

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	13/10/2016
Unique reference number	SC034797
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Norfolk County Council Children's Services
Registered person address	Norfolk County Council, Chief Executives, County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich NR1 2DH
Responsible individual	Lee Napper
Registered manager	Neil Marjoram
Inspector	Clive Lucas

Inspection date	13/10/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Declined in effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC034797

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Staff develop good relationships with the children.
- Managers and staff know the children well. They know children's needs and areas of risk. This helps them to meet the children's needs and keep them safer.
- Children above compulsory school age attend further education courses which they have chosen.
- Children have their health needs identified and met. There are good links with mental health services to help staff well in promoting emotional and mental health needs.
- Children are able to express their views and influence their day-to-day care as well as their wider plans. Children can take part in a range of activities. Individual interests are promoted.
- Older children feel that they are being prepared for independence.
- The risks for children do reduce. Although this happens at differing levels, children do become safer as a result of being at the home. Children feel safe at the home.
- Staff work effectively with other agencies. They identify areas of risk and call meetings to look at how children can be kept safer.
- There has not been any restraint since the last full inspection. There is limited use of sanctions. They are appropriate and focus on reparation. Staff help children to think about their behaviour.
- Routines are not encouraged as much as they could be, for example expecting that children take part in communal mealtimes.
- Staff supervision does not take place at the frequency that the home sets.
- While training covers a range of appropriate areas, refresher training is not always undertaken at the set timescales.

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

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person(s) meets 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 registered person must ensure that all employees undertake appropriate continuing professional development and receive practice-related supervision. This relates to refresher training being provided at the frequency identified and staff supervisions taking place at the frequency set by the home. (Regulation 33 (4)(a)(b))	23/12/2016
8. The education standard: In order to meet the education standard, with particular reference to engaging children when they are not in full-time education and ensuring that children's plans are adhered to so that they maintain routines which will support their education, the registered person must ensure that staff: (2)(a)(ii) support each child's learning and development, including helping the child to develop independent study skills and, where appropriate, helping the child to complete independent study; (x) help each child to attend education or training in accordance with the expectations in the child's relevant plans.	25/11/2016

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further, the service should take account of the following recommendations:

- Ensure that opportunities for children to sit together and eat are promoted. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.8)
- Ensure that children have access to a computer and the internet to support their education and learning, unless there are specific safeguarding reasons why this would be inappropriate. In such cases, the home should consider whether and how it can support the child to access a computer and the internet safely. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 29, paragraph 5.19)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This home provides medium- to long-term residential care for up to six young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is owned and operated by the local Children's Services Department.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/03/2016	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
19/11/2015	Full	Requires improvement
25/03/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
30/01/2015	Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
Some children at the home have engaged well, they spend time with staff and have built good relationships. Other children who have moved in more recently are engaging less with staff and with the daily life of the home. Nonetheless, these children's social workers are clear that they are beginning to build relationships with staff, which they had not done in previous placements. In building these relationships with staff, the children are beginning to speak about issues and concerns. This is helping staff to understand the children's needs and vulnerabilities. In turn, this helps the home and other agencies to begin identifying areas of need and risk so that they can provide more individualised care for children. Two children are beyond compulsory school age. They are both attending college courses for three days a week. These courses are in areas of particular interest to the children and are likely to help them in their future employment and careers. One of these children did well in his GCSEs in the summer. He received an award in recognition of this and went for a meal with a member of staff as a reward. One other child is in education for four days a week. His education provision says that his attendance is 'brilliant' and that he is 'thriving'. Also that he has 'grown up a lot since he has been at (the home)' and 'he appears to have matured since the summer'. The fourth child is currently undertaking an education assessment which is for only two hours a day. The managers at the home have been very proactive in ensuring that suitable education arrangements are in place. However, they have not encouraged the child to engage in educational activities in the home for the rest of the school day. The child's plan refers to him getting up at 8.30am to maintain his routines, but staff are not regularly attempting to achieve this. This could make it more difficult to engage him in full-time education following the assessment. Children's health needs are identified and met. One child has begun to work with children and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), another child has had a dyslexia assessment and a third child is participating in therapeutic work. These are helping to ensure that children's health needs are met, including emotional and mental health needs. Staff promote and support children's contact with their families very well. Some children have had significant increases in the level of contact and who they have contact with. This helps the children to retain their self-identity and to maintain important relationships which will continue long after they have left the home. Children's views are sought and listened to. The child who is involved with CAMHS began this at his request. Other children have been able to influence their contact	

arrangements with their families, choose their college courses and their activities. One child spoke enthusiastically about saying to staff that he wanted to try windsurfing and being able to do it. He liked it that a member of staff tried it with him. Children are involved in their meetings when they choose to be. They are also encouraged to be involved in their plans about their care and to sign them. This level of involvement helps the children to have a say in all areas of their lives. This in turn helps them to feel engaged and valued.

Children are encouraged to take part in activities with staff. This can include helping to decorate their bedrooms, going out for a coffee or a meal and climbing or trampolining. One child has a strong interest in making and mending things. He has been provided (and helped to set up) a small workshop that has been kitted out with tools. He mostly uses this for working on his bikes. He was proud of this and pleased to show it to the inspector during the inspection. One external professional said that the home was proactive at arranging activities for children.

