

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	19/11/2015
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	19/11/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Improved effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Requires improvement
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.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement

SC034797

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is requires improvement because:

- Since the previous inspection some young people have been placed at the home inappropriately. Decisions on some placements have not been child-centred.
- Placements have been made in emergencies and at very short notice contrary to the home's statement of purpose. Sometimes without an assessment of the young person's needs or their potential impact on other young people in the home.
- Some placements have been made despite the assessment indicating that they were not appropriate.
- Some young people have had poor outcomes and have had to move from the home due to decisions on placements and the group dynamics.
- Some young people have increased their risk taking behaviours as a result of the group dynamics.
- Some staff have not had refresher safeguarding training for 10 years or more.
- The bathrooms are not well maintained to provide a homely feel
- There is not effective monitoring of young people's individual progress.

The children's home strengths

- Young people generally form good and appropriate relationships with staff. For these young people this adds to their sense of belonging and stability.
- Staff maintain positive attitudes to young people, even when they face very challenging behaviour.
- When the home is settled, young people take part in age-appropriate and fun activities.
- Staff listen to and when appropriate act on young people's views
- Young people's educational attendance improves as a result of being at the home.
- Managers and staff identify and take action to reduce areas of risk for young people.
- Staff provide young people with appropriate emotional support and help them to learn about safe relationships and appropriate touch.
- Managers and staff have very good relationships with other agencies.

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 with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
14. The care planning standard In order to meet the care planning standard with particular reference to the suitability of placements and how children move into and leave the home, the registered person must ensure: (2) (a) 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; (b) that arrangements are in place to— (i) ensure the effective induction of each child into the home; (ii) manage and review the placement of each child in the home; and (iii) plan for, and help, each child to prepare to leave the home or to move into adult care in a way that is consistent with arrangements agreed with the child's placing authority.	18/12/2015
12. The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standard with particular reference to having comprehensive risk assessments and implementing them, the registered person must ensure: (2)(a) that staff— (i) 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.	18/12/2015
13. The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard with particular reference to monitoring the progress of children, the registered provider must:	31/12/2015

(2)(h) use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.	
The registered person must ensure that all employees undertake appropriate continuing professional development. (Regulation 33(4)(a))	31/12/2015
The registered person must ensure that the home is at all times conducted in a manner which is consistent with its statement of purpose. (Regulation 16(5))	18/12/2015
6. The quality and purpose of care standard In order to meet the quality and purpose of care standard with particular reference to the standard of accommodation the registered person must ensure that: (2)(c)(i) the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to meet the needs of each child.	29/02/2016

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
25/03/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
30/01/2015	Full	Good
27/03/2014	Interim	Good Progress
18/04/2013	Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Requires improvement
Young people generally build good relationships with staff. When this happens, this allows staff to work effectively with young people. It allows the young people to develop a sense of belonging and stability. There have been some young people placed in the home whose needs have not been in line with what the home sets out to do in its statement of purpose. In some cases the mix of young people has caused problems in managing their behaviour and keeping them safe. Some young people have had to move due to this. This has not provided stability for those young people. While some young people do well in the home, others do not. At times there has been some very disruptive behaviour and this has resulted in some young people becoming involved in the criminal justice system despite staff efforts to prevent this. Professionals from outside of the home say that staff are focused on the needs of young people and that they have maintained a positive attitude to young people even when their behaviour has been very challenging. This helps young people to feel valued. Staff take an interest in young people's experiences, they talk to young people about how their school days have been. When the home is settled, young people can take part in normal age-appropriate activities which include having fun with staff and each other. Staff seek young people's views and when possible act on them. There are regular young people's meetings when they can discuss their views with staff. In addition to this staff will ask young people about aspects of their lives and care. For example, one young person was having problems getting up and this was having a negative impact on his education. Staff spoke with him to find a way of waking him and a routine for the mornings which he was happy with. As a consequence he has been consistently getting up and going to school. Young people do better in their education as a result of being at the home. Different education providers commented on the improvements they have seen since the young people have been at this home. When there are difficulties with education, staff work pro-actively with education providers to try and address these. Consequently, young people attend school more regularly and this increases their chances of doing well in education and later life. Some young people at the home get part time jobs, or do voluntary work. This helps the young people to develop their self-esteem and confidence. It also helps them to prepare for work and independence. Young people get help with developing the skills they will need for adulthood in line with their individual needs	

and strengths. However, some young people have moved out of the home in ways which were not in line with their plans. Consequently, they have moved to semi-independent placements much earlier than was hoped and this has limited their chances of success in independence.

