

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 home provides medium- to long-term residential care for up to four children. The home is owned and operated by the local authority children's services department.

The home has a registered manager who has been in post for six years.

Inspection dates: 8 to 9 August 2018

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	inadequate
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	inadequate
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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There are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded and/or the care and experiences of children and young people are poor and they are not making progress.

Date of last inspection: 13 December 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
13/12/2017	Full	Good
01/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
13/10/2016	Full	Good
14/03/2016	Interim	Declined in 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 education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— help each child to achieve the child's education and training targets, as recorded in the child's relevant plans; promote opportunities for each child to learn informally. (Regulation 8 (1)(2)(a)(i)(v))	29/09/2018
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; help each child to understand how to keep safe. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(i)(ii)) In particular this relates to having comprehensive risk assessments to identify risks for children, ways of managing the risk and helping the children to understand about safe internet use.	22/09/2018
The protection of children standard is that children are	22/09/2018

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)) In particular this relates to fire safety issue and smoke detectors in children's bedrooms.	
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— ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(2)(d))	29/09/2018
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— use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(2)(h))	22/09/2018
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the	22/09/2018

home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home’s statement of purpose. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b)(2)(a)) In particular this relates to ensuring that the matching of children does not have a significant negative impact on individual children.	
A person may only manage a children’s home if— having regard to the size of the home, its statement of purpose, and the number and needs (including any needs arising from any disability) of the children— the person has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills to manage the home effectively and lead the care of children; and the person is physically and mentally fit to manage the home. For the purposes of paragraph (1)(b)(i), a person has the appropriate experience and qualification if the person has— by the relevant date, attained— the Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management for Residential Childcare (England) (“the Level 5 Diploma”); or a qualification which the registered provider considers to be equivalent to the Level 5 Diploma. The relevant date is— in the case of a person who starts managing a home after 1st April 2014, the date which falls 3 years after the date on which that person started managing a home; or in the case of a person who was managing a home on 1st April 2014, 1st April 2017.	31/08/2019

The registered provider may defer the relevant date if the person— does not manage, or has not managed, a home for a prolonged period; or manages, or has managed, a home on a part-time basis. (Regulation 28 (1)(b)(i)(2)(c)(i)(ii)(3)(a)(b)(4)(a)(b))	
The registered person must ensure that— within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes— the name of the child; details of the child’s behaviour leading to the use of the measure; the date, time and location of the use of the measure; a description of the measure and its duration; details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure; the name of the person who used the measure (“the user”), and of any other person present when the measure was used; the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and a description of any injury to the child or any other person, and any medical treatment administered, as a result of the measure; within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so (“the authorised person”)— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(viii)(b)(i)(ii)(c)(iv))	22/09/2018

In particular this relates to the records of sanctions.	
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children (“a quality of care review”) at least once every 6 months. In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating— the quality of care provided for children; the feedback and opinions of children about the children’s home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. (Regulation 45 (1)(2)(a)(b)(c))	31/12/2018
The registered person must review the appropriateness and suitability of the location of the premises used for the purposes of the children’s home at least once in each calendar year taking into account the requirement in regulation 12(2)(c) (the protection of children standard). When conducting the review, the registered person must consult, and take into account the views of, each relevant person. (Regulation 46 (1)(2))	29/09/2018

Recommendations

- The importance of understanding who we are and where we come from is recognised in good social work practice, for example through undertaking life story work or other direct work. Staff in children’s homes should play a full role in work of this kind. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 16, paragraph 3.14)
In particular, this relates to encouraging and helping children to explore their backgrounds and develop their sense of identity.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

Some children who have lived at this home have had good experiences and made progress. However, a recent decision to place one child at the home has had a significant negative impact on the other child living at the home. This has resulted in poor experiences and a high level of vulnerability for this child. The impact of this decision and the subsequent judgement for how well children are helped and protected have contributed significantly to the overall judgement of inadequate.

The initial child, who has had a number of placement moves, was beginning to make progress and was happy and settled at the home. His independent reviewing officer said that the manager's assessment of the match between the children as being inappropriate was 'spot-on'. However, a decision to place the other child at the home was taken by a senior manager. Several professionals from different agencies refer to the quick and serious deterioration for the initial child following this placement.

