

Children's home's inspection – Full

Inspection date	20/07/2016
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	20/07/2016
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 requires improvement because:

- Managers do not always update risk assessments in a sufficiently timely way in relation to their developing knowledge of the risks and experiences of the children.
- Some aspects of the physical environment require attention, including carpets that have stains and tears. This compromises the homeliness of the building.
- Internal monitoring is not identifying shortfalls and is not strong enough to contribute to improvement.
- Debriefs are not consistently happening after physical interventions take place. This does not ensure a vigorous reflection of incidents.
- The staff do not routinely receive training in managing children who go missing, despite the home providing care and accommodation for children who go missing. This does not support staff to develop their knowledge and understanding of safeguarding concerns pertinent to these incidents.
- The children's guide is not up to date. This does not help children to have a clear understanding of the home prior to moving in. In addition, the children are not routinely receiving feedback following discussions in residents' meetings.
- There are too many occasions when the home is not receiving copies of independent return-from-missing interviews. This does not allow fully informed assessments of risk to take place.
- Meetings planned to discuss placement breakdown reviews do not include external professionals. This limits the potential learning from such exercises.
- Recruitment records do not offer full assurance that a satisfactory Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check is in place, or that references have been verified.

The children's home strengths

- Some children make progress in relation to reducing risk-taking behaviours and attendance at school.
- The staff and managers have strong relationships with external professionals, including the police and specialist child sexual exploitation services.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that must be taken so that the registered persons 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 persons must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
6: The quality and purpose of care standard In order to meet the quality and purpose of care standard, the registered provider must (2)(c)(i) ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to meet the needs of each child.	31/08/2016
6: The quality and purpose of care standard In order to meet the quality and purpose of care standard, with particular regard to staff training, the registered provider must ensure that the staff team (3)(c)(i) has the experience, knowledge and skills to deliver that care. In particular, they must provide staff with training in managing incidents of missing and self-harm, and ensure that the management team has a clear overview of the training that staff have received.	31/08/2016
7: The children's views, wishes and feelings standard In order to meet the children's views, wishes and feelings standard, the registered person must ensure that staff (2)(c) keep the children's guide under review and seek children's comments before revising the document.	31/08/2016
12: The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standard, with particular regard to risk assessments, the registered provider must ensure that staff	24/08/2016

2(a)(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. In particular, they must ensure that risk assessments are thorough, up to date and promptly reviewed.	
13: The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard, the registered provider must (2)(h) use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.	31/08/2016
The registered person must ensure that, within 48 hours of the use of the measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ('the authorised person') has spoken to the user about the measure and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate and that, within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35(3)(b)(i)(ii)(c))	11/08/2016

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that children are able to see the results of their views being listened to and acted on. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.11)
- Ensure that when a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority enables the home to take account of information provided by return interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect each child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)
- Consider undertaking a review of night-time incidents to ensure that current staffing arrangements are sufficient. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.19)
- Ensure that when a placement breaks down, any management review of the reasons why and lessons to be learned includes external professionals. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 55,

paragraph 10.24)

- Ensure that recruitment of staff safeguards children and minimises potential risks to them, with particular regard to ensuring that recruitment records show that a satisfactory DBS certificate has been seen. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)

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
09/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
03/11/2015	Full	Requires improvement
26/03/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
04/12/2014	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Requires improvement
The quality of service that children receive needs to improve. While there is improvement in some areas of practice, there is a need for further progress to ensure that the provision is consistently good. The quality of the decor needs to improve. There are numerous stains in the carpets running through the hallways, and some parts are very worn and damaged. A professional observed: 'It is not the nicest building. There is a feel of antiquity and under investment.' This compromises the homeliness of the building. The general effect is unwelcoming and the surroundings do not help children to feel valued. The children contribute their views about the service. There are regular meetings that take place between the staff and the children. However, the children do not receive feedback about what they raise in these meetings. This lack of feedback has the potential to undermine some of the confidence that children have in staff. Social workers compliment the staff on the way in which they plan for children moving into the home. One social worker commented: 'I was very pleased with the planning meeting where everyone came, including the community police.' A new child, describing the process of moving into the home, said: 'I was happy with the way the move was handled.' The manager allocates a key-work team to new children and they receive one-to-one sessions. This supports children to manage the feelings that they have when they move in. The staff give the children a guide to the home. However, this is out of date and contains some inaccuracies. As a result, children are receiving some incorrect information about the home. Some children are making progress with their emotional health. When children experience emotional distress, they are able to talk to the staff. A parent said: 'He does still get angry, but it is much less frequent and he is better able to manage this, which is largely attributable to the care the staff provide. The level of difference is so great that we are looking to have him back.' A headteacher said: 'She is happier now, and able to enjoy herself.' This progress provides children with the foundation to make developments in other areas of their lives. Some children are making progress in relation to their education. Education providers talk positively about the way in which the service engages with them. One headteacher said: 'We have a very positive relationship with the home. They pop in and see us and are supportive. Before, she was not attending. Then she was attending but not engaging. Now she is attending and engaging. This is real progress.' There is some awareness among the staff of the schoolwork that	

children are completing. The staff participate in education meetings. The staff and managers have an effective relationship with the virtual school, and a virtual school employee stated: 'The relationship with us has really improved. The biggest improvement is the proactive communication.'

Other children make progress with their behaviour. One social worker said: 'There has been progress in his behaviour, massive progress. Since he has been there I have had no concerns of any serious violence.' Other children are now going missing far less frequently. As a result, some children are becoming increasingly less at risk.