Some young people make progress in their health, including those who have specialist health needs. Some others have not made progress in all areas of their health. Despite the attempts of staff, they have increased their use of illegal substances since being at the home and at times this has been due to influence of other young people with whom they live. This has led to poorer outcomes for these young people. Staff work closely with outside agencies who provide specialist help for young people. This helps to ensure that their emotional and psychological needs can be met.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
Staff and managers at the home are quick to identify areas of risk for young people. They take prompt action, often involving other agencies, to find ways to address and reduce the risk at which young people may put themselves or others. This helps to keep young people safe. However, there have been times when young people have not become increasingly safe as a result of their time in the home. Some young people have increased their use of illegal substances and there has been some bullying due to the mix of young people. In recognition of this the organisation have decided to put a temporarily limit four young people in the home rather than the six for which they are registered. This is a positive step in safeguarding young people, but for some young people who have been at the home recently, their safety has not been sufficiently safeguarded. There are written risk assessments in place for young people. There is also a system which uses written assessments to assess the suitability of individual young people moving into the home, including the dynamics of the group. Young people's risk assessments are mostly appropriate, but one young person who was known to bully others did not have this in his risk assessment. Staff were aware of the risk and took action to address it, but the failure to include it in the risk assessment has the potential to lead to inconsistent responses and does not prompt a review of the effectiveness of the measures. Some of the group dynamic risk assessments were written after young people had moved in. This is not in line with the home's statement of purpose which states they will be done before young people move in. Consequently, they did not inform the decision-making about suitability of placements. Others clearly concluded that a placement was inappropriate, but decisions were made by senior managers, which over-rode them. This process has	

not safeguarded young people and has led to a number of shortfalls identified in this report.

There have been times when levels of challenging behaviour were such that staff have not always been able to address it. Despite staff efforts, some young people did become involved in the criminal justice system. The young people currently in the home have good relationships with staff and the manager. This helps to keep them safe as they have trusted people with whom they can talk. It also helps staff to address behavioural issues successfully. Staff and the manager challenge inappropriate behaviour calmly and effectively and young people respond to this. Such clear boundaries help young people to feel secure. Staff also provide emotional support in ways which are appropriate to the individual young people. There are clear expectations over physical contact which, for example, allow young people to receive hugs from staff in safe and appropriate ways. This helps young people to understand appropriate and safe touch and relationships. It also allows them to be comforted and supported when they feel low or upset.

When young people go missing from the home, staff take appropriate action to try and find them and get them back. The police are very positive about staff and the actions they take. They describe them as 'brilliant'. Staff support young people to take age-appropriate risks which help them to develop independence skills and learn how to keep themselves safer. These include using public transport and staying over with the families of their friends.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement
The registered manager has been at this home for over three years. He has a social work qualification and a good level of experience to undertake his role. There is a low turnover of staff, with some having been at the home for many years. All except one member of staff have a qualification at Level 3. The person who does not have this is currently working towards it. This helps to provide stability and consistency for young people who are looked after by well-qualified and experienced managers and staff. Staff speak positively about the leadership and management of the home and say they receive good support. Requests are made to placing social workers for outstanding paperwork and when necessary, visits to young people. There is a training programme for staff which is supplemented by work and visits from other professional who regularly attend team meetings. This has included on line safety and child sexual exploitation. However, some staff have not had safeguarding refresher training for a number of years, in one case 10 years and in another, longer than this. This can limit their awareness and ability to respond appropriately.	

The home has a suitable statement of purpose but this has not always been adhered to, for example, emergency or very short notice placements have been made. In one case, a placement was made for two days. The statement of purpose states that the home will provide medium to long term care. It does not say that there will be emergency placements, or how they could be managed alongside the longer-term placements without causing disruption to young people for whom this is their medium to long-term home. Some of the decisions about which young people come to live at the home have not been child-centred. In one case a senior manager made a decision that a young person would move to the home during the night. They did not speak to anyone involved in managing the home, so that there was no consideration of the needs of the young people already living there, or the impact this could have upon them.

The registered manager has a sound awareness of the strengths and areas of development for the home. He monitors records, but there is not clear and effective monitoring of the progress and outcomes for individual young people. This limits the ability to identify and respond to anything which impacts on their progress. Some young people have made good progress as a result of living at the home, but some others have not.

There are very good relationships with other agencies and professionals, including police, health and education. They describe staff as helpful and friendly. One said that they found staff thoughtful, reflective and willing to work with partner agencies. They say that staff do the best they can for young people and 'their commitment is tremendous'. One person said 'I can't praise them enough'.

The home is large enough to provide suitable facilities for the young people. Some parts of it, for example, the living rooms, are decorated and furnished well. There are some areas and elements, which appear institutionalised. There are old and faded 'Now wash you hands' signs in bathrooms as well as wall mounted soap dispensers. In addition bathrooms appear old and in need of refurbishment. Old enamel baths look worn. This does not provide a comfortable and homely environment for young people.

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 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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