

SC031698

Registered provider: East Sussex County Council

Interim inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a local authority children's home providing short breaks for up to eight children who have severe learning difficulties and who may also have physical disabilities. The home's statement of purpose states that the age range of the children is between seven and 19 years old.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since June 2017.

Inspection date: 16 January 2020

Date of last inspection: 2 October 2019

Judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

This inspection

The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection

This home was judged good at the last full inspection.

At the interim inspection, Ofsted judges that it has declined in effectiveness.

Significant changes have occurred since the last inspection. Children who routinely use this service for planned short breaks are currently unable to. This caused disruption for some families over the Christmas and New Year period, resulting in complaints from parents.

One child has been accommodated since before the last inspection and is continuing to benefit from the continuity of the care that he receives from staff, who know him well. Already familiar with his needs and routines from his previous short-break stays, the staff team provides a stable environment while longer-term provision is being explored.

A significant focus is being placed on helping this child to maintain very regular and meaningful contact with his family. The staff are diligently following health planning guidance, and the child's recent return to school is looking promising.

In response to a recent crisis, senior leaders have taken the decision to accommodate another child while a longer-term solution for him continues to be sought. Although this child had used the service a number of years ago, the majority of the staff do not have an established relationship with him.

During this period, the core staff have not always been sufficient in either numbers or expertise to safely look after this child, who has complex needs that manifest in challenging behaviours. Some staff members have been injured and there has been extensive damage to the property, rendering areas unsafe for periods of time. In specific areas, the physical premises now require extensive repairs and refurbishment.

The reactive measures taken by leaders include suspending all other scheduled short breaks for an indefinite period and restricting this child's living area to a separate floor of the home. Staff from a private company are contracted to support the child, and one member of the home's team is rostered to each shift. The registered manager describes this arrangement as an added safeguard to ensure that the child's care is monitored by the core team. In reality, there have been occasions when the allocated core staff member has been called away, therefore this additional protective measure is flawed.

Despite their best attempts, the staff are unable to provide meaningful experiences for this child in accordance with the aims and objectives of the home's statement of

purpose. Children who have previously benefited from their stays have been unable to use the service.

The recruitment information relating to the additional, contracted staff members has not been sufficiently scrutinised by the registered manager. Consequently, safer recruitment practice is not being fully undertaken, nor is it consistent with the children's homes regulations.

A previous requirement, in respect of agency staff needing to achieve the relevant care qualification, has not been met, and is therefore repeated. The registered manager said that the human resources department is currently liaising with staffing agencies to provide incentives for such staff to undertake relevant training. This longer-term objective does not resolve the immediate shortfall.

The decisions made by leaders, including the registered manager, on the current use of the provision demonstrate a lack of understanding of operating a regulated children's home. The impact of these decisions has interrupted the use, enjoyment and benefit of those families and children for whom the service is intended.

The registered manager has made a proposal to senior leaders about the future operation of this service and awaits a response to these proposals.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
02/10/2019	Full	Good
22/08/2018	Full	Requires improvement to be good
29/08/2017	Full	Good
01/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

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 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 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)(d))	31/03/2019
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– 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 work as a team where appropriate; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child. (Regulation 13(1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(b)(c)(d))	31/03/2019
Subject to paragraph (6), the registered person must ensure that the home is at all times conducted in a manner which is consistent with its statement of purpose. (Regulation 16(5))	31/03/2019
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. For the purposes of paragraph (3)(b), an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification if, by the relevant date, the individual has attained– the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England) ("the Level 3 Diploma"); or	31/03/2019

a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the Level 3 Diploma. The relevant date is– in the case of an individual who starts working in a care role in a home after 1st April 2014, the date which falls 2 years after the date on which the individual started working in a care role in a home; or in the case of an individual who was working in a care role in a home on 1st April 2014, 1st April 2016. (Regulation 32(1)(4)(a)(b)(5)(a)(b)) Specifically, ensure that agency staff are qualified to level 3 within the required timeframe.	
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only– employ an individual to work at the children's home; or if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that– the individual is of integrity and good character; the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform; the individual is mentally and physically fit for the purposes of the work that the individual is to perform; and full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32(1)(2)(a)(b)(3)(a)(b)(c)(d))	31/03/2019

Information about this inspection

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full 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 address: 175b Priory Road, Hastings, Sussex TN34 3JD

Responsible individual: Elizabeth Rugg

Registered manager: Shirin White

Inspector

Sophie Wood, regulatory inspection manager

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