The staff work to promote contact with families. This is effective, with one social worker saying: 'They have made massive strides in promoting contact with his mum. I never thought they would ever achieve this. They have. This was an amazing piece of work.' Consequently, the children are able to improve the relationships that they have with families.

The children are now beginning to engage in independence work. A child said: 'They get me doing my washing and ironing and cooking and hoovering and cleaning. I can look after myself, but they have encouraged me to develop these skills further.' This helps children to prepare for life after the home.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
Risk assessments have improved. These are now clearer. However, one child has not had his pre-placement risk assessment updated almost four weeks after his arrival in the home. This is despite the child experiencing bullying. In addition, risk assessments do not consistently distinguish between historic and current behaviours. As a result, the staff do not benefit from an up-to-date risk assessment informed by the increased knowledge of the child's needs and experiences. The staff manage behaviour without routine recourse to physical interventions. When they do, it is with the minimum force necessary. However, debriefs are not consistently taking place following the incidents. This means that the subsequent protection and learning that debriefs are designed to capture are not realised. The staff use restorative sanctions as part of their approach to behaviour management. The records of these are not always sufficiently clear, and internal monitoring has not identified this. For example, the recording does not always state the specific sanction. This hinders the manager's ability to assess the appropriateness of the action taken. There have been a substantial number of incidents when children have gone	

missing from the home since the last inspection. The police missing person coordinator talks positively about the work of staff in relation to this, stating: 'Even when things were difficult, they handled this well.' External professionals also say that the home manages the risk associated with missing well. One safeguarding professional said: 'They are in tune to the issues around missing. They are aware of the potential risks.' The management team works hard to ensure that return interviews take place and strives to access copies of them once they occur. Despite these efforts, there are still too many occasions when the local authority does not provide the home with a copy of the return interview. This compromises the home's ability to fully assess and update its response to the risks that children are experiencing.

The home follows internal safer recruitment guidelines, including seeking references and DBS checks. However, the internal recruitment records do not capture whether an applicant's DBS check was clear or just noting the completion of a check. As a result, the manager lacks assurance that checks are clear. In addition, there is no confirmation of the verification of references in internal recruitment files. This is not sufficiently robust to ensure that adults working with children are suitable.

The children spoken to report that they feel safe in the home. They engage with the staff and have regular one-to-one sessions. They are aware of how to comment or complain and report that the staff are accessible to them. Some children in the home are at risk of child sexual exploitation. The staff and management team work with child sexual exploitation agencies to ensure that children have access to specialist support. The manager of a child sexual exploitation service endorses the work of the children's home staff: 'There is a good relationship with the staff. The communication is good, planning is shared and the young people are positive.' This ongoing collaborative approach increases the potential for children to engage with dedicated services.

The police report positive working relationships with the home. The staff and management team have an effective working relationship with the local police community support officer, the safer neighbourhood team and the missing people co-ordinator. This enables a participative approach to managing the needs of the children.

The staff are clear about what they would do to raise concerns about practice in the home. The local authority safeguarding manager reports that the management team is very open and seeks support and advice when needed. This openness increases the likelihood that children will receive the right support.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement
A permanent, suitably experienced and qualified registered manager has been in post for 15 months and registered since 11 December 2015. A deputy manager and senior residential worker support him in this role. The manager also receives support from the head of service. She is a visible presence in the home. The management team has met two of the three requirements set at the last inspection. Independent visitors now contact families as part of monitoring visits, and there is greater preparation for independence work taking place with children. However, the management team has yet to provide the majority of staff with training relating to children going missing or managing self-harm. In relation to recommendations, the management team has not ensured that children are able to see the result of their views being listened to. Internal monitoring arrangements have not identified some of the issues picked up at this inspection. They have not identified mistakes in paperwork, ambiguities in record-keeping or gaps in procedural expectations. As a result, monitoring systems do not support the staff and management team to understand their strengths and weaknesses or to identify areas for improvement. This affects their capacity for improvement. The staff team is stable, and the eligible staff are qualified. The staffing stability means that no agency staff have been used since the last inspection. This promotes consistency in the care that the children receive and contributes to the strong relationships between the staff and the children. These strong relationships underpin the positive work and the progress that have taken place. The staff receive regular supervision. These sessions consider the emotional impact of the work. The staff have access to a variety of training courses. However, the vast majority of the staff have yet to receive training in dealing with missing children. In addition, monitoring arrangements have not been in place to check who has undertaken the managing self-harm training. This means that staff may lack knowledge in these key areas, and the management team lacks a clear overview of what training has taken place. This affects the ability of the manager to identify the training needs of the staff team. The home continues to experience placement breakdowns. Plans are in place to hold disruption meetings following these breakdowns. However, these meetings do not include any external professionals. This limits the usefulness of these meetings. The management team completes impact risk assessments when considering whether a child is suitable for the home. These are generally very thorough. When they assess that a child is not suitable at the current time, or in relation to the home's statement of purpose, the rationale is clear and unambiguous.	

There are strong relationships between the staff, the managers and the wider professional network. The manager challenges external professionals when necessary. The staff and management team work effectively with education providers and the virtual school. They work well with the police and specialist support agencies. There are strong relationships with parents and other family members. As a result, managers have a good awareness of the needs of the children in their care and the progress that the children make.

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 children looked after 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 that 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 whom 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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