

SC030797

Registered provider: Ethelbert Specialist Homes Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately owned children's home is registered to provide care for up to nine children with social, emotional and mental health needs.

The manager of the home registered with Ofsted in April 2016 and is suitably qualified.

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 May 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/or 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: 21 March 2023

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
21/03/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
28/07/2021	Full	Good
19/11/2019	Full	Good
04/09/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

Since the last inspection, two children have moved on from the home and six children remain living in the home. The registered provider currently has no plans to admit more children into the home, to allow for a period of stability.

The children have experienced unacceptable responses to their needs from staff. For example, a child returned from hospital and asked for food. The staff refused to provide food for this child. Similarly, another child woke up in the morning and asked staff for a piece of fruit. This was denied. Consequently, children have been left hungry.

Children have experienced harm from other children, and this has not been recognised as bullying. For example, children have been physically assaulted and threatened. While staff take action to intervene at the time, there is no follow-up work or preventative work undertaken with children.

The staff do not provide children with consistent boundaries. The registered manager recognises that this is due to insufficient staff with the skills needed to support children's behaviour. Staff that do provide children with boundaries are sometimes assaulted as a result of inconsistent staff practice.

Most children are attending school and doing well. Many children have made progress in their education and enjoy going to school. For children who are temporarily not in education, the registered manager has been proactive in escalating this concern.

The staff seek children's wishes and views through discussion and children's meetings. However, some children are unsure about how to make a complaint when they are unhappy about something, and they are unaware of the children's guide. This means that children are sometimes unable to appropriately express their feelings.

Some measures used in the home do not reflect positive behaviour management. For example, all children's bedrooms have door alarms. These are used as standard practice and do not reflect children's individual needs. Staff also override and disconnect children's televisions at night. This practice does not provide children with routines or promote positive learning.

Children are generally in good health and attend regular appointments. However, there are weaknesses in plans for supporting children's health needs. The registered manager has started work to update these plans and implement goals for children's health.

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

The home is currently undergoing some planned redecoration. Children's bedrooms are locked during the day. However, the registered manager is making plans to provide children with keys so that they can freely access their rooms. During the inspection, shards of glass were hanging from an external window frame; this was dealt with immediately when raised with the senior leaders.

Currently, children are not being safeguarded effectively. Serious incidents are recorded by the staff. However, current risks and emerging risks are not explored with children to consider preventative measures or reduce future risks.

When children's needs change, plans, including risk assessments, are not updated. Furthermore, risk assessments are not in place to guide staff to support children who may self-harm. The registered manager was unaware of some incidents of self-harming behaviour.

Staff do look for children when they go missing from home. However, updated missing-from-care plans are not in place, and therefore staff do not have the necessary information to respond to these incidents. On occasions, children have gone missing from the home without the staff's knowledge.

Staff involved in incidents of restraint have been appropriately trained and evidence shows that restraint is used as a last resort to support children's behaviour. However, records are not consistently completed, including whether children have been spoken to following a restraint. This is a missed opportunity to explore children's views and identify ways to reduce restraint. Any consequences implemented for children are not recorded. Therefore, there is no reflection or oversight on whether sanctions used to manage children's behaviour are appropriate or effective.

Staff personnel files demonstrate that the process for recruitment of staff is thorough. Employment gaps, previous experiences and any risk associated with employment are explored. Therefore, staff are suitably vetted to work with the children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The registered manager's monitoring and oversight of the home have been hindered by insufficient staffing, which has meant that he is regularly completing shifts. This has led to a lapse in children's plans being updated following changes in children's behaviours. Consequently, staff do not have sufficient guidance to care for children. Additionally monitoring systems have been ineffective in picking up shortfalls in safeguarding and care provided to children.

Staff have not had regular supervision or an annual appraisal. Furthermore, the notes for staff supervisions could not be located during the inspection. The

registered manager has delegated some staff supervision to senior staff, but was unclear if this had taken place.

There are insufficient plans in place for staff to follow regarding children's care needs. The registered manager does not ensure that care plans are in place or updated to support staff to manage children's behaviour.

On the whole, established staff have the appropriate training and skills to care for children. However, newer staff have yet to complete mandatory training. Consequently, not all staff have the skills and experience to care for the children's needs. This has led to inconsistent care and boundaries being provided to children.

