

SC031410

Registered provider: East Sussex County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is operated by the local authority. The service is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to seven young people who have learning disabilities and/or physical disabilities.

Inspection dates: 13 to 14 December 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: 22 February 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: declined in effectiveness

Key findings from this inspection

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

- There has been no registered manager for a period of more than 26 weeks.
- The manager vacancy has led to shortfalls in supervision for staff.
- There are gaps in training for permanent and bank/agency staff.

The children's home's strengths:

- The young people benefit from trusting relationships with dedicated staff.
- The staff ensure that the young people access a wide range of enjoyable and rewarding social activities.
- Safety is a priority at this home, evidenced in part by the use of specialist equipment which is used in accordance with detailed risk assessments.
- Education is encouraged by the staff. They ensure that the young people are provided with education that suits their needs.
- Independence is promoted by creative staff who seek inventive ways to stretch the young people's skills.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
22/02/2017	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
06/07/2016	Full	Outstanding
22/03/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
03/12/2015	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
The registered person must ensure that within 24 hours of the use of the measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home staff record a description of the measure and its duration. (Regulation 35 (a)(iv)) In particular, record which staff member has applied which measure.	31/01/2018

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11)
- All staff in a care role, including external agency or bank staff, must have the qualification in regulation 32(4) within the relevant timescale listed in regulation 32(5). ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.12)

Inspection judgements

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

While the daily care provided for the young people living at this home has enabled them to make progress, the overall judgement has been made due to there being no registered manager for a 28-week period. During this time a number of shortfalls occurred that will be referred to later in this report.

The young people living at this home benefit from relationships with staff who nurture them and provide safe, predictable care. The staff take the time to learn the young people's particular communication needs and are good at interpreting their wishes. Parents feel confident that the staff take good care of their children. A parent commented, 'The staff are lovely, respectful and kind. I wish my son could live there forever.'

Admissions to the home are carefully considered. Impact assessments enable managers to consider the compatibility with young people already living at the home. Plans are made in line with the young people's individual needs to ensure that they are familiar with staff prior to their arrival at the home.

Advocacy support is provided through a weekly visit from an independent advocate. This ensures that the young people have the opportunity to voice their opinions with adults who are not their care givers. Regular house meetings further ensure that the young people have the opportunity to participate in decisions about the day-to-day running of the home.

Young people are encouraged to attend and apply themselves in education by staff who have high aspirations for them. They know that education provides opportunities for the young people to engage in social learning as well as formal education. An example of staff championing for young people was their ability to negotiate a reduced timetable for one young person who was experiencing difficulties. They succeeded in agreeing a reduction of hours, while continuing to attend school each day in order to maintain the young person's daily routine.

Inclusion in community and social events is a key focus for the young people. The staff recently attended an open day, which gave them information on social activities such as night clubs and sporting events that are accessible. Their passion to enable the young people to participate in such activities is a good example of their willingness to go the extra mile to support the young people to embrace their teenage years.

Health matters are meticulously managed. One young person has a serious health condition. Her paediatrician recently wrote to commend the staff on the way they have managed her condition. The staff have not only learned to administer the medication, they have also become adept at managing the dietary requirements, which has stabilised the condition. The social worker for the young person said, 'The staff manage her condition really well. There is such a strong interlink between her behaviour and her health.' As a result of this, the young person is enjoying improved health and an increase in the stability of her mood.

A sensitive approach is taken to the young people's developing identities. Staff ensure that privacy is promoted and protected for the young people. Personal care is delivered professionally, promoting the dignity of the young people. The staff encourage the young people to become independent with as much of their personal care as possible. One young person can now brush her teeth independently. For another, staff are encouraging her to wash her doll to help her learn self-care. These are good examples of staff promoting independence for the young people.

Celebrations are focused on individual needs. Some of the young people enjoy being the centre of attention for their birthday. Others prefer to celebrate independently. This is a good example of the staff's insight into the needs of the young people, and respect for

their wishes.

Plans for young people leaving the home are carefully agreed with the young people's network. Staff ensure that consideration is given to the young people's ability to understand information. Social stories are used to support the young people to understand the process of moving to a new home. This helped prepare one young person. On the day she was due to move she told staff, 'New home now, please.' The staff have supported young people to settle into their new homes, and maintained contact with them during the early days. This has resulted in the young people moving successfully to their new homes.

