

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 and young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home is owned and operated by the local authority children's services department.

Inspection dates: 13 to 14 December 2017

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected **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: 1 March 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- The young people benefit from carefully planned introductions and visits to their home.

- Young people benefit from the home's child-centred, caring ethos.
- Young people's education needs form an important part of their care.
- Care, support and safety plans are well organised.
- The staff have a good understanding of safeguarding practice.
- A culture of continuous improvement is ingrained in the manager's leadership style.
- Case records for the young people reflect the work that the staff do to support them.

The children's home's areas for development:

- Activities offered to young people are not evidenced effectively.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
01/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
13/10/2016	Full	Good
14/03/2016	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
19/11/2015	Full	Requires improvement

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children are offered a wide range of activities both inside and outside of the home (when appropriate) and are encouraged to participate in those activities. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 31, paragraph 6.5)

In particular, keep a record of the activities offered and undertaken.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The young people make good progress, although in small steps, because of the care and support that they receive. Their health, education and independence skills improve. For example, a young person has developed better self-regulation because they have learned to communicate more effectively and make better choices. This has resulted in a reduction in missing-from-home episodes.

The young people benefit from carefully planned introductions and visits to their home. The managers and staff team make a great effort to plan introductions well. They give particular attention to detail in each young person's transition plan. Consequently, the young people's individual needs are well met and they soon settle into their new home. One young person who previously did not want to spend too long living at the home now states that he wishes to stay longer.

Young people benefit from the child-centred, caring ethos. The staff are well equipped to meet the needs of the young people and they are committed to and insightful about individual needs. The manager and the staff team consistently focus on the emotions behind the young people's behaviours and not on the specific behaviours themselves. This reflective approach provides a successful response to meeting the young people's needs.

When appropriate, the staff support safe, managed contact with families, which helps the young people to develop relationships that will sustain them into adulthood. The staff develop their understanding of individual family dynamics, build relationships with families and use these experiences to enhance outcomes for the young people.

Young people are offered a wide range of activities, which is evidenced on posters throughout the home. Despite this, young people rarely take up the activities that are offered and choose instead to spend time out in the community with friends. However, there is no clear record of the activities that young people have been offered, and the extent to which staff have promoted activities and encouraged participation is not clear.

Young people's education needs form an important part of their care. The staff support the young people's attainment in education through the maintenance of good routines, provision of educational activities, participation in multi-agency meetings and the review of services. One young person was able, with the support of staff, to gain employment. He is now actively looking for an apprenticeship in the building industry, which will help to support him into adult life.

The manager ensures that the health of the young people is promoted positively. The staff have a good oversight of the young people's healthcare needs and they support the young people's emotional well-being. Medication is stored safely and a good medication management system helps to ensure that young people receive their medication safely.

Consultation with the young people occurs through daily interaction with the staff. Care, support and safety plans are well organised, detailed and helpful. Records contain good information and provide a unique picture of each young person. The staff understand the young people well and use their knowledge carefully to think about what events and behaviours mean in order to help young people to progress.

The young people live in a home that is pleasantly decorated and furnished throughout to meet their needs. The staff have worked hard, and show an ongoing commitment, to adding warmth and special touches to the decor. The gardens have plenty of equipment to support young people's development and to keep them fit and healthy.

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

One young person talked about their safety with confidence and understanding. Young people learn how to understand risks and how their behaviour can increase or reduce risks. Although young people do not always agree with the procedures that the staff have put in place to protect them, they understand why these risk assessments and arrangements are implemented. One young person gave examples of their previous and current behaviours, how they have reduced the risks they took previously and the consequences of their actions.

There is a strong safeguarding culture at the home. The staff realise the value of effective multi-agency work with significant professionals, such as social workers, to monitor and continually risk assess the young people's complex needs. Advice and guidance is readily sought from the host local authority on complex issues, such as the safety needs and transport for the young people. When a response is delayed, the manager and the staff pursue a resolution and conclusion to any concerns.

