

SC037256

Registered provider: Suffolk County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority home provides care for up to seven children aged between 11 and 18. The children may have experienced neglect and emotional abuse or had traumatic experiences that have left them vulnerable.

There is an acting manager in post who is not yet registered with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 19 to 20 February 2020

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	inadequate
---	-------------------

How well children and young people are helped and protected	inadequate
---	------------

The effectiveness of leaders and managers	inadequate
---	------------

There are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded.

Date of last inspection: 28 February 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/02/2019	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
12/09/2018	Full	Good
08/03/2018	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
13/06/2017	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

The managers have failed to prevent recent incidents of bullying, substance misuse and aggression at the home. These failures have left the children living in a volatile and unsafe environment. A culture of low expectations and poor routines means that the children's experiences are detrimental to their physical and mental health. This does not include all of the children. However, there is a significant impact for some children. Outcomes for two children have deteriorated since they moved into the home.

An external professional expressed concern for one child's physical and mental health. A professional noted that a child has lost a significant amount of weight since they moved into the home. The child's records detail an unhealthy diet, that includes caffeine and regular substance misuse. A staff member said that he tries to engage with this child; however, the child spends a lot of time in his bedroom and is socially isolated.

Two of the children are attending school well. Two of the children do not attend school and other children have varying levels of engagement with education. The children who do go to school are, at times, disturbed overnight by noise and damage being caused to the home. Broken sleep and an environment that causes children anxiety affect their ability to progress with their learning.

The staff have not given one child her medication since December 2019. The staff felt that it was unsafe to do so as the child had been giving her medication to the other children at the home. Consequently, this child's health needs have not been met. Inability to manage the dynamics between the children prevents the staff from providing individualised care in accordance with the children's relevant plans.

Incidents of children's distress are evident, due to, for example, witnessing another child threatening to hurt themselves. One record reflects a child's feelings of hopelessness and wanting to end his life. However, the staff have not been successful in improving the children's emotional well-being and behaviour.

Significant improvements have been made and the house has a modern new well-appointed kitchen. This is appreciated and welcomed by children. However, the children's bedroom walls need repainting and the carpets are stained. Consequently, the children are unhappy with their bedrooms. One child moved herself into a bedroom that was allocated for the staff. The staff were unable to prevent this. This room did not have a window restrictor and, as a result, another child climbed onto the windowsill outside this room while intoxicated and was found dangling from the first-floor window. The children often put themselves in dangerous situations. This has an impact on the child concerned and the children who witness these incidents.

The layout of the home makes the supervision of the children difficult. The home has an institutionalised feel. Communal areas contain broken furniture. Interior door windows have been boarded up after being damaged. A light that was in use had been pulled from its fixings and was dangling from the wall by a wire. Despite regular and repairs to the home the ongoing damage fails to provide the children with a warm, safe and relaxing home environment.

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

The staff have not managed recent incidents of children's negative behaviour or prevent them from putting themselves at risk. During the last week the children have taken the staff's master keys and the home's car keys. The children started the home's car and stalled it when trying to reverse it. They have broken items, cut themselves on broken crockery, poured water into damaged light fittings, emptied the freezer and taken confidential files from the office. During the inspectors' discussions with the children, the children said that there are no consistent boundaries. One child described the nights as 'wild'.

The children frequently use cannabis. There is little evidence of how this issue is being managed or how the children are being encouraged to stop. Records detail repeated occasions when the staff have smelled cannabis in the home and on the children. The staff watch the children going across the road to smoke and then return under the influence. Some staff try to discourage the children from smoking inside the home, but the staff said that the children then become aggressive. The inconsistent approaches mean that the children routinely smoke in their bedrooms. This has a negative impact on the children's physical and emotional well-being. A child who did not previously misuse drugs has started smoking cannabis since coming to live at the home. Although the home has adequate fire detection systems, children smoking in the home increases the risk of fire and the risk of harm.

The staff have recorded bullying incidents in regard to one child. Incidents of bullying have included highly concerning intimidation, coercion and manipulation. Records fail to evidence how the staff try to prevent and reduce these incidents. Staff are present during incidents, and support individual children but preventative strategies are not clear.

The risk assessments fail to include some of the serious incidents that have taken place. The staff do not have the guidance that they need to prevent incidents being repeated. One child has been subjected to repeated bullying, but this child's risk assessment does not guide staff in what steps they should take to prevent bullying. This has left a vulnerable younger child subject to regular intimidation and coercion.

Serious incidents happen one after the other with no time for reflection or investigation. Some incidents are not recorded. Failure to ensure that the staff manage children's behaviour effectively puts the children at risk of harm to themselves and each other.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The registered manager left his post with effect from 1 February 2020. An acting manager is in post and has not yet registered with Ofsted.

Management oversight of and actions in response to bullying, coercion and intimidation are inadequate. At the time of the inspection, managers had failed to provide a clear strategy for managing or reducing the frequency and severity of these incidents.

Managers have failed to monitor the impact of the quality of care on the children's progress and experiences. They have failed to ensure that the staff are provided with clear and effective guidelines and strategies to reduce bullying incidents. The inspectors were unable to review all the records of bullying in full as one bullying log had been destroyed by the children.

Matching of children who live at the home is of serious concern. Although managers undertake matching assessments that give a comprehensive overview of the risks that the children present and their vulnerabilities, these risks are not adequately mitigated. In October 2019, the registered manager at that time identified in his six-monthly management review that cannabis misuse was a serious and increasing problem. A much younger child came to live at the home even though concerns were identified at the matching stage about bullying at the home. Despite these concerns, two more children were admitted to the home.

Overall, the lack of effective leadership and management of this home have led to serious incidents that have had an impact on children's well-being. Lack of effective behaviour management and responses to incidents mean that children's health and safety are at risk. There are significant concerns about the risks posed by using the independence flat. The location of the flat is on the first floor of the children's home and accessed via a corridor that leads to the children's bedrooms. This has not been adequately risk assessed. A male, aged 17, regularly visited the flat. He was banned from the property by the staff prior to the inspection because he was intoxicated and aggressive. This male was also recorded, at times, to have been in other children's bedrooms. Room search logs detailed that vodka and gin bottles were found in the flat. The layout and use of the flat without a clear and consistent strategy on how to manage visitors leave younger children vulnerable. This was addressed during the inspection with a decision that the flat will no longer be used and this reduces the risk.

Managers have failed to ensure that the staff work in accordance with the home's statement of purpose, which says that the home provides a safe, nurturing, caring and homely environment for each child.

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 quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; and use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— understand and apply the home's statement of purpose; ensure that staff— understand and apply the home's statement of purpose; protect and promote each child's welfare; provide personalised care that meets each child's needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking account of the child's background. (Regulation 6(1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(b)(ii)(iv))	17/04/2020
The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child.	17/04/2020

(Regulation 6(1)(a)(b)(2)(c)(i)) The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— help a child who is excluded from school, or who is of compulsory school age but not attending school, to access educational and training support throughout the period of exclusion or non-attendance and to return to school as soon as possible. (Regulation 8(1)(2)(a)(viii))	17/04/2020
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; manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other. (Regulation 12(1)(2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv))	17/04/2020
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—	27/03/2020

lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose;

understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home; and

use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.
(Regulation 13(1)(a)(b)((2)(a)(f)(h))*

* These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

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: SC037256

Provision sub-type: children's home

Registered provider: Suffolk County Council

Registered provider address: Endeavour House, Russell Road, Ipswich IP1 2BX

Responsible individual: Clifford James

Registered manager: post vacant

Inspectors

Angela Weston, Social Care Inspector

Deirdra Keating, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

© Crown copyright 2020