

SC037256

Registered provider: Suffolk County Council

Interim 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 or emotional abuse, or had traumatic experiences that have left them vulnerable. The manager of the home was registered with Ofsted on 24 August 2015.

Inspection date: 28 February 2019

Judgement at last inspection: good

Date of last inspection: 12 September 2018

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

This inspection

The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection

This home was judged good at the last full inspection. At the interim inspection, Ofsted judges that it has sustained effectiveness.

At the full inspection, two requirements and two recommendations were raised. The manager has met the two requirements and one of the recommendations. The other recommendation is not met.

The children are aware of the complaints procedure and have used this to raise concerns. The manager has acknowledged children's complaints and discussed their concerns with the designated officer. The manager has promised to investigate these concerns, but has failed to inform the children of the outcomes of their complaints. Additionally, although some elements of the investigations are documented, most are not. The manager's investigations are uncoordinated and are delegated to staff to take forward without any managerial follow up. This fails to uphold the home's complaints policy and does not make children aware that their concerns have been dealt with.

The interior of the home, particularly the bedrooms and first-floor corridor, is in a poor state of repair. Walls are damaged and dirty, carpets and furniture are stained and frayed and some divan bed bases are worn and have holes in the material. This fails to provide a welcoming and clean environment. These shortfalls have been identified by senior managers. A condition audit has been undertaken and there is a plan to replace these items.

An external fire company has rectified faults with the fire doors, which failed to close at the last inspection.

A risk assessment for one child is dated in the future, making it unrealistic. It contains a Signs of Safety plan that does not include several recent incidents, such as a child bullying another child, damage to property and a serious incident with the child's family outside the home. The lack of up-to-date information means that staff are not given clear guidance on managing the risks for this child and the potential threat to other children.

A member of staff found a child who has a history of substance misuse in another child's bedroom with white powder chopped into a line, and another child holding a rolled-up piece of paper. The police and a social worker visited the child and a referral was made to a substance misuse agency. Notification of this incident was not sent to Ofsted, which prevented Ofsted from having a complete picture of events at the home.

There have been 21 sanctions implemented in five months, of which 19 are financial. Some lack thought and the records of them do not consistently include children's views. The use of sanctions has since been discussed with children in order to consider the best way of making reparation. One financial sanction has no link to the incident, which involved an altercation between two children. The common use of financial sanctions is meaningless and reduces the likelihood of children understanding the impact of their actions.

The number of children going missing from care continues to reduce. This means that some individuals have been much safer since being at the home. The incidents of self-harm are also reducing in number. A child who has shown indicators that he places items around his neck has been risk assessed and staff have been trained in ligature removal. Staff are aware of the risks and prepared for such an incident. This protects the child.

There have recently been some incidents of bullying involving three children. Staff addressed these incidents quickly and made sure that all children felt safe and were able to reflect on their actions. Children said that they know staff will intervene when there are tensions at the home. This reassures them.

Social workers spoken to during the inspection said that staff are prepared for care planning meetings and that communication with the staff is good. This has improved since the last inspection.

Children are purposefully engaged. All of the children are at school or college, or attend an alternative education provision. The children all attend well and try hard. Staff overcome barriers to the children's progress and learning. The staff work closely with schools and social workers so that any concerns can be discussed. Some children work part time in the summer months, around their college courses. The children build interests and develop skills that help them to make career destination choices.

Children take an active part in life at the home. They help with meals and food preparation. An independence flat at the home provides a space in which children can build valuable life skills.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/09/2018	Full	Good
08/03/2018	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
13/06/2017	Full	Requires improvement to be good
03/11/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

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 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. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(i))	29/03/2019

In particular, update children's Signs of Safety plans to include serious incidents.	
Subject to paragraph (6), the registered person must establish a procedure for considering complaints made by or on behalf of children. In particular, the procedure must provide that no person who is the subject of a complaint takes any part in its consideration or investigation, except at the informal resolution stage if the registered person considers it appropriate. The registered person must ensure that a record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of any investigation. The registered person must ensure that no child is subject to any reprisal for making a complaint or representation. The registered person must supply to HMCI, at HMCI's request, a statement containing a summary of any complaints made during the preceding twelve months and the action that was taken in response to each complaint. (Regulation 39 (1)(2)(3)(4)(5))	29/03/2019
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; and there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(c)(e))	29/03/2019

Recommendations

- For children's homes to be nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of their children, they will, in most cases, be homely, domestic environments. Children's homes must comply with relevant health and safety legislations (alarms, food hygiene etc.); however, in doing so, homes should seek as far as possible to maintain a domestic rather than 'institutional' impression. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that all incidents of control and discipline are subject to systems of regular scrutiny to ensure that their use is fair. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.36)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and 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 focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

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: Tobias Hall

Inspector

Deirdra Keating, social care inspector

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