The registered manager has taken action to report an allegation to the local authority safeguarding team and conduct an investigation. However, a notification was not made to the regulator as is required. Additionally, senior leaders have failed to notify Ofsted that a child protection enquiry has concluded. This limits Ofsted's ability as regulator to hold accurate information regarding safeguarding matters.

There are serious shortfalls in the records and care planning for children. For example, inspectors were unable to review how decisions were reached to ensure effective planning for some children moving into the home, as the documentation was unavailable.

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 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; 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; 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)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(b)(d))	7 July 2023

In particular, the registered person should ensure that: - staff take effective action when children are at risk; - plans are updated to reflect current risks for children, including children who self-harm; - the environment is safe for children, particularly in relation to the glass shards in one child's bedroom window; - staff provide consistent boundaries and care for children.	
The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— mutual respect and trust; an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— meet each child's behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child's relevant plans; help each child to develop socially aware behaviour; encourage each child to take responsibility for the child's behaviour, in accordance with the child's age and understanding; help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone; communicate to each child expectations about the child's behaviour and ensure that the child understands those expectations in accordance with the child's age and understanding; understand and communicate to children that bullying is unacceptable; and have the skills to recognise incidents or indications of bullying and how to deal with them; and	7 July 2023

that each child is encouraged to build and maintain positive relationships with others. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(xii)(xiii)(b)) In particular, the registered person must: - ensure that children are protected from bullying; - ensure that staff educate children about bullying so that they understand the impact of their behaviour; - help children to understand unacceptable behaviour aimed towards adults working in the home; - ensure that staff recognise bullying and take action to address this.	
The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— 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— ensure that staff— treat each child with dignity and respect; provide to children living in the home the physical necessities they need in order to live there comfortably. (Regulation 6 (1)(b) (2)(b)(iii)(vii)) In particular, the registered person should ensure that children are able to access food where appropriate.	7 July 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 have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child;	7 July 2023

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; understand the impact 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; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(d)(e)(f)(h)) In particular, the registered person should: - ensure that there is sufficient skilled and experienced staff to support the children; - ensure that the staff team provides children with consistent care and challenges inappropriate practice; - make changes to the quality of care for children so this does not impact on children's experiences and progress; - establish effective monitoring systems to ensure effective oversight of children's care.	
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and that arrangements are in place to— that each child's relevant plans are followed. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b)(c)) In particular, the registered person should ensure that: - children's plans are updated to reflect their current care needs in collaboration with children's social care professionals; - health plans are updated with children's current health needs.	31 August 2023
The children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who—	31 August 2023

develop positive relationships with them; In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that each child— is enabled to provide feedback to, and raise issues with, a relevant person about the support and services that the child receives; has access to the home’s children’s guide, and the home’s complaints procedure, when the child’s placement in the home is agreed and throughout the child’s stay in the home (Regulation 7 (1)(a) (2)(b)(i)(ii)) In particular, the registered person should ensure that children have a copy of the children’s guide and are aware of how they can make a complaint or action to take when they are unhappy.	
The registered person must ensure that— within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes— the name of the child; details of the child’s behaviour leading to the use of the measure; the date, time and location of the use of the measure; a description of the measure and its duration; details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure; the name of the person who used the measure (“the user”), and of any other person present when the measure was used; the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and a description of any injury to the child or any other person, and any medical treatment administered, as a result of the measure;	31 August 2023

within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so (“the authorised person”)— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(vii)(b)(i)(ii)(c)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that: - a record is made following an incident of a child being restrained; - a record is made of any consequences used in relation to children’s behaviour; - children are spoken to following any incident of being restrained and a record of this is made.	
The registered person must ensure that all employees— receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience; and have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (4)(b)(c))	31 August 2023
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; a child protection enquiry involving a child — concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry); or there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(c)(d)(ii)(e))	31 August 2023

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that, just as in a family home, children should be able to access all shared areas of their home unless there are specific reasons why this would not meet a child's needs. Bedroom door alarms, the switches for turning off the televisions in each child's room and locked bedrooms should only be implemented to safeguard each child in the home, and should be informed by a rigorous assessment of that individual child's needs, be properly recorded and be kept under regular review. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.10)

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: SC030797

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Ethelbert Specialist Homes Limited

Registered provider address: Ethelbert Specialist Homes Limited, 17 Leigh Road, Ramsgate, Kent CT12 5EU

Responsible individual: Leslie Davenport

Registered manager: Sidney Coffin

Inspectors

Sara Stoker, Social Care Inspector

Jane Balfe, Social Care Inspector

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