

SC030439

Registered provider: Somerset County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is registered as a children's home providing full-time 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.

Inspection dates: 26 to 27 July 2017

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 **inadequate**

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: 14/02/2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home requires improvement to be good because:

- The quality of care provided to children and young people, as well as their opportunities and experiences, has declined.
- Not all young people are provided with continuity of care by the adults who are employed to care for them.
- Opportunities for children and young people to explore and enjoy new interests and hobbies have decreased.
- Not all young people benefit from a varied and healthy diet. As a result, one young person continues to have a restricted and unhealthy diet.
- Care plans, behaviour management plans and risk assessments do not provide staff with clear instructions and specific strategies to enable them to respond to and meet the needs of the children and young people. As a result, staff do not manage challenging behaviours using a consistent and agreed approach.
- The home is not led and managed effectively. Leaders and managers have not ensured that the Children's Home Regulations (England) 2015 relating to care planning, behaviour support plans, risk assessments, staffing and activities are met.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/02/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
11/10/2016	Full	Good
29/02/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
17/11/2015	Full	Good

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
9: The enjoyment and achievement standard In order to meet the enjoyment and achievement standard, the registered person should ensure children take part in and benefit from a variety of activities that meets their needs and develops and reflect their creative, cultural, intellectual, physical and social interest and skills. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff help each child to: develop the child's interest and hobbies; participate in activities that the child enjoys and which meet and expands the child's interest and preferences; and have access to a range of activities that enable the child to peruse the child's interests and hobbies. (Regulation 9(1)(2)(a)(i)(ii)(b))	01/09/2017
12: The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standard, the registered person should ensure that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to: 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. In particular, ensure risk assessments, care plans and behaviour management plans provide staff with clear instructions about how to respond to challenging behaviour. Ensure staff apply strategies consistently. (Regulation 12(1)(2)(a)(i))	01/09/2017
13: The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard, the registered person should enable, inspire and lead a culture in relation to the children's home that helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare.	01/09/2017

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 the home's workforce provides continuity of care for each child; understand the effect that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home; demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— 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)(a)(c)(e)(f)(g)(ii)(h))	
31: Staffing of the children's home 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 such continuity of care as is reasonable to meet their needs. (Regulation (31)(1)(2)(a))	01/09/2017
36: Children's case records The registered person must maintain records ('case records') for each child which includes 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 are legible, accurate, detailed and factual.	01/09/2017
39: Complaints and representations The registered person must ensure that a record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of any investigation. (Regulation 39(3))	01/09/2017

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

Recommendations

- Ensure children have access to a computer and the internet to support their education and learning, unless there are specific safeguarding reasons why this access would be inappropriate. In such cases, the home should consider whether and how it can support the child to access the computer and the internet safely. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 29, paragraph 5.19)
- Ensure children's home staff encourage children to take a proactive role in looking after their day-to-day health and well-being. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 34, paragraph 7.10). In particular, ensure staff encourage young people to eat healthier foods outside of their restricted diet.

Inspection judgements

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

The quality of care provided to children and young people, and their opportunities and experiences, have declined.

Senior managers placed a young person at the home without formally assessing whether his needs could be met alongside the other young people and whether the staffing arrangements were sufficient to meet all of the children's and young people's needs. In order for staff to support the new resident, the quality of care and opportunities available for the other children and young people reduced. Leaders and managers have subsequently recognised that they cannot meet one young person's needs and are actively seeking an alternative home for him.

In order to meet the needs of all children and young people, leaders and managers rely on core staff working additional hours and have also commissioned temporary staff to work in the home. As a result, children and young people are not always provided with continuity of care, and their daily needs and behaviours are not always managed well.

Opportunities for children and young people to develop, explore and enjoy new interests and hobbies have declined. In recent months, children's and young people's activities have been curtailed to a drive in the car/bus, playing on electronic devices, watching television and playing in the garden. A parent spoken with during the inspection said that her son does not engage in as many meaningful activities as he used to.

Not all children and young people benefit from a varied and healthy diet. Staff have not considered creative ways for all children and young people to explore, taste and consider

new foods. As a result, one young person continues to have a severely restricted and unhealthy diet.

Children and young people benefit from living in and staying in a home that is warm, welcoming and homely.

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

Children and young people who live at this home and visit for short-breaks are, in the main, helped and protected effectively. One parent spoken to during the inspection was complimentary about the staff team and the progress that her son has made since living at this home. She said that she values the service and opportunities that she has had to spend quality time with her son.

Risk assessments, care plans and behaviour management records do not provide staff with clear instructions and directions about how to support the children and young people. Not all known risks are identified and local authority care plans are out of date. Strategies that help staff to manage high-risk behaviours are not clearly documented.

The staff team's management of children's and young people's behaviour is variable. Incidents occur regularly. However, the use of physical interventions is rare. Records show that some staff manage incidents well, but a number of incidents have resulted in staff withdrawing from the children and young people and leaving them on their own. The use of withdrawal is not clearly defined in behaviour management plans. As a result, the timescales of this practice vary depending on the experience, skills and ability of the member of staff managing the incident, rather than being a specific, planned approach.

Since the last inspection, the home has received two complaints from parents. The resolution of one of these complaints is not recorded in the complaint records and the second complaint has not been shared with the manager. As a result, actions taken to deal with these complaints could not be established at this inspection.

Since the last inspection, three new staff have been recruited who have been assessed and checked for their suitability. All staff are required to undertake basic mandatory training.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Leadership and management are inadequate. Senior managers made a poor decision in admitting an emergency placement into the home. The manager quickly identified that they could not meet the young person's needs and informed senior managers. However, actions taken to minimise and mitigate the risks have been too slow. As a result, children and young people have not received well-planned and well-managed care.

The manager has failed to ensure that all children and young people are provided with continuity of care from staff who are sufficiently motivated and have the required

experience and skills. Some children and young people are not always being looked after by care staff who know and understand them well. Consequently, the staff team's management of behaviours leading up to and during serious incidents has been variable.

Those staff spoken with during the course of the inspection demonstrated an enthusiasm, commitment and passion to improving the outcomes of the children and young people. However, some staff said that they are feeling tired and disillusioned. The care team's ability to understand and prioritise the improvements needed is hindered by ineffective leadership and low morale. This is particularly evident in the inconsistent management of significant incidents and staff's ability to provide children and young people with good-quality activities.

The manager has failed to ensure that the records relating to the care of children and young people and the running of the home are well maintained. Handwritten records completed by staff do not always reflect the actions taken by staff. Important information is often absent and some records are illegible.

Leaders' and managers' oversight of the experiences, opportunities and progress of children and young people has declined. Some children and young people are not given enough opportunities to thrive and to achieve their full potential.

All staff have access to a wide range of e-learning courses. Despite this opportunity, a large percentage of staff have not completed basic training in supporting young people who have learning disabilities and/or autism, alternative communication, the safe administration of medication or mental health awareness. This limits the care team's ability to understand and respond effectively to the children's and young people's needs and does not promote staffs' professional development.

Opportunities for staff to reflect on their work and share good practice are not included in formal supervisions and/or team meetings. This weakness limits their opportunities to reflect, and to learn and develop new skills.

Monitoring by the manager and the independent visitor lacks rigour and, as such, has failed to identify the deficiencies found at this inspection. As a result, leaders and managers do not fully understand the strengths and weaknesses of the home. The recommendation raised at the previous inspection has not been met. Young people still do not have access to a computer and the internet to support their education and learning.

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 difference 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: Robert Eveleigh

Registered manager: Stephen Mullins

Inspector

Sharron Escott; social care inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

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