

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.

The registered manager has been registered with Ofsted since July 2007.

Inspection dates: 26 to 27 July 2018

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	inadequate
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	inadequate
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	inadequate
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There are serious and widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected and their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded.

Date of last inspection: 14 February 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

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

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
9: The enjoyment and achievement standard In order to meet the enjoyment and achievement standard, the registered person should ensure that children take part in and benefit from a variety of activities that meet their needs and develop and reflect their creative, cultural, intellectual, physical and social interests 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 interests and hobbies; - participate in activities that the child enjoys and which meet and expand the child's interests and preferences; and - have access to a range of activities that enable the child to pursue the child's interests and hobbies. (Regulation 9(1)(2)(a)(i)(ii)(b))	1/09/2018
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. (Regulation 12(1)(2)(a)(i)) In particular, ensure that risk assessments, care plans and behaviour management plans provide staff with clear instructions about how to respond to challenging behaviour. Ensure that staff apply strategies consistently.	1/09/2018

*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. 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))	8/08/2018
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 such continuity of care as is reasonable to meet their needs. (Regulation (31)(1)(2)(a))	8/08/2018
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.	1/09/2018

(Regulation 36(1)(a)(b))

In addition, the registered person must ensure that all records are legible, accurate, detailed and factual.

* These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendations

- Ensure that children's homes 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 that staff encourage young people to eat healthier foods outside of their restricted diet.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

Senior leaders placed a vulnerable child in the home in an emergency in May 2018, without ensuring that care staff had the experience, training and skills to manage and support the child's complex and increasing needs. Staff still do not have the necessary skills or expertise to support the child effectively. As a result, the child's welfare is compromised, and his needs remain unmet.

Leaders and managers have failed to secure sufficient assessment of and support for the child's emotional well-being. The child's emotional health has significantly deteriorated in the two months he has lived in the home, resulting in a withdrawal from daily life. Inspectors observed him sleeping on a two-seater sofa fully clothed during the day. The child has a poor diet and frequently refuses to wash and clean his teeth. Incidents of aggression towards staff and incidents of significant damage to the property have occurred.

Children who visit the home for short breaks are provided with an environment that is well maintained, personalised and homely. Staff working with children who are staying for a short break know them well. Memory books capture the opportunities and experiences these children have during their stay. However, staffing shortages have meant that some children who require two-to-one support to go out into the community have been unable to do so as often as before.

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

Leaders and managers did not follow safeguarding procedures when a child in their care reported that they had received images unsuitable for children, from an unknown

person. The delay in reporting concerns to the appropriate agencies has the potential to comprise the child's safety.

Staff are not provided with effective strategies or specialist training to help them to best understand one child's needs and how to manage his behaviour effectively. In the two months that this child has lived in the home, 21 significant incidents have occurred. During these incidents, staff have been at risk of injury or have been injured. On two occasions, staff have called for assistance from the police to help them to manage this child's behaviour, as they were unable to manage the behaviour themselves.

Senior leaders and managers have allowed a child to live in an environment that is unsafe and poorly maintained. The living conditions for this child are unacceptable. The child has caused extensive damage to the area that he is living in. The maintenance team is unable to gain access to the area. As a result, leaders and managers have not ensured that the child resides in a home that is suitable and well maintained.

The management of fire safety is poor. Leaders and managers have not ensured that fire drills are undertaken regularly or made sure that all of the children have participated in a fire evacuation. Staff do not know how one child will respond in the event of a fire and have not devised protective strategies to help this child.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Senior leaders made a decision to move a child into the home without ensuring that the staff caring for him could meet his needs and improve his outcomes. Two out of the three staff who are working with the child are still in their probationary period. One of these members of staff has no previous experience of working with children who have complex needs.

Staffing shortages have not been sufficiently addressed; agency staff are covering five full-time staff vacancies. Because of staffing shortages, opportunities for children who require two adults to support them to go out into the community have reduced. As a result, the experiences and opportunities for some children who are staying for a short break have declined.

Monitoring of the home is weak. The registered manager has not taken sufficient action to improve poorly maintained records. Records that staff write about children's time in the home are not detailed and do not provide sufficient information about their experiences and progress.

Senior leaders and managers have not taken appropriate action to improve the home despite weaknesses being routinely brought to their attention by the independent visitor. Monthly reports completed by the independent visitor consistently refer to breaches of

regulation, poor management oversight and weak monitoring. Weaknesses identified at this inspection have also been evident at previous inspections. Five requirements are repeated at this inspection as insufficient action has been taken to sustain improvements.

Leaders and managers are not using team meetings and formal supervisions to consult with staff or to provide them with an opportunity to reflect on their practice. Despite this weakness, staff demonstrated enthusiasm and commitment to their work.

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: Robert Eveleigh

Registered manager: Stephen Mullins

Inspectors

Sharron Escott, social care inspector
Michelle Oxley, regulatory inspection manager

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