

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	17/12/2015
Unique reference number	SC031698
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	East Sussex County Council
Registered person address	County Hall, St. Annes Crescent, LEWES, East Sussex, BN7 1UE

Responsible individual	Elizabeth Rugg
Registered manager	Helen Simmons
Inspector	Sophie Wood

Inspection date	17/12/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
how well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC031698

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Children and young people thoroughly enjoy their stays and take full advantage of the services provided.
- Staff understand the individual needs of the children and young people; they provide bespoke packages of care as a result. However, the care plans for those children who are looked after do not sufficiently include all of the required elements. This inhibits the home's ability to accurately demonstrate the progress such children make.
- Relationships between the staff and the children and young people are respectful, warm and fun. There is much laughter and enjoyment in this happy house. Parents and carers commend this aspect as validation that their child enjoys their stays.
- The quality of the accommodation continues to improve. Children and young people are assured sufficient safety, privacy and freedom of movement within the home.
- The Registered Manager understands the strengths and weaknesses of the service; her on-going development plans are continuing to drive improvements.
- A wide range of structured and naturally occurring activities enhance children and young peoples' growth and development. Their sense of curiosity and learning is actively encouraged.
- Parents and carers say the service makes a significant positive difference to their lives because of all of the resources it has to offer. These are not accurately captured within the statement of purpose; consequently, new and prospective parents and carers may not be aware of the potential benefits of accessing this resource.
- Staff feel very well supported and led by the Registered Manager and senior staff. Supervision processes are recognised by the Registered Manager as requiring further development. The staff training programme accurately reflects the more complex needs of some of the children and this results in safe, competent care delivery.
- Staff implement effective behaviour management guidance which results in

the very low level use of physical intervention techniques. Challenging behaviour is extremely well understood and often successfully de-escalated. Sanctions and consequences are equally infrequent. Staff view challenging behaviour as a form of communication which needs to be understood.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets 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 with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
cooperate with the child's placing authority in agreeing and signing the child's placement plan, and comply with requests by the child's placing authority to- (a) provide the placing authority with information relating to the child. This is in respect of the content of the placement and care plans held in relation to Looked After Children whose placements extend beyond the short breaks timescales (Regulation 17 (2), (3)(a))	28/02/2016

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

Ensure that staff supervision enables staff to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 61, paragraph 13.2)

Continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. In particular, review the quality and clarity of children's individual risk assessments and behaviour management plans (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 42, paragraph 9.5)

Ensure that the statement of purpose is set out to accurately describe how the home will be able to respond effectively to the child's needs. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 15, paragraph 3.6).

Full report

Information about this children's home

This children's home is operated by the local authority. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to eight children and young people with learning and physical disabilities for short breaks.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
23/03/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
13/08/2014	Full	Good
12/02/2014	Interim	Good progress
31/10/2013	Full	Outstanding

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
Staff strive to create a warm and safe environment which welcomes children, young people and their parents and carers as soon as they enter the building. Regular attenders are familiar with the accommodation and the stable staff team. They are comfortable in their surroundings and happily target the activities they desire, remembering favourite things from their previous stays. Newly referred children and young people are sensitively supported with gradual introductions. This approach maximises their chances of settling. Staff members said, 'We want kids to want to come here. That's the whole point of this service.' Staff are sensitive to individual needs and the little things which are important to certain children. Examples include, a young person's preferred bedroom, specific toys and how individual rituals and personality traits need to be sensitively managed. This attention to detail helps children to readily settle because they trust the environment and the staff. Anxieties and worries are quickly dispelled and children get on with enjoying their time here. The home typically provides short breaks but there are occasions where children and young people stay for longer periods and are therefore 'Looked After Children.' These episodes of care are often in response to a crisis situation; they are agreed following a multi-disciplinary meetings and a planned approach. Two such parents who were visiting their children during this inspection told the inspector, 'this place is fantastic', 'I feel as much at home here as my child does' and 'our family is only being maintained because of the difference this service makes to us.' The experiences for these children and their families are excellent. Care plans contain clear and relevant information that enables staff to provide good quality, individually tailored care. The Registered Manager is currently reviewing and updating all care plans and it is recommended that this opportunity is used to ask parents and carers to sign their agreement to these. Staff effectively promote the value of education. The home is well resourced with toys, books and engaging activities that encourage children's learning and development. Children's attendance at school is not compromised while using the service. Staff liaise with school colleagues but with regards to the Looked After Children, there are some gaps with regards to the information contained within their care files and plans. For these children, the home is required to amend the care plans to ensure all of the required information is in place.	

The specific health and medical needs of children and young people are accurately described; including any specialist input, support and therapy interventions. Staff follow the guidance of external professionals meticulously. A specialist diabetes nurse said, 'The staff always attend the clinic alongside the child and their parents; we can see just how well their condition is being managed.' This is further complemented by staff supporting one young person to actively participate in the preparation of their own meals and snacks, in order to broaden their own understanding of their own health needs.

The quality of the relationships enjoyed by the children and young people with the staff and each other enhances their experiences when they stay. Short breaks are well planned, wherever possible in advance, in order to maximise the positive impact for the children, young people and their families. The Registered Manager endeavours to offer the same dates to children who have made friends with each other. Similarly, those who don't get on so well are offered different dates. Parents said, 'it allows me to spend quality time with my other child without feeling guilty. We are all winners.' Social workers said, 'he gets opportunities he doesn't get at home' and 'staff allow greater appropriate risk taking which promotes independence and growing up.'

