child's views, wishes and feelings, and balance these against what they judge to be in the child's best interests when making decisions about the child's care and welfare; regularly consult children, and seek their feedback, about the quality of the home's care; and help each child to prepare for any review of the child's relevant plans and to make the child's views, wishes and feelings known for the purposes of that review. (Regulation 7 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(iv)(vi)) This specifically relates to ensuring that children are helped to contribute to their care plan and are helped to provide feedback on the quality of care they receive.	5 May 2022
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 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;	5 May 2022

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; 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; and are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies; that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(v)(vi)(vii)(d)) In addition, ensure that the child's bedroom window is not covered by an external shutter during the day.	
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— lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose; 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; understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each	5 May 2022

child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home; and use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(c)(d)(f)(h))	
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 or moving on from the home. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b))	5 May 2022
The registered provider must appoint a person to manage the children's home if— there is no registered manager in respect of the home; and the register provider is an organisation or a partnership; does not satisfy regulation 28; or is not, or does not intend to be, in day-to-day charge of the home. If the registered provider appoints a person to manage the home, the registered provider must, without delay, give HMCI notice of— the name of the person so appointed; and the date on which the appointment takes effect. (Regulation 27 (1)(a)(i)(ii)(b) (2)(a)(b))	5 May 2022

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that they consult with children and other stakeholders to obtain their views about the quality of care provided by the home. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.2)
- The registered person should ensure that children are offered a wide range of activities both inside and outside of the home (where appropriate) and are encouraged to participate in those activities. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 31, paragraph 6.5)

- The registered person should ensure that actions from previous supervision sessions are consistently reviewed at the next meeting. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2)

Information about this inspection

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full 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: SC030439

Provision sub-type: Children's home

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

Responsible individual: Serena Pike

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Paula Lahey, Social Care Inspector
Michelle Oxley, Social Care Inspector

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