

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 for short breaks. It provides care and accommodation for up to eight young people 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 young people is between seven and 19 years old.

The registered manager has been in post since 2016.

Inspection dates: 22 to 23 August 2018

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: 29 August 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Good

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
29/08/2017	Full	Good
01/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
26/10/2016	Full	Good
23/03/2016	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 quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 6(1)(2)(c)(i))	16/11/2018
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; and understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person. (Regulation 12(2)(1)(a)(i)(v))	16/11/2018
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 have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child;	16/11/2018

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 at the home. (Regulation 13(1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(c)(e)(f)(h))	
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home. (Regulation 14(1)(a))	16/11/2018

Recommendations

- The registered person should have a system in place so that all serious events are notified, within 24 hours, to the appropriate people. The system should cover the action that should be followed if the event arises at the weekend or on a public holiday. Notification must include details of the action taken by the home's staff in response to the event. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 63, paragraph 14.13)

Inspection judgements

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

During this inspection period, the children and young people have experienced significant disruption directly linked to emergency admissions. Children and young people have made complaints that their access to some areas of the home has been restricted due to the needs of others. One child cannot practise their independent personal care skills due to being unable to access a particular bathroom.

Other examples of dissatisfaction from children and young people include having limited access to the soft play and computer facilities. Despite the registered manager's best efforts, some much-needed refurbishment has been significantly delayed. This has adversely affected the availability of communal areas for children and young people and their family members.

Despite these difficulties, staff demonstrate noteworthy resilience in maintaining a warm and welcoming culture. Parents describe 'excellent communication with the staff' and say that their child thoroughly enjoys their short breaks. Children and young people feel valued and cared for by the permanent staff members that they have come to know and trust over time. While this is testament to the drive and passion of this caring and nurturing team, the current use of agency staff is noted and felt by the children and young people. Wherever possible, the registered manager strives to secure the services

of regular workers to aid consistency. However, one complaint from a young person is directly linked to 'wanting more regular staff'.

Variable outcomes for children and young people include some young people achieving their goals in further developing their independence skills. Staff encourage young people to become more proficient at managing their own money, as well as budgeting for and preparing meals. One young person is flourishing at college. His social network has expanded, and he is regularly going out with his friends. Some aspects of care planning, however, have been inconsistent. One child remains at the home, despite professionals involved agreeing that the placement cannot effectively meet his needs. Although staff report that this child has made some progress, the absence of clear goal setting and lack of key-work records fails to demonstrate this.

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

Some aspects of staff's safeguarding practice are weak. One example relates to a poorly risk-assessed holiday which resulted in a preventable incident for children. Staff failed to ensure adequate levels of supervision to keep the children safe. This incident has not been reviewed. Consequently, no learning has been undertaken.

Staff have used restrictive measures that are not prescribed in their attempts to manage challenging behaviour and there has been an increase in staff injuries. There have been incidents of the police being called, resulting in further excessive measures of physical restraint being used for a child. The registered manager is solution focused and she has sought immediate further guidance and advice from a qualified trainer in this regard. Consequently, the use of restrictive measures has reduced and staff injuries have become less frequent.

Other examples of managing risk demonstrate the staff's clear understanding and their ability to remain alert to potential safeguarding concerns. On one occasion, a potential safety threat to the home was immediately recognised by a staff member and consequently prevented. Risks in this regard were further reduced because of the registered manager's actions in securing a joint working protocol with the police in the event of possible future occurrences.

Staff know how, when and to whom to pass on information in respect of allegations and concerns. Examples of allegations made by children are demonstrated to be quickly reported to safeguarding agencies. Such practice is a strong protective factor. Children, young people and parents are assured that staff work transparently in this regard.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The decisions of senior leaders to make emergency placements have caused disruption and poor experiences for many of the children and young people. The staff team does not possess the knowledge and skills to successfully care for one child's presenting needs. Other children and young people are adversely affected by the restrictions that this has imposed, such as being unable to access specific areas of the home.

The combination of an incompatible group of children and young people and significant maintenance and repair delays creates undue pressure on a tired staff team that is unable to deliver the aims and objectives of the service. Some children and young people have had their short breaks disrupted and, in some cases, cancelled at short notice.

The registered manager is placing a heavy focus on supporting the staff team during this challenging period. Staff appreciate this. In particular, the registered manager's ongoing commitment to provide the team with regular supervision is commended.

Monitoring systems are not effective. The registered manager has identified significant shortfalls and areas of weakness in respect of poor-quality care records completed by staff and significant damage and maintenance concerns. These areas have not improved. Independent visitor reports have identified areas of fire safety concerns and some remedial action has been taken. However, no practice drills have occurred to ensure that staff are familiar with new equipment and visitors are not always advised of emergency procedures when they arrive at the home. Significant incidents are notified to Ofsted but not always within the required timescales.

Not all staff members are suitably qualified in accordance with the children's homes regulations. This shortfall particularly applies to agency workers and is exacerbated by the increased use of such staff. While this use meets the immediate need for additional staffing levels, it results in children and young people being supported by unfamiliar and unqualified staff. The staff team is reacting to circumstances beyond its control due to placement decisions made by senior leaders.

Regardless of their permanent or agency status, all staff members are working incredibly hard to maintain a positive culture and environment for the children and 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: SC031698

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: Shirin White

Inspector:

Sarah Olliver, social care inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence>, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

© Crown copyright 2018