The staff have a good understanding of safeguarding practice. They are fully aware of their responsibility to protect the young people from abuse and they can confidently describe reporting procedures. The staff are fully aware of the roles of external agencies, and report that they have confidence in their organisation's whistle-blowing policy. This knowledge helps to ensure that any safeguarding concerns are reported and dealt with promptly. Safeguarding issues are promptly investigated, recorded and resolved in a timely manner.

The staff understand the young people's vulnerabilities and consider more specific risks in respect of their individual needs. Formal risk-assessment procedures are well managed and identified strategies implemented by the staff to keep young people safe. Regular reviews of risk assessments and strategies ensure that risk management remains current and proactive, which enables the young people to develop and grow in a safe environment.

Behaviour management strategies are regularly reviewed and reflect the young people's triggers and behaviours. The staff know how to manage these behaviours. Some young people engage positively in this process. The staff and young people fully appreciate the impact of physical interventions; restraint has not been used since the last inspection. The staff spend time working with the young people through timely chats and during key-work sessions. This has been successful in some instances and has resulted in a reduction of incidents and episodes of going missing from the home. Although there are incidents of unauthorised absence, young people are retaining contact with the staff and this enables the staff to make safety checks. The use of sanctions is minimal and proportionate to the behaviour.

The manager ensures that all staff working at the home receive up-to-date fire safety training to enable them to minimise the risks to the young people in the event of a fire. Regular health and safety checks help to ensure that the young people's physical safety at the home is well protected.

The local area risk assessment is regularly reviewed. Having a good knowledge of local risks to the young people means that the staff can be vigilant and work with the young people to raise their awareness of risk, both at the home and out in the community.

Young people understand their right to complain, their right to an advocate and their right to be looked after well. The home has embedded good practice around safeguarding matters.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Strong and effective leadership is consistent and provided by a qualified and experienced manager. He has been in post for many years and brings a wealth of expertise and knowledge to this role. He is respected and valued by staff, who benefit from his supportive leadership. The manager leads by example through his involvement in all aspects of the day-to-day running of the home.

A culture of continuous improvement is engrained in the manager's leadership style. The manager is working on a development plan to set out the aims of the home and identify areas for change. However, the plan requires embedding into practice to achieve the objectives fully.

The manager has good insight into the young people's strengths, vulnerabilities and progress from their starting points. He offers good support to the staff through his daily presence at the home, and leads a staff team that is both dedicated and very

experienced in the field of caring for children and young people. The manager is accessible and approachable and, when necessary, will offer practical support in the care of the young people. Regular team meetings ensure that the young people are discussed in detail and that they remain the focus of activities at the home.

Case records for the young people reflect the work done to support them. Regular audits and reviews ensure that the safety plans and assessments reflect the current and changing needs of each young person. The staff clearly have high aspirations for the young people and work collaboratively to ensure that their holistic needs are known and met.

Supervision sessions cover a wide range of topics appropriate to individual staff members' needs. Appraisals occur annually and they are supported by mandatory training in core areas, which include safeguarding, physical intervention and first aid. The staff undertake more specific or targeted training through consultation with the manager or during supervision. Training focuses on the individual personal development plans and the roles of the staff in supporting young people effectively. This training ensures that the staff have the skills to meet the individual needs of the young people they care for.

Staff spoken with during this inspection reported high levels of satisfaction in their roles and in the support that they receive from the manager. One member of staff spoke with real passion of their role. Another member of staff said, 'I can honestly say I really do like working here, and I feel very supported.'

Meaningful quality assurance is conducted through monthly visits by the external visitor, along with oversight from the manager. When shortfalls in service provision are identified, prompt action is taken to address these and to improve.

Notifications of concerns to external agencies and Ofsted are appropriate. When notifications are made, information is concise and clear and describes the events and the actions taken by the home in response.

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

Responsible individual: Lee Napper

Registered manager: Neil Marjoram

Inspector

Cathy Russell, social care inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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