

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	03/11/2015
Unique reference number	SC037256
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Suffolk County Council
Registered person address	Suffolk County Council, Endeavour House, Russell Road, IPSWICH, IP1 2BX

Responsible individual	Clifford James
Registered manager	Tobias Hall
Inspector	Ashley Hinson

Inspection date	03/11/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained 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

SC037256

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is requires improvement because:

- Risk assessments are generally poor. They are not sufficiently robust and offer limited clarity or depth.
- Missing from care protocols are not good enough. Some have key information missing.
- The content of return interviews are not known by the home and therefore do no inform risk assessments.
- Case records in relation to missing incidents contain numerous factual inaccuracies.
- Where young people raise concerns it is not always clear if these have been resolved to the young person's satisfaction.
- Regular fire drills and tests take place. However, there is a limited overview regarding which staff have experienced a fire drill.
- Management monitoring processes have not been effective and do not contribute to improving the quality of care.
- There is little structured focus on the support young people need to develop the skills they will need in adulthood.
- The staffing levels within the home are low, potentially impacting on capacity to respond to young people and to complete management tasks.
- Relationships between the home and some key services need to develop further.
- The staff have not received training in areas relevant to the needs of the young people and staff supervision is not always as frequent as it should be.

The children's home strengths

- A dedicated staff team support the young people.
- The new management team are beginning to have a positive impact on the quality of service.
- Management recognise the need to improve in a range of areas.
- Some young people have reduced incidents of going missing and restraint.
- The young people have access to a range of leisure opportunities.
- The staff support young people to engage with a variety of health professionals.
- The staff promote contact with family members.

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
5: Engaging with the wider system to ensure children's needs are met In order to meet the engaging with the wider system standard with particular reference to agencies commissioned to undertake return interviews and provide advocacy services the registered provider must: (d) ensure that effective professional relationships with such persons, bodies or organisations as the registered person considers appropriate having regard to the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the children's home is to provide care and accommodation are maintained.	15/12/2015
6: The quality and purpose of care standard In order to meet the quality and purpose of care standard with particular reference to supporting young people to develop independence skills the registered provider must ensure that staff: (2) (b) (vi) help each child to develop resilience and skills that prepare the child to return home, to live in a new placement or to live independently as an adult.	15/12/2015
6: The quality and purpose of care standard In order to meet the quality and purpose of care standard with particular reference to staff having access to the training needed the registered provider must ensure that the staff team: (3) (c) (i) has the experience, knowledge and skills to deliver that care.	15/12/2015
12: The protection of children standard	24/11/2015

In order to meet the protection of children standard with regard to ensuring that risk assessments thoroughly analyse the risks relating to each young person, including but not limited to the risks associated with missing, self-harm, and the location of the building, and include the ways in these risks can be managed the registered provider must: 2 (a) (i) 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.	
12: The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standard with particular regard to assessing the potential impact of new residents the registered provider must: 2 (b) ensure 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.	24/11/2015
13: The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard the registered provider must ensure that staff: (2) (h) use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.	15/12/2015
The registered person must maintain records which include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child. This is with particular regard to the date and circumstances of all incidents where a child goes missing from the home including any information relating to the child's whereabouts during the period of absence. Regulation 36 (1) (a)	24/11/2015

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

Ensure that children are able to see the results of their views being listened to and acted upon. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 22 paragraph 4.11)

Ensure that staff encourage children to share any concerns about their care or

other matters as soon as they arise. Children must be able to take up issues or make a complaint with support. This is with particular regard to ensuring that concerns raised by young people have been resolved to young people's satisfaction. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 23 paragraph 4.13)

Ensure that the procedures to be followed and the roles and responsibilities of staff when a child is missing from care or away from the home without permission and how staff should support the child on return to the home are specified within missing from care protocols. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 45 paragraph 9.28)

Ensure that when a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, staff take account of information provided by return from missing interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect each child. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 45 paragraph 9.30)

Ensure that staffing levels meet the needs of children and enable flexible response to unexpected events or opportunities. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 54 paragraph 10.15)

Ensure that good employment practice is maintained and the performance management of staff includes ensuring staff are experienced in responding to fire drills to safeguard and minimise potential risks to children placed in the home. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 61 paragraph 13.1)