Children are helped to develop the skills that they will need for successful independent living. Where appropriate, they have up-to-date pathway plans. Older children who have been at the home longer say that staff are helping them to learn independence skills and they feel confident in this area.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Managers and staff know the children well including their needs and their areas of risk. This helps staff to work on reducing the risks and making children safer. Some children do participate in risk-taking behaviours, such as failing to return to the home as agreed and misusing drugs and alcohol. Some are also involved in criminal activities. However, there is a wide agreement from other professionals that the risks are reduced due to the children's placement at this home. For some children who have been at the home for less time, this reduction in risk is limited. However, for there to be any reduction at all is a marked improvement on children's previous placements. While these children can be reluctant to become involved with staff and in the daily life of the home, there is some developing engagement. They still choose to spend a lot of time out of the home with their peers, but are speaking with staff and being open about what they are doing. This has allowed the staff and other agencies to put some preventative measures in place. One child, who is frequently out of the home and can be late in returning, has spoken to staff about what they would do if he was in danger. They have an agreement that they will always go and pick him up if he asks. They also make regular telephone calls to him and offer to pick him up at 9pm every evening. Another child frequently returns to his home area for the evening. Staff encourage him to return at a reasonable time, but will always go and get him. The social worker for one of these children said that this is one of the only places that he has settled for any time and	

while the time that he spends in the home is limited, this is an improvement over previous placements. He feels safe at the home and has good relationships with staff. The social worker is pleased with how things are going. For the other child, staff have identified risks and called multi-agency meetings to review the risks. The view from these meetings is that while the child is at risk, they are safer at this home than in an alternative one. They feel that this is the right place for him.

Two of the children do have periods when they do not return on time and are missing, on rare occasions this may be overnight. However, this is a marked improvement from previously higher frequencies of being missing for longer periods. On the day of the inspection, all children returned early and spent time with staff in the home during the evening. This is not a frequent occurrence, but it is a positive step as children choose to spend time with staff in the home rather than with peers in the community.

Staff set clear and consistent boundaries for children. There have not been any incidents of restraint since the previous full inspection and there is limited use of sanctions. When they are used, sanctions are appropriate and have a focus on reparation. This is in line with the home's statement of purpose. One social worker spoke of staff doing 'some real proactive work addressing (the child's) behaviours'. Youth offending team workers say that staff work with them so that they can help children address their behaviour. One youth offending team worker said that staff encourage the child that they work with to think about what he is doing. This work will help children to understand the implications of their behaviour and to make informed choices about how they behave.

There are set mealtimes, but some children are rarely in for them. Their food is kept until they return later in the evening. While staff cannot make children return, there is not a clear expectation that children are in for meals. This prevents there from being communal mealtimes which can be used to speak with children as well as being enjoyable and pleasant activities in themselves.

There are plans to provide internet access in the home, but currently this is not available for all children. While preventing children from accessing the internet may help to keep them safe in the short-term, the internet is an unavoidable part of life. If children do not learn how to use it safely while they are living at the home, they will not be prepared to use it safely when they are away from the home or living independently.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
There is a registered manager in post. He is appropriately qualified and experienced to undertake his role. He was away from the home for a period recently. Staff and children say that there were appropriate cover arrangements during this time. The manager and the senior have a clear understanding of the	

individual needs of the children in the home. Meeting children's needs is a priority for them. As a result, children do make progress at the home compared with their starting points, even though the levels of progress may vary. Managers know the home's strengths and areas for development. They are actively reviewing and amending the risk assessment format to make it clearer and easier for staff to use. Managers monitor records and the operation of the home. They prepare a report on how they will improve the quality of care.

Staff receive regular appraisals, but the frequency of supervision for some staff falls short of what the home says it will provide. This limits the oversight that managers have of staff practice and also the opportunities for staff to discuss and reflect on their practice. There is a good range of training for staff. Some of this training is specific to helping them meet individual children's needs. However, some training is identified as requiring refresher courses at set intervals. This is not always taking place for areas such as fire safety, food handling and medication. While staff have had the initial training, the frequency of refresher training is set so that staff do not forget important information and this is not always happening. This potentially limits staff's ability to work effectively, keep children safe and meet children's needs well.

The manager and staff have very good relationships with other agencies involved in caring for the children. Placing social workers, teachers, youth offending team workers and health staff all say how good communication is with the home. They also say that staff will advocate for children and when necessary will chase other agencies. The quality of relationships and joint working has helped to identify risks for children and find ways of reducing them, thus keeping children safer than they would otherwise have been. Mental health staff regularly attend staff meetings to discuss children and how staff work with them. They said that staff use this time well to reflect on their practice with children. This helps to ensure that the children's emotional and mental health needs are met well.

Managers make appropriate decisions about which children come to live at the home. They consider how they can meet the individual child's needs as well as the potential impact on the group of children. The home is operated in line with the statement of purpose. There have been noticeable improvements to the standard of accommodation. Communal areas are well decorated and furnished. Children say that they like their bedrooms. One child who has a smaller bedroom has also got an additional room for studying in. Some parts of the home have an institutional feel, such as long corridors, but staff do what they can to minimise this. Children say that this does not stop it from feeling homely.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place. However, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or that result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, 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 who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service 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'.

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