

SC034797

Registered provider: Norfolk County Council

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 who have experienced trauma and may have experienced neglect and/or emotional abuse.

The manager registered with Ofsted in April 2020.

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 July 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 30 November 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
30/11/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good
07/09/2021	Full	Inadequate
08/01/2020	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
04/04/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Since the last inspection, one child has moved back home to live with their family and two children have moved into the home.

There have been distinct improvements in the assessment of risks to children and of children's needs before they move into the home. The manager has only accepted children into the home if he and the staff team can provide effective care for them. This has improved group dynamics. Additionally, staff morale has improved.

The home has undergone extensive refurbishment and redecoration. This has vastly improved the environment. This benefits children's and staff's well-being. Children have been involved in choosing items such as rugs, pictures and furniture. However, these items have yet to arrive at the home. Without these items, the home lacks homeliness. However, the maintenance and presentation of the home is greatly improved.

Some children have been encouraged to engage in community clubs, such as dance and drama groups. This increases children's esteem as they learn to develop skills and explore their interests. Staff advocated well on behalf of one child when they did not get the part that they wanted in a play. Staff requested that the child had a behind-the-scenes role which enabled them to feel involved at the drama group. This demonstrates good child advocacy. One relatively new child was taken by staff to see a show in London. This child has also been supported to attend a Children's Society initiative which discusses children's rights. Such activities help staff to establish positive relationships with the children. This also demonstrates that staff support children's interests well.

Staff have been proactive in meeting one child's cultural and religious needs. Staff helped the child to celebrate Eid and made them aware of the local mosque. Staff have prepared traditional meals that represent the geographical region and cultural community that the child is from. The children's guide was translated for the child, as English is not their first language. Staff have been sensitive to and effective in meeting this child's needs.

One child has finished school and plans to attend polytechnic college in the new academic year. The headteacher from the child's school said, 'Staff have always had the educational needs of the child at the top of their agenda. They have made every effort to get the child to attend.' Another child is being supported by the staff team to attend school on a phased timetable. This child's social worker said that staff encourage the child to attend school each day. However, these attempts are not always successful. The social worker did not view this as a negative reflection on the staff team. Another child is currently not accessing any education, although there is provision for them to do so. Plans are in place for this child to attend college in September 2022. Although academic engagement is variable for some children, staff

have encouraged children to attend, and they emphasise the importance of a good education.

There have been improvements in how staff obtain the children's views, wishes and feelings. New strategies have been introduced to increase the children's confidence in expressing their views at meetings. As a result, children are more vocal when making requests. Children asked for steak to be on the menu and to go to a theme park. Both these things have been approved by the manager. Staff spend quality time with the children. One child requested a special meal out with other peers and staff as they missed their prom. This was facilitated by the manager as he did not want the child to miss out on what others of a similar age have experienced.

Staff know the children exceptionally well. Staff care for the children well and have their interests at the heart of their practice.

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

There have been no restraints, allegations against staff or child protection concerns since the last inspection. On occasion, children go missing from the home. Staff look for the children when they are missing. Staff ensure that the children have someone independent of the home to talk to on their return, to share any concerns that they have. Staff's understanding of what process to follow when a child is missing is variable. Their understanding conflicted with information in risk assessments relating to the procedures to follow when a child is missing. To date, this has not compromised a child's safety. However, inconsistent practice has the potential to do so.

Risk assessments overall are good. They include the main risks to children and provide risk-reduction information to guide staff practice. One risk assessment relating to smoking states that the child had not smoked in their bedroom, when there was evidence to show that they had. Failure to record and mitigate known risks reduces staff's capacity to keep children safe.

Staff educate children on topics that are important to their healthy development. Staff discuss sexual health, identity, sexuality and mental health. Staff have discussions with children that are tailored to their needs and risks. Consequently, children feel informed about matters that are central to their lives.

On one occasion, staff did not know that a child had left the home. Staff failed to make suitable checks on the child and, as a result, had no understanding of how long the child had been absent from the home. On another occasion, staff failed to record the return of a child. In the event of a fire, it is essential to know who is inside the building to ensure that all people are accounted for in an evacuation.

Staff have lacked professional curiosity about the activities and whereabouts of one child. This child is regularly leaving the home extremely early in the morning and sometimes not returning for 12 hours. The assigned social worker has agreed to this

arrangement. The staff have had discussions with the child about their whereabouts and have made attempts to reach them via phone when they are away. However, staff are not aware of what the child is doing. Given the complex needs of the child, it is of concern that neither the staff nor the social worker know what the child is doing. During the inspection, staff began making physical checks of places where the child may be. However, at the time of the inspection, the child had lived at the home for just under six weeks and, apart from a couple of checks made by staff, no regular checks had been made. This has the potential to seriously overlook risk and increase exposure to exploitation.

The manager said that no sanctions had been given to children since the last inspection. However, the daily logs have a record of a sanction. This had not been documented in line with regulation. Failure to record sanctions prevents them from being monitored to check if they are proportionate and reasonable.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Staff find the manager approachable, supportive and readily available. The manager has worked hard to address all the requirements and the recommendation that were made at the last inspection. There have been notable improvements in how staff support children's education, monitoring of records and assessment of risk and an increased understanding of children's needs. There has also been an improvement in the staff's positive engagement with children.

The manager has a clearer understanding of the strengths of the home and the areas that require improvement. The manager has delegated some managerial tasks to a senior member of staff in the team. These have been executed well by this team member. This senior member of staff is spoken about highly by one child's psychotherapist and social worker. The strengthened management team has benefited and improved the children's experiences and quality of care.

The manager works well with other professionals, including social workers and education staff, and with families. Working collaboratively enables the team around the child to strive towards helping children in a more coordinated and effective way.

The manager knows the children well and spends quality time with them. He understands the children's needs well. The manager models effectively to staff how to establish and maintain positive relationships with children.

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 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; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person and that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(v)(b)) In particular, ensure that: staff know who children are mixing with and what they are doing when they are away from the home; staff are consistent in their responses to managing the risks that children face; risk assessments include emerging risks and risk-reduction strategies;	5 August 2022

staff know when children are not at the home; records detail when children have left and returned to the home.	
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 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)(b)(i)(ii)(c)) In particular, ensure that sanctions are recorded.	5 August 2022

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that the home is a nurturing and supportive environment that meets children's needs. In particular, ensure that the home is provided with fixtures and furnishings to create a more homely environment. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, 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, Norfolk NR1 2DH

Responsible individual: Lee Napper

Registered manager: Roger Macdonald

Inspector

Lianne Bradford, Social Care Inspector

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