Ensure that all staff, including the manager, deputy manager and senior receive supervision of their practice from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional, which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. This is with particular regard to ensuring sufficient frequency of supervisions. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 61 paragraph 13.2)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This home provides care and accommodation for seven young people from the age of 11 to 18 years old. The home looks after young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The local authority owns the home.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
26/03/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
04/12/2014	Full	Good
13/03/2014	Interim	Good Progress
17/12/2013	Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Requires improvement
The home has experienced considerable change in management and frontline staff over recent times. The new management team are establishing themselves and the new frontline staff are joining a dedicated team who work hard to try and support young people and meet their needs. A mental health professional stated: 'They work as a family unit. They value the children. Overall they are a very thoughtful group and do all they could for the young people. They often go above and beyond.' The young people make some progress in some areas. For example, some young people have reduced incidents of going missing and restraint. One young person said: 'I used to go missing when I first came here but not anymore. I don't want to waste police time. They were encouraging me not to go missing.' Another young person said: 'I have managed to stay out of trouble for a week now which is more than managed before. I have been missing lots less than before I came here. They care.' A youth offending worker, referring to a different young person, stated: 'The staff have built very good relationships with her. This has resulted in less offending and missing behaviours.' Other young people are developing relationships with staff that have led to them being able to discuss difficult issues for the first time. A young person commented: 'If I feel I want to do something that is going to get me in trouble I talk to staff and they talk me out of it.' Feedback from professionals highlighted a belief that relationships between staff and young people were strong. A social worker said: 'They are child focused. I have spoken to staff and they know about his history and know him well. When he talks to me he shares with me who he has spoken to and this is good as he does not talk to people easily.' Another said: 'They get on very well with her. It takes a while to develop that relationship but she is now able to talk about how she is feeling with them.' Observations of relationships between staff and young people were variable. There was clearly warmth in some interactions but there were also examples where young people were roaming the building without adequate supervision. The staffing levels are on occasion low, with two staff to work with up to seven young people on early shifts. This raises concerns that the home has limited capacity to monitor and engage with young people within the home and to respond to unexpected events. The young people often arrive at the home on the point of exclusion from education and staff support young people to access other provisions. A special educational needs co-ordinator said: 'They have been fantastic. They managed the	

handover and transition really well. The key workers have been really helpful.' An independent reviewing officer stated: 'There was a concerted effort to get her to attend school. The staff are committed and creative in terms of trying to help young people attend education and stay safe.' A social worker commented: 'They work very hard with education'. As a result young people are encouraged to engage in education, but this is not always successful. When it is not successful the home engages with the local virtual school.

Young people have access to a range of leisure opportunities. An independent reviewing officer said: 'The staff have been really good at trying to find places to visit and making the effort to arrange it and give young people the opportunity to enjoy these things. I have heard the young people talk about the things they have done and enjoyed.' A social worker commented: 'They have done good work in trying to get him into clubs such as cadets. A young person said: 'There is a good activity budget. There is also a group activity. You don't have to pay for that. They try and stop kids from staying home bored. I was impressed'. This enables young people to enjoy new experiences and further explore existing ones.

The young people who live in the home are able to attend residents meetings. They report influencing decisions in the home. A young person said: 'The best thing about the home is that you get a say in what happens. You feel that your opinion has been listened to.' When young people do not attend the meetings, staff make further efforts to ascertain their views and add these to the record. However, records do not routinely capture the impact of young people expressing their views. As a result young people may not be fully aware of the impact of staff listening to their views.

There is little work done to assist young people in preparing for their future. The young people's plans do not include independence work. This means the home has not begun to equip them with, or strengthen, many of the key skills needed for independence. Consequently the service does not currently sufficiently prepare young people for their future beyond the home. The manager recognises that this is an area for improvement and has plans to introduce a stronger focus on this.

The staff support young people to attend health appointments and register with appropriate agencies. They have been proactive in linking young people with sexual health services and with specialist services working with young people at risk of child sexual exploitation. The home has links with the local child and adolescent mental health services. A worker from that service meets regularly with staff to offer both professional and personal support. This means that young people have access to appropriate health care professionals.

The staff promote appropriate contact with family members. An independent reviewing officer stated: 'They are very good at encouraging contact with family members and making this safe and possible. That makes things more normal for the young people.' A social worker stated: 'They work well with his family as well.

Sometimes it can be very difficult for families. The staff really supported the family with the contact.' As a result young people are able to maintain important relationships which support their sense of who they are and where they come from.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
The young people report living in a safe environment. They are able to identify someone they can talk to if they have concerns. They are aware of the ways in which they can raise concerns within the home and there was evidence that they have used the internal systems. One young person said: 'I would definitely say something if I was not happy here. There are sheets you can fill out. They are a bit cheesy but they work.' However, young people have not signed to say that they are happy with the response. As a result it was not always clear if concerns raised by young people had been resolved to their satisfaction. Risk assessments are completed but they are not thorough. They do not sufficiently consider the risks that young people may pose or experience. Risk assessments frequently only made brief reference to the cause for concern, without any reference to how staff should respond to the associated risk. For example, one risk assessment simply stated that a young person did self-harm and offered no clarity regarding the actions staff may need to take to manage this risk. As a result, the service does not fully explore the risks young people experience and consequently staff lack sufficient guidance. This means the young people may not be as protected as far reasonably possible. The home works with young people who may on occasions go missing from care. When young people go missing the systems designed to protect them are not sufficiently robust. Missing from care protocols are not good enough. One did not contain information advising staff on what to do should the young person go missing. The protocols require clarity regarding when a member of staff can contact the police sooner than the standard one hour. As a result the staff do not have access to clear analysis and guidance in relation to missing incidents. This increases the risk of staff making mistakes. The home is not able to say whether return interviews have taken place. Whilst the home informs social workers when young people are missing any subsequent return interview is not sent to the home in line with the relevant policy. Although the information is commonly available on the electronic recording system, managers have not accessed this. As a result the content of return interviews does	

not inform assessments of risk relating to missing incidents. This means that relevant information on why young people went missing and what staff can do to prevent it happening again is itself missing.