Some children make progress in their education while at the home, but the staff do not encourage the children in informal learning (as a good parent would). One child currently at the home has a recorded interest in the area of the United Kingdom where he was born, its language, sports personalities and celebrities. He is very interested in football and plays for a local team. His personal education plan refers to him being behind in literacy and mathematics, and to him needing to develop an interest in reading. Managers and staff have not taken opportunities to encourage these areas through his known interests. Further, by not encouraging him to develop the interests in his background, they have not helped him to develop his sense of identity.

The staff have recently built good relationships with the children who have lived at this home. However, the relationship and influence between the children has led to a breakdown in the previous relationships. Currently the relationships between the staff and the children are not helping the staff to provide good daily experiences for the children.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: inadequate

Both of the children at the home are frequently missing from care, involved in substance misuse and taking part in high-risk activities. The frequency and level of these activities have increased notably for one child since the placement of the second child. Several professionals from other agencies spoke about the effort that the registered manager and staff are putting into trying to safeguard the children, but said that despite this one of the children is not safe.

The staff use risk assessments for individual children to record levels of risk and identify measures to reduce them. However, the staff and managers do not keep these risk assessments up to date to include developments and all areas of risk. For example, in

their risk assessment for one child, staff have not recorded the significant increase in substance misuse, the possible implications of an injury or his fire-starting behaviour. The fire-starting behaviour is detailed in another plan for the child and this document states that there will be room searches to look for lighters. However, none have taken place.

Managers have assessed the home's location and identified some risks related to the local area. However, their assessment is not sufficiently thorough and they have not included some potentially significant risks. For example, the assessment refers to gangs in the area and some locations from where the children could get drugs. It does not explore the implications of these risks for any children placed, how the risks may influence admission decisions or any steps to reduce the risk. In addition, one child has spoken of swimming in local rivers. The registered manager has spoken to him about the risks of this, but the manager has not updated the location risk assessment to include this risk. The assessment provides some safeguards for children, but these are limited by the assessments not being comprehensive.

Both of the children are known to tamper with smoke detectors so that they can smoke in their bedrooms. The smoke detector in one child's bedroom has been protected so that it cannot be interfered with. The one for the other child has not. There has been a period of 16 days without this being done, and as this child is also known to start fires, the procedures to protect him from the risk of fire have not been as effective as they could be.

The staff enter into written agreements with the children over their expected levels of behaviour. They do not record the individual sanctions that they impose. Consequently, it is not possible to monitor the number, effectiveness and appropriateness of the sanctions. This can prevent the manager and the staff from being able to review their use of sanctions and how well they help them to encourage good behaviour in the children.

The home provides the internet for the children through a wired computer. This has safety filters and the children's use of it is monitored by the staff. While this provides some protection for children to prevent them from unsafe internet use, it is limited. One child has accessed some inappropriate material despite the safeguards. The manager and staff have missed an opportunity to discuss this with the child and work with him to help him understand better how to use the internet safely and appropriately.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The staff team has remained unchanged for four years. The manager has a qualification at level 4, but not at the required level 5 management qualification.

There has been a shortfall in staffing since the second child moved in. It was identified and agreed that there would need to be three staff on duty to allow them to provide appropriate care and in order to try to engage the children in separate activities. Between 20 and 29 July 2018 there were only two occasions when three staff were on duty. In both of these cases, the third member of staff went off duty before the evening.

On the weekends there were only two staff on duty all day. In addition to the low level of staffing, those staff on duty are having frequent disturbed nights, with children going missing or returning from missing episodes. The home has a registered manager and a senior. The senior has not been at the home for three months and there have not been any arrangements to cover this post. The low level of staffing has limited the opportunities that the staff can provide for the children and the level of management cover to oversee the running of the home.

The monitoring of the home has not identified several of the shortfalls as set out in this report and so opportunities to address them have been missed. The registered manager has undertaken a review of the quality of care in the home. The majority of the report lacks clear evaluation and does not identify actions to improve the care provided for the children. Opportunities to address issues have been missed.

The manager and staff do want the children in the home to be safe and to do well. They advocate for the children when they need to. Several external professionals said that the manager and staff work effectively with them and the children's parents. This helps to provide consistent care and messages for the children. One professional said that he particularly wanted to get across how hard the manager and staff had worked in difficult circumstances.

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: Chief Executives, County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich
NR1 2DH

Responsible individual: Lee Napper

Registered manager: Neil Marjoram

Inspector

Clive Lucas: social care inspector

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