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

The young people living at the home are currently safe. Allegations are reported to the designated officer. She has a good working relationship with the home and is confident in the ability of staff in the home to identify and share any concerns. However, the records and reports of allegations are not clearly collated and lack clarity. Some records are not clearly labelled or signed. There is no clear timeline recording for allegations, and some information is not kept at the home. This results in a lack of clarity regarding safeguarding investigations.

There have been incidents when effective action has not been taken. One young person was bitten by a peer. The staff did not seek medical attention for the bite. Subsequently, during family contact, the bite was inflamed and required medical attention. This resulted in a complaint from the young person's family. In response to this the manager has updated the protocol. The staff handbook now clearly states that medical attention must be sought for any bites.

Risk assessments are detailed. They reliably inform staff of the risks and provide clear strategies to reduce them. If specialist equipment, such as walking reins or special car harnesses, is required, the risk assessments contain clear information about when and where such items should be used.

Leaders and managers are engaging with the positive behaviour management team to find ways to reduce physical interventions for one young person. The manager takes a proactive approach to behaviour management, with the view that all behaviour is a communication from the young person. Physical intervention is used as a last resort. However, a requirement made at the interim inspection in February has not been met. Records of physical intervention do not detail which staff applied the measure. This requirement is repeated.

Online safety has been reviewed. The young people have engaged in a house meeting to discuss safe use of the internet. Staff are currently supervising the young people when they are using the internet. However this has not stopped one young person accessing inappropriate web pages. The manager has arranged for the young people to participate in 'Think, Connect, Protect' in the new year to further educate the young people in

online safety.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

This home has been without a registered manager for over 28 weeks. The deputy manager and staff worked closely together during this period to ensure that the young people's needs were prioritised. However, the managerial tasks such as monitoring and supervision during this period fell short, with gaps in both. As a result of this, staff were not regularly supervised and some actions from the independent reports were not met.

A period of challenging behaviour from one young person impacted on the service. Staff injuries occurred, and short- and long-term staff absence further hampered the team. The deputy manager was supported by other managers in the locality, which enabled her and the team to focus on ensuring that the young people continued to make progress. Additional staff were provided for an interim period while an alternative placement was identified for the young person. This was effective in keeping the staff and young people safe.

A new manager has been in post since October 2017. She is suitably experienced and qualified, and has submitted an application to register with Ofsted. She has developed an action plan and has already improved supervision for the staff, which is now occurring in line with the home's statement of purpose. The statement of purpose has also been updated. It provides a clear outline of the services provided at this home.

Since arriving at the service, the manager has faced a number of challenges. She has met with the staff and the young people to ascertain the current situation, and has prioritised areas for her attention. An early success has been the introduction of personal protective equipment. One young person was frequently pulling staff's hair. The manager introduced hats for staff, which has succeeded in preventing this behaviour.

At the interim inspection in February, three requirements and one recommendation were made. The requirement regarding the risk assessment of specialist equipment has been met. The second requirement regarding the statement of purpose has been met. Staff meeting minutes evidence that the staff have read and understood the document.

In response to a recommendation made at the interim inspection in February, staff have had Makaton training. A further refresher is planned for a team meeting in January 2018. This is a good example of the managers' intent to drive forwards the quality and performance of the service.

Training is not currently clearly recorded. The matrix is not up to date and some staff have not had the required mandatory training within the annual timescales. Bank and agency staff do not have the level three qualification. Due to these shortfalls, the recommendation regarding training is repeated.

Communication has been a focus at this home. All of the young people who use picture communication have their own books. The manager has visited the schools for the

young people to ensure that the home and schools are using the same communication tools. This has led to the home using lanyards to support the young people with prompt cards. As a result of this, a young people's ability to communicate with staff has improved.

New staff are being recruited. The manager is ensuring that safer recruitment is followed, and has developed a file-checking system to ensure that all relevant checks are completed prior to employment. Files sampled evidence this monitoring to be effective.

The garden refurbishment is now complete. It provides a safe space for the young people to play outside. The young people's bedrooms have also been refurbished. They have chosen their own colour schemes, giving them a comfortable space to relax in. Health and safety checks, including routine maintenance of equipment, are in date, ensuring that the environment provides safe accommodation for the young people.

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: SC031410

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: County Hall, St. Annes Crescent, Lewes, East Sussex
BN7 1UE

Responsible individual: Elizabeth Rugg

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Sarah Olliver, social care inspector

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