Case records in relation to missing incidents contain numerous errors. This included incorrect dates and incorrect information about the number of times a young person has been missing. Monitoring processes had not picked this up. As a result the home does not have accurate records of missing incidents. This would seriously hamper any review or thematic analysis of a young person's missing incidents and potentially compromise the validity of any conclusions.

Staff take a non-punitive response to incidents of negative behaviour. They look beyond behaviours to understand the frustrations young people face. Staff apply constructive consequences to enable young people to reflect and learn from incidents. A young person said of staff: 'Sometimes they have to be strict and they have to put in boundaries but they make them fair. Sometimes you might not like them but they are fair and you can influence them.' When staff use physical interventions they do so appropriately. The home has experienced some issues of bullying. The staff now record these incidents in a separate bullying log. This is an improvement on the previous system.

The location risk assessment requires updating. The document does not fully explore the risks associated with the local area despite impact assessments and feedback from professionals referencing these risks. A child sexual exploitation professional commented: 'There is a lot of poverty in the area and a lot of drug use.' An independent reviewing officer stated: 'There are a group of young people who live in the area who cause issues and difficulties.' This means the impact of these risks and the way the home will manage them are not explicitly captured.

Regular fire drills and tests take place. However, there is a limited overview regarding which staff have experienced a fire drill.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement
A committed manager, supported by an equally committed deputy and senior, manages the home. He has been in post for eight months. He is in the process of registering with Ofsted. He has worked in residential childcare for many years including in a supervisory capacity. The management team as a whole is relatively new, with all post holders only recently stepping up into their respective role. A hard working team of care workers staff the home. The manager and deputy are often available to help out on shift. However, the frequency with which staff and	

young people call upon them to assist which inevitably impacts upon their capacity to carry out managerial tasks. Some of the shortcomings identified during this inspection reflect this.

Leaders and managers have not effectively monitored the quality of the service provided. There have been numerous examples found within the inspection of mistakes and inaccurate information within documents. This is despite monitoring processes being in place. As a result the service has missed issues that it should have identified. This means that the management monitoring systems are not effective and do not contribute to improving the quality of care.

The manager and deputy recognise the need to improve. They are open about the shortcomings and are committed to making the necessary changes. Despite the issues identified during this inspection external professionals identify that the new management team are having an impact. A child sexual exploitation professional stated: 'Last year I had children at the home and felt it was chaotic, I now feel it is very calm.' A mental health professional said: 'It is certainly improving. Although it is still not at the point it could be, my impression is that things are moving forward.' An advocate commented: 'Although it is not good enough there have been some improvements since the new manager came into post.'

Leaders and managers have established links with some external professionals. The home has formed good relationships with social workers, youth offending teams and the organisation working with children at risk of child sexual exploitation. A professional commented: 'I work as closely with the home as I would with any parents of a 12 year old. They share information appropriately.' A social worker said: 'They work very well with me. I get very frequent updates and e-mails. They are very good at communicating with us.' However, relationships with some key agencies need to develop further. For example, the manager needs to enable a more effective working relationship with the agency commissioned to undertake return home interviews and advocacy services. An advocate said: 'They could do more to involve us. We have less involvement here than in any of the other homes.' The lack of effective engagement with advocacy services means young people are missing out, on the support and protection this service can provide.

The staff spoke of the managers as being supportive and having an open door approach. This was apparent during the inspection. Staff receive supervision. However, this is not always happening as frequently it should be. There are gaps of up to three months in the supervision of some staff. Some records of supervisions are brief and contain limited evidence of reflective discussions. This means staff do not always have access to protected time to reflect upon practice. This is particularly important when staff are relatively new, the mix of young people is complex and the behaviours that are being dealt with are difficult.

Staff have access to training. However, they have not yet accessed training in child

sexual exploitation. Whilst a date has now been set, it is a concern that staff have not had this training up to this point given the needs, behaviours, experiences and risks of the young people in the home. In addition, staff have not received training in relation to missing children, working with children who self-harm, bullying or mental health. The capacity to send staff on training courses has been limited due to a period of low staffing levels. The staff and managers recognise that this is a concern and that there are potential gaps in the knowledge that staff require to fully understand the needs and experiences of the young people in their care.

Some professionals spoke about the groupings of young people placed in the home. A mental health professional said: 'The young people do not always complement each other and this can make progress difficult. There needs to be more thought put into this.' A social worker said: 'They work extremely hard and they have several very challenging young people living under the same roof.' An advocate said: 'I feel the children have higher needs than in the others homes.' In considering potential new placements, the manager undertakes impact assessments but these are not sufficiently robust. They offer limited clarity and depth in relation to the analysis of the available information. Where they state that risks are manageable the reason is not clearly articulated. Any potential impact on staff in terms of additional training or knowledge is not considered.

Where safeguarding concerns arise the management team share these with the appropriate agencies. The manager sends notifications to the regulator in a timely manner.

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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