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
On-going refurbishment works are continuing to improve the physical environment. As this progresses, the Registered Manager implements thorough risk management practices. This ensures the health and safety of the premises remains uppermost in everyone's thinking. She has seized this opportunity to make changes which positively affect the children's freedom of movement within the home; for example, by removing previous restrictors to a number of doors. Her view is simple: 'children require good staffing levels and supervision, not locked doors.' This diligent practice extends into other health and safety measures. The current works result in much dialogue between the Registered Manager and the local fire officer. Fire evacuation plans are updated, in accordance with any physical changes to the premises; staff know what to do. All other premises checks are regularly conducted to maximise everyone's safety and security. Children and young people can move more freely within the home and spacious garden. This is further achieved through good staffing levels. Some children require very close supervision and this is factored into robust shift planning. The creation of a separate medical room has enabled safer medication administration. Staff said, 'with fewer potential distractions, it is almost impossible to make any	

errors.' The health and medical needs of children are keenly understood and promoted. One young person sometimes struggles to understand the consequences of occasionally refusing to cooperate with having injections. Consequently, a multi-disciplinary risk management approach has sanctioned the use of physical intervention techniques should these become necessary. Staff are struggling with this decision and said, 'it goes against all that you believe in and we try everything to gain their cooperation before resorting to such measures.' Their dilemma in this regard represents their very strong moral ethic about how to treat children.

Staff of all disciplines understand their key safeguarding roles and responsibilities. They are able to describe the core policies and procedures and how they use them. As such, there is a strong culture of reporting any worries or concerns, no matter how minor, to senior staff for appropriate action. The Registered Manager maintains good links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and benefits from regular meetings with other Registered Managers. This forum is used to share good safeguarding practice, understand the roles of other lead safeguarding agencies and to learn from events, such as serious case reviews.

Regular refresher child protection training is well attended by all staff and the content examines some of the distinct vulnerabilities of disabled children and young people. There have been no missing episodes since the last inspection and no child or young person is deemed by the home to be at risk of sexual exploitation. This aspect of fully exploring the potential risks is not yet fully embedded within the policies and training for staff and neither does guidance such as e-safety readily flow into individual risk assessments or care plans. A recommendation is made to further develop and embed these aspects.

Some children and young people engage in behaviours which are potentially harmful to themselves or others. Many of the staff are long-standing and know the children well. They are able to spot triggers and are quick to implement successful de-escalation techniques. The actual use of physical interventions is rare, although staff are trained in the use of such measures. This low use of restraints, sanctions and consequences represents a culture of trying to teach children to deal with their anxieties and frustrations in safer ways, to avoid the use of intrusive interventions. Such behaviours are explained within individual care plans and risk assessments but there are examples of ambiguous language. More experienced staff know what this means but the home is currently using some agency workers and also recruiting new staff. This written guidance, including behaviour management plans, needs to be explicitly written to reduce the room for misunderstanding or error on behalf of such staff.

Safe recruitment procedures serve to protect the children and young people from potentially unsafe adults. During its on-going recruitment campaign, the home is using a number of agency staff. In its attempts to reduce potential risks and to provide continuity for the children, a small cohort of regular such staff are being

used. One young person said of a regular worker, 'I like him best' and this young person's parent stated, 'I'm thrilled that [agency worker's name] has applied for a permanent post, my child adores him.'

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
A suitably qualified and experienced Registered Manager has effectively led and managed this service since January 2012. Staff spoke of 'excellent support', 'clear direction' and 'feeling valued.' Other substantive post-holders, including a deputy and permanent relief workers have long service. There is a good balance between new and agency staff with the stability and continuity of the existing team. New staff are confident about their induction and support systems that include a thorough probationary period. All staff members receive 1:1 supervisions and these are further complemented by regular team meetings. The Registered Manager recognises the need to continue to develop and improve the supervision process. Currently, there are examples of a lack of evaluation with regards to staff's training and no clear link between this and their on-going professional development needs. The Registered Manager responds positively to the inspection process. One requirement was made from the previous inspection. This identified shortfalls regarding her monitoring processes and has been successfully addressed. The Registered Manager identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the service. One example is the need to recruit more permanent staff. Furthermore, she consults with parents, carers and children to identify and think about the longer-term development needs. A strong awareness of the presenting and changing needs of families has resulted in the planned expansion of the service which includes a decision to make an application to Ofsted to increase its registered numbers. Two recommendations were made from the previous inspection and these have been implemented. The frequency of staff supervision has increased and there is now greater clarity with regards to the aims and objectives for assessment placements. Children and young people understand, as much as their disabilities allow, why they use the services offered by the home. Direct observations made during the inspection positively indicated their enjoyment and ease in their surroundings. Some of this is captured within the statement of purpose but its content does not do sufficient justice in describing all it has to offer. Consequently, prospective parents and new users may not fully appreciate the benefits of accessing this home. It is strongly recommended that this document is updated and the use of	

different formats considered.

Good quality external monitoring provides an extra layer of scrutiny and challenge which further aids the on-going development of the service. An independent visitor makes clear and rationalised recommendations which are shared with the team and used to improve the conduct and practices of the home.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place, however, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, 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 who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service 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*.

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