

SC037281

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 six children aged between 10 and 17. The children may have experienced neglect and/or emotional abuse or had traumatic experiences that have left them vulnerable.

The registered manager left in April 2021. The acting manager is a longstanding member of staff and intends to apply to Ofsted to register.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

We last visited this setting on 2 February 2021 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 7 to 8 July 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 26 February 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: declined in effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
26/02/2020	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
11/04/2019	Full	Good
03/10/2018	Full	Inadequate
21/02/2018	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

At the time of this inspection, a child was isolating at the home. As a result, this inspection was carried out in a blended way, with some on-site activity and some off-site activity.

Children build trusting and secure relationships with the staff who care for them. Children are welcomed into the home by the staff, who take an interest in getting to know them. This helps children to develop a sense of permanence and belonging.

Staff and children eat together in the large dining area. Meals are planned together, taking into consideration children's individual cultural needs and preferences. A routine of sitting together to share a meal and discuss the day creates a sense of family.

Children and staff enjoy shared activities together. One child belongs to a local scout group and plays for a football team. Children's interests and talents are nurtured. This helps children to develop positive self-esteem and healthy peer relationships.

Education is valued by the staff. Children are helped to develop good routines so that they can attend their education provision. During COVID-19 lockdown periods, the children were able to access education remotely. Staff supported children to continue with their learning when they were unable to attend school. Some of the children attend alternative provisions. The manager liaises with the head of the virtual school, who described a 'strong culture of engagement in education among the children'. This helps children to benefit from their education.

Children develop friendships in the local community and benefit from age-appropriate freedoms. Internet use is monitored to ensure that children are protected from dangers online.

Staff meet children's health needs. Children access routine health appointments, and staff provide good help for children to develop healthy personal hygiene routines. Staff provide appropriate support for children who find it difficult to manage their personal care or live a healthy lifestyle.

When children struggle to manage their emotions, they are encouraged to talk through their difficult feelings with staff. Therapists provide regular guidance to staff to help them respond to children in a trauma-informed way. This means that all children receive sensitive care from adults who are beginning to respond to the children's behaviours in the context of their difficult pasts.

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

Children largely get along well with each other. Things are more settled than they have been. Children rarely go missing from the home. On the occasions when children are not where they should be, staff respond quickly and ensure that the child is safely returned to the home. Return interviews are facilitated. This helps protect children from risks outside the home.

Staff help children to manage self-harming behaviour. Staff are proactive in intervening in risky situations. Risk assessments are updated, and external support is available to help children in distress. Relevant professionals are kept up to date with any serious incidents. Well-coordinated care planning means that risks are quickly identified and mitigated, which reduces the likelihood of harm to the children.

Children can identify a trusted adult to talk to. They know how to complain. Meaningful key-work sessions enable children to explore personal risks and risks in the community. These sessions educate children about how to keep themselves and others safe.

Positive behaviour is encouraged. Staff are trained in de-escalation techniques. The children are not often restrained. When restraints do occur, debriefs with staff and children take place, and children's views are recorded.

The staff team is more settled than it had been previously. Agency workers do not often come to work at the home. Internal recruitment processes are sufficient to keep children safe. However, the recruitment records of agency staff are not sufficiently robust. This has not been addressed since it was raised at the last inspection.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

There has been a change of manager at the home following a well-planned handover. The new manager is well liked and is committed to driving forward change. Consequently, the change has not had a negative impact on children.

The manager has worked at the home, as deputy manager, for many years and knows the children well. Children's progress is monitored, and additional support is brought in when needed to meet the children's individual needs.

Staff feel supported. They spoke with enthusiasm about their roles. New staff are supported by a thorough induction. Supervision and support are available to all staff. Additional ongoing guidance in trauma-informed practice is provided to all staff. Staff talked confidently about the benefits of this intervention on the quality of care that they provide to children.

Children's individual beliefs are promoted and respected. Acceptance of diversity is encouraged. On occasions, when a child displays discriminatory views or bullying behaviour, staff talk to the children about the importance of responding to others in a way that celebrates individual differences. These discussions help children to understand how to respond to others in more socially acceptable ways.

Some areas of the home have been updated. This has improved the quality of accommodation. All the children have new beds, and some soft furnishings have been replaced. The environment is becoming more homely. However, some decoration requires attention.

At the time of the inspection, several disused beds were being stored in the children's games room. This means that the children are not able to make use of this part of the home. The manager took steps to arrange removal of the beds quickly following this inspection.

The children's bedrooms are all fitted with door alarms. These arrangements are not regularly reviewed to ensure that they remain justified. Children and their social workers have not given written consent to the use of this monitoring. Failure to gain relevant consent and to keep these arrangements under regular review mean that it is not clear whether the use of monitoring is necessary and proportionate.

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 registered person must ensure that— the privacy of children is appropriately protected; children can access all appropriate areas of the children's home's premises; and any limitation placed on a child's privacy or access to any area of the home's premises— is necessary and proportionate; is kept under review and, if necessary, revised; and allows children as much freedom as is possible when balanced against the need to protect them and keep them safe. (Regulation 21 (a)(b)(c)(ii)(iii)(iv)) In particular, this relates to removing beds from the children's games room.	23 July 2021
The registered person may only use devices for the monitoring or surveillance of children if— the monitoring or surveillance is for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child concerned, or other children; the child's placing authority consents in writing to the monitoring or surveillance; so far as reasonably practicable in the light of the child's age and understanding, the child is informed in advance of the intention to do the monitoring or surveillance. (Regulation 24 (1)(a)(b)(c)) In particular, ensure that decisions about the use of door alarms on the children's bedrooms are made in the best	26 August 2021

interests of individual children and written consent obtained from each child's social worker. The reasons for the use of monitoring devices should be discussed with children individually, and the suitability of the arrangements should be kept under regular review.	
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children's home; or if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that— full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3)(d)) In particular, ensure that all staff, including agency staff, have comprehensive recruitment checks. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	26 August 2021

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that the home is a homely domestic environment. In particular, ensure that damage to the home is repaired and that the decoration is maintained to a suitable standard. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

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: SC037281

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

Inspector

Angela Weston, Social Care Inspector

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