

SC034797

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This local authority home provides medium- to long-term residential care for up to four children who have experienced trauma and may have experienced neglect and/or emotional abuse.

The home has a permanent registered manager who registered with Ofsted in April 2020.

Visit dates: 3 to 4 September 2020

Previous inspection date: 8 January 2020

Previous inspection judgement: declined in effectiveness

Information about this visit

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), Ofsted suspended all routine inspections in March 2020. As part of a phased return to routine inspection, we are undertaking assurance visits to children's social care services that are inspected under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF).

At these visits, inspectors evaluate the extent to which:

- children are well cared for
- children are safe
- leaders and managers are exercising strong leadership.

This visit was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000, following the published guidance for assurance visits.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills is leading Ofsted's work into how England's social care system has delivered child-centred practice and care within the context of the restrictions placed on society during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Findings from the visit

We identified no serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit.

The care of children

Staff at this children's home have good relationships with all the children. The children feel able to talk about their worries and are warmly welcomed into the home. A social worker said that the staff show insight into the children's needs. One child's reviewing officer talked about high levels of emotional containment offered by the home's staff. The children benefit from individual therapy.

Despite the limitations of the pandemic, the children have been able to continue doing things that they enjoy. One child is a representative on the 'In care council' and attends virtual meetings. The staff took the children sailing and for trips to the beach so that the children enjoyed the summer holidays.

Staff help the children to keep in touch with their family members. Staff use information technology to make sure that virtual contact takes place during periods when face-to-face contact is not possible. Face-to-face contact was reintroduced soon after the restrictions were lifted. A parent said that the staff communicate with her regularly and make sure that the quality of care is consistent.

All the children have an identified education placement. A reviewing officer praised the staff for advocating on behalf of a child who did not have a school place. This child now has a place at a school that meets his needs. Staff work hard to support the children with their education. They offer the children individualised help with managing transitions into a new school. Two children attended their education regularly during the lockdown period. Staff make sure that the children have all the equipment that they need for school, which helps them to feel valued and prepared for the new term. One child said that she valued that the staff make sure that she has what she needs for her new school term no matter what the financial cost.

The children have detailed plans that give staff information about their individual needs. However, staff were not clear about the arrangements for when and how to help a child with cleaning their bedroom. This meant that the child's room was not of an acceptable hygienic standard.

The safety of children

Staff ensure that the children are kept safe from harm at the home and in the community. Children have detailed risk assessments that are regularly updated. The children feel safe and do not go missing from home. There have been no incidents of restraint. Staff take a restorative approach to dealing with incidents.

The children's plans guide staff in how to manage challenging behaviour effectively. There is learning following incidents, and when things go wrong the incidents are

discussed in team meetings to ensure a consistent approach is taken by all staff members.

Relationships between the children have improved. There are no bullying incidents between the children. Staff have a good understanding of the potential indicators of abuse and how to raise any concerns about a child's safety or well-being.

There have been no complaints made by the children. One child said that she can talk to the staff if she has any worries. However, this child said she that she has not been given a children's guide. A child who has limited understanding of English has not been given information about how to complain in his first language. Not giving children information in an accessible format on how to complain compromises their ability to express their views or raise concerns about the quality of their care.

Some areas of the home have sustained damage, which although reported to the maintenance team, has not yet been addressed. Consequently, there is a cracked window on the landing and damage to the games room, which makes it inaccessible. In addition, the games room is being used as a storage area, which means that it is not suitable for the children's use.

Leaders and managers

The home is managed and led by an experienced manager. Management of the home has improved since the last inspection and good progress has been made with addressing the requirements raised at the last inspection. Managers have responded sensitively to the concerns of the children and staff during the COVID-19 pandemic. The well-being of individual children has remained at the centre of practice.

Virtual school staff said that the home works in partnership with them to help the children with their education. The local police have praised the management of the home and talked about the skill of the managers in dealing with incidents to prevent the need for the police to be called to the home. The staff deal with incidents as they would be dealt with by individual families, which reduces the likelihood of the children being criminalised for their behaviour.

Managers ensure that the staff are equipped with the skills that they need to care for the children. Training has continued despite the limitations of social distancing. Staff have worked flexibly as a team to make sure that there is enough cover during periods of staff absence. Staff benefit from regular supervision and the opportunity to reflect on their practice.

Monitoring of the home has improved. The independent visitor has made virtual visits using technology to view the inside the home and to talk to the children. Face-to-face visits have now resumed. The manager uses the findings from external monitoring visits to improve the quality of care provided to the children.

Some improvements have been made to the home since the last inspection and an extensive plan of refurbishment and modernisation is planned. The children have been consulted about these renovations so that they are involved in the planned changes to their home.

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 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)(c)(i)(ii)) In particular, ensure that damage to the home is repaired promptly so that the children have full use of all areas of the home, and carry out refurbishment to the home to make the environment more homely.	12/10/2020
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In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—

understand and apply the home's statement of purpose;

ensure that staff—

provide personalised care that meets each child's needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking account of the child's background.

(Regulation 6(1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(b)(iv))

In particular, ensure that children's plans detail what action the staff need to take to support a child to keep their bedroom clean and tidy.

Recommendations

- The children's home must produce a children's guide. The children's guide must be made available to all children when their placement in the home is agreed (or on arrival at the home if the placement is made in an emergency) and must be age appropriate, provided in an accessible format and explained to each child to make sure they understand it. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 24 paragraph 4.21)

In particular, give each child a copy of the children's guide, when they come to live at the home, ensuring that the format of the guide is translated into the child's first language and ensure that all the children know how to complain.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC034797

Registered provider: Norfolk County Council Children's Services

Registered provider address: County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich NR1 2DH

Responsible individual: Lee Napper

Registered manager: Roger Macdonald

Inspector

Angela Weston, Social Care Inspector

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