

SC034797

Registered provider: Norfolk County Council Children's Services

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority home provides medium- to long-term residential care for up to four children. The home caters for children who experience behavioural difficulties and mild learning difficulties. The registered manager has been in post for six years.

Inspection dates: 4 to 5 April 2019

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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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: 8 August 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
08/08/2018	Full	Inadequate
13/12/2017	Full	Good
01/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
13/10/2016	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

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

Children have little routine at the home. Both of the children are at the home during the day. One child has refused to attend a work training placement and the other has sporadic school attendance. This is despite staff's best efforts to get children to attend. Children have too much unstructured time, which results in them seeking out others who are not in education, employment or training. This leads to antisocial activities and children placing themselves in unsafe situations.

One child, who is temporarily away from the home, stays in regular contact with staff who visit him. This child's move was not planned with enough detail or thought. Although the move was a safeguarding measure, it was traumatic for the child. Despite the new placement's staff meeting with the home's staff, the type of accommodation was not confirmed prior to the child's arrival. The staff drove the child for several hours to the new placement and discovered that the child would be staying in a small tent. The month was February and the child was not prepared for sleeping outdoors. This caused the child and the child's parent significant distress and failed to meet his basic needs. On the contrary, a child moving on from the home has experienced good planning and preparation to live in semi-independent accommodation. The home's staff have visited the new placement and met with the staff there and with the child. Staff at the home supported the child to learn cooking and domestic skills, and this has helped with employability. This is a local move and the staff will provide bridging support during the transition period. This minimises the stress for a child leaving the home.

Staff know children well and have developed lasting relationships that children value. This gives consistency and stability to children who have experienced change and difficulty. Staff try to provide children with activities that are meaningful and help build relationships. This has been successful at times. The children like and trust the staff. They will go out with them, for example, to visit the coast and enjoy trips away from the home.

Communication is cited as good by professionals. Effective working relationships support children who are experiencing disruption and difficulty.

Memory books are made by staff for children, to illustrate fun times, milestones and the significant relationships built with the staff. These books give children pictures and photographs from which they can build positive memories.

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

Risks to children are clearly identified and assessed, although the staff have been unable to reduce children's risky behaviours. Children's risk-taking has increased since being at the home. One child has accrued many criminal offences. This inevitably will limit his future potential. Feedback about the child from parents and professionals stated that the risks have increased, despite staff's best efforts to reduce these.

Children regularly go missing and are drawn to local peers who are antisocial and misuse substances. The staff respond as best they can to these incidents. They record, report and respond in an appropriate manner but have been unable to change children's behaviour. This has reached levels of concerns. A child has been moved temporarily for their own safety. This move has created a change in dynamics and a positive effect on other children at the home.

The risk management plans for each child are comprehensive and include recent incidents. They identify risks to children and guide staff in their responses. Consequently, the plans provide a relevant picture of risks and how best to reduce these.

Children often break the general house rules. They smoke in the house, remove items from the house, cause damage and fail to use the bicycle safely. Staff apply consequences and are persistent in their approach. Although these consequences are not always effective, they relate to the incident and provide consistency of approach in helping children to understand the expectations and house rules.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is managed well by an experienced management team. The registered manager has been in post since 2014. He is a qualified social worker and holds a level 4 qualification in health and social care.

The staff team is long-serving and established. The staff are positive about their roles and the support that they receive from the manager. All staff have regular supervision. However, the records of the supervisions vary in depth and quality. This reduces the staff's ability to fully reflect on their practice.

The manager has a realistic overview of the home, the quality of care that is provided and the progress that children make. Children are encouraged to share their views regularly with staff, who have developed a recording system to capture these. The voice of each child is included in the review and monitoring of the home.

A lack of autonomy in decision-making about the suitability of placements has resulted in

two unplanned endings and children who have been poorly influenced by other children. The manager has raised concerns with senior leaders about being directed to take placements. This has since been addressed. However, this has resulted in children who are difficult to match, who take risks and who have not achieved good outcomes at the home. The decisions made about new placements contradict the ethos and objectives of the home. These decisions were made by senior managers who had to balance the need to find a placement with the fact that the home had available resources. These issues have been detrimental to children's welfare and disappointing for staff. Despite the issues, staff have remained buoyant and display a strong professional team ethic.

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 any care that is arranged or provided for a child that— relates to the child's development satisfies the conditions in paragraph (3). The conditions are— that the care is approved, and kept under review throughout its duration, by the placing authority; that the care meets the child's needs. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b)(2)(d)(i)(3)(a)(b))	01/05/2019
The care planning standard is that children—	01/05/2019

have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. (Regulation 14 (1)(b))	
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Recommendations

- The registered person must have systems in place so that all staff, including the manager, receive supervision of their practice from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional, which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2)

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: SC034797

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Norfolk County Council

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

Responsible individual: Lee Napper

Registered manager: Neil Marjoram

Inspector

Deirdra Keating, social care inspector

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