

SC031698

Registered provider: East Sussex County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a local authority children's home. The home can provide care for up to eight children with learning and physical disabilities. According to the statement of purpose, the home provides a short-breaks service.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since June 2017 and is suitably qualified.

There are two children currently living in the home. Since the last inspection, no children have moved into or out of the home.

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 October 2022

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 widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted, and the care and experiences of children and young people are poor and they are not making progress.

Date of last inspection: 16 September 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
16/09/2021	Full	Good
16/01/2020	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
02/10/2019	Full	Good
22/08/2018	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

The home was operating as a short-breaks service. However, two children were placed as emergencies in 2019 and 2020 and have remained living in the home.

This was originally a temporary arrangement to help create space and enable assessments to be carried out to determine the best placements for the two children. However, despite the manager's and the staffs' best efforts to meet the children's needs, a suitable placement has not been identified which has resulted in the children remaining at the home far longer than initially planned

One child's needs fall outside the home's conditions of registration. This has resulted in his primary care needs having to be met by an external agency.

The registered manager has implemented care plans to try to meet the children's complex needs. However, she recognises this is not good enough for the children and has raised concerns with senior leaders.

Children experience barriers to their inclusion in society and are deprived of their liberty. The level of restrictions imposed on one child are so severe that he only leaves the home to attend medical appointments or for a short minibus ride under staff supervision. He has no interaction with other children and is not able to participate in any activities outside the home.

Leaders have not ensured that consent has been appropriately sought for the level of restrictions in place for this child. This is despite the registered manager's continued efforts to advocate for the child and make clear that this is needed.

Access to education is wholly inadequate. Children are not being provided with meaningful education. One child is visited by a tutor for two hours a week. The other child has no formal education.

The registered manager and the staff have tried hard to support one child's health needs. This resulted in the child having a surgical procedure to resolve an ongoing health condition which had caused him pain. The considerable planning and dedication of everyone involved was exceptional.

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

Children do not live in a pleasant home and staff practices create an institutional environment, such as the locking of doors.

The environment is bleak and unwelcoming. For example, in one child's bedroom there is a stockpile of dirty sofa cushions and there are marks, holes and writing all

over the walls. There is a boarded-up window, with no confirmed date when this will be fixed.

There has been a lack of urgency to repair a child's bathroom. There is a radiator missing from a wall which has not been replaced and, consequently, there is exposed pipework. Not enough consideration has been given to the child's sensory needs, which have led to items such as toilet paper and soap being removed from the bathroom. The delay in addressing the needs of the child when accessing their bathroom has resulted in a deterioration in the child's personal hygiene and their behaviour.

One child raised a complaint following a window frame falling out on him when he opened it after it had been repaired. The registered manager escalated this to an internal department and ensured that this was correctly fixed.

Staff do not have the skills, experience or knowledge to manage children's behaviours. This failure has resulted in practices being used that impose restrictions to keep children safe. For example, to manage one child's behaviours, there is a practice of locking the child in an area or room to contain them, while staff observe through a window. Other strategies include staff holding doors shut to keep themselves safe when children's behaviours escalate.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The manager has been escalating concerns that the home is not able to meet the needs of the children, despite every effort being made by the staff. However, there has been too long a delay in dealing effectively with the concerns raised.

Staff feel supported by the registered manager. They are provided with regular supervision. However, there are gaps in staff receiving annual appraisals.

External feedback from stakeholders praises the registered manager and the staff for their dedicated work in trying to meet the children's needs. However, there is recognition that this is not an appropriate or sustainable placement for one child.

Although the registered manager has taken action to ensure that children are safeguarded when an allegation is raised, this is not sufficiently rigorous. These significant events have not been notified to Ofsted and referrals have not been made to the local authority designated officer. Furthermore, a staff member who was dismissed due to safeguarding concerns was not subject to the necessary referral to external agencies.

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; 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— provide to children living in the home the physical necessities they need in order to live there comfortably; 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)(b)(vii)(ix)(c)(i)(ii))	20 November 2022
The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. (Regulation 8 (1))	20 November 2022
The enjoyment and achievement standard is 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.	20 November 2022

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 make a positive contribution to the home and the wider community; and that each child has 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))	
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— understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; 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; and 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)(v)(b)(d))	20 November 2022
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—	20 November 2022

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; 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. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(f))	
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home's statement of purpose; that arrangements are in place to— manage and review the placement of each child in the home; and plan for, and help, each child to prepare to leave the home or to move into adult care in a way that is consistent with arrangements agreed with the child's placing authority. (Regulation 14 (1)(a) (2)(a)(b)(ii)(iii))	20 November 2022
No measure of control or discipline which is excessive, unreasonable or contrary to paragraph (2) may be used in relation to any child. (Regulation 19 (1))	20 November 2022
The registered person must ensure that— the privacy of children is appropriately protected; children can access all appropriate areas of the children's home's premises; and any limitation placed on a child's privacy or access to any area of the home's premises— is intended to safeguard each child accommodated in the home;	20 November 2022

is necessary and proportionate;

is kept under review and, if necessary, revised; and allows children as much freedom as is possible when balanced against the need to protect them and keep them safe.

(Regulation 21 (a)(b)(c)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv))

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that performance management of staff safeguards children and minimises potential risks to them. In particular, the registered provider should ensure that following the dismissal of employees, referrals are made to statutory agencies. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)
- The registered person should ensure that all staff have their performance and fitness to carry out their role formally appraised at least once annually. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.5)

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: SC031698

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: East Sussex County Council

Registered provider address: East Sussex County Council, County Hall, St Anne's Crescent, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 1UE

Responsible individual: Kathy Marriott

Registered manager: Shirin White

Inspector

Sara Stoker, Social Care Inspector

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