

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	14/09/2016
Unique reference number	SC037281
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	Serena Emberley
Inspector	Ashley Hinson

Inspection date	14/09/2016
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

SC037281

Summary of findings

The children's home provision requires improvement because:

- The debriefs following physical interventions do not always record sufficiently the enquiries that have been made in to the child's welfare, or the offer of the chance to speak to someone independent of the home. On one occasion a conversation with the local authority safeguarding team did not take place, despite the fact it involved a potential complaint.
- Children are not receiving the therapeutic support outlined in their care plans. Case records do not include the detail of discussions with mental health professionals. Records of medication administration are incomplete.
- On two occasions managers have failed to identify discrepancies in recruitment records. This does not enable robust scrutiny of applications or contribute to preventing inappropriate people from working with children.
- The staff are not consistently receiving frequent supervisions. This does not provide them with the support that they need to carry out their role.
- The staff are not in possession of the most up-to-date care plans or review minutes for the children in their care. They are therefore unaware of any actions attributed to them in reviews.
- Internal monitoring arrangements are ineffective and do not identify areas for improvement. The review of the quality of care does not include consultation with staff. In one instance, a notification did not include key information, impacting upon the effectiveness of external monitoring arrangements.

The children's home strengths

- There is a strong focus on educational attendance, attainment and progress. All of the children are in mainstream school and making progress.
- The children have strong relationships with staff. This underpins the progress that they make.
- The children enjoy a wide range of inclusive leisure activities that support the establishment and maintenance of friendships.

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 within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
10. The health and well-being standard In order to meet the health and well-being standard, with particular regard to ensuring that relevant plans include up-to-date information about the mental health support being provided and case records include the detail of the guidance given by mental health professionals, the registered provider must ensure that staff help each child to— (2) (a) (i) achieve the health and well-being outcomes that are recorded in the child's relevant plans.	20/10/2016
12. The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standard, with particular regard to ensuring that when children raise concerns following physical interventions these are shared with safeguarding professionals, the registered provider must ensure— (2) (a) (vi) that staff take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare.	06/10/2016
12. The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standard, with particular regard to ensuring that the fire risk assessment is updated in line with the service's expectations, the registered provider must ensure— (2) (d) that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health.	20/10/2016
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.	31/10/2016

14. The care planning standard In order to meet the care planning standard, with particular regard to ensuring that updated care plans and the outcome of placement reviews are recorded on the child's file, the registered person must ensure— (2) (c) that each child's relevant plans are followed.	31/10/2016
The registered person must keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it and notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16 (3) (a) (b))	31/10/2016
The registered person must ensure that medicine which is prescribed for a child is administered as prescribed to the child for whom it is prescribed and a record is kept of the administration of medicine to each child. (Regulation 23 (2) (b) (c))	06/10/2016
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. This is with particular regard to ensuring that any discrepancies in applications are recognised and explored as part of the recruitment process. (Regulation 32 (1))	31/10/2016
The registered person must ensure that all employees receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4) (b))	31/10/2016
The registered person must prepare and implement a policy ('the behaviour management policy') which sets out how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the children's home; and the measures of control, discipline and restraint which may be used in relation to children in the home. This is with particular regard to improving the quality of restraint records ensuring that debriefs take place. (Regulation 35 (1) (a) (b) (3) (a) (b) (c))	20/10/2016
The registered person must ensure that any notification made under this regulation includes details of the matter. (Regulation 40 (5) (a) (i))	06/10/2016
The registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the quality of care provided for children and any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. The system must provide for ascertaining	31/10/2016

and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff. (Regulation 45 (2) (a) (c) (5))	
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Full report

Information about this children's home

Owned and operated by a local authority, this home provides medium and long-term placements for up to seven children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
29/09/2015	Full	Good
04/03/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
18/09/2014	Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Requires improvement
The home requires improvement to be good. There are many strengths within the service, particularly in relation to children's education. However, the inspection has identified a number of weaknesses in practice concerning safeguarding and leadership and management. The management team needs to address these to fully support children and to mitigate risk. Children are not consistently receiving the mental health support that care plans outline. While the circumstances surrounding this gap in provision were unforeseeable and do not relate to the practice of the home, there is no clear plan on the children's files to manage this change in circumstance. This is despite there being no decrease in the children's needs, and in one case, a likely increase. Although the manager is consulting with mental health professionals regarding the children, this is in the form of guidance to staff rather than therapeutic intervention for the child. In addition, the manager does not record this advice. Consequently, there is no clear record of the advice given. This does not provide staff with the clarity that they need to manage the complex emotional needs of the children. The staff ensure that children register with universal health services and support them to attend appointments. The staff administer medication within the home. However, the records relating to administration are incomplete. There are unexplained gaps and omissions. The records do not amount to a comprehensive record and do not contribute towards ensuring that children's health needs are met. Internal monitoring arrangements have not picked up these concerns. Relationships between children and staff are strong. The staff team is stable, with many members of staff having been in post for a long time. The staff are interested in the children and show this in their daily interactions with them. The children are keen to interact with the staff. They discuss their experiences and share what they have been up to. The children feel secure in the presence of staff. The staff speak positively about the children and show pride in the children's achievements. This assists the children to develop their self-esteem and see the positive in themselves. They feel that the staff support them. The children are making progress in relation to their behaviour and education. The staff seek children's views on a routine basis. For example, the children review and rate the food that is provided. There are regular get together meetings and children's attendance is good. Interactions observed demonstrate that staff deal sensitively when explaining why something cannot happen. As a result, the children say that staff listen to them and act upon their wishes when appropriate. The children are able to talk to staff about issues that concern them. They are able to talk openly and tell staff how they are feeling. The staff respond thoughtfully to	

the feelings of the children. For example, the staff have recently sensitively supported one child to attend his mother's funeral. This enabled him to cope with this potentially traumatic but important milestone.

The staff support the children to manage their feelings and behaviour. They engage in restorative meetings. The staff speak to children about incidents in an attempt to understand further what caused them. This both reflects and reinforces the strong relationships between the children and staff and assists children to make progress in their behaviour.

Educational engagement is a strength. There is a very strong ethos that all children should be attending school and staff translate this attitude into action. They simply see school attendance as the norm. The home has worked effectively with education providers to ensure that educational needs are met. This has included proactively pursuing educational placements when the manager felt that the local authority was moving too slowly. Education staff consistently speak extremely highly of the service that the home provides. They describe supportive transition that may not have succeeded without the efforts of the home. An educational professional stated, 'They are strong on partnership working and they listen.' As a result, all of the children are in mainstream education and making progress.

The children enjoy a wide range of inclusive leisure activities. They participate in clubs in the local community. As a result, the children are able to make friendships local to the schools that they attend. The staff support children to further develop friendships. This includes inviting friends to the home and having them participate in birthday outings. As a result, the children build appropriate peer groups. Where children express interest in faith-based activities, the staff fully support this. For example, one young person has recently had his first communion.

The staff encourage the children to complete age-appropriate independence activities. This includes through activities such as come dine with me cooking events and walking to school independently.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
Practice in relation to helping and protecting children needs to improve. This inspection has found failings, but these can be addressed. While there is nothing to show that they have led to children suffering harm, unchecked they have the potential to do so. The staff promote positive behaviour and emphasise children's strengths. They recognise that physical interventions are a last resort. However, the records relating to these incidents need to improve. The records use imprecise language and do not consistently capture debriefs with children. When debriefs do occur, these are often centred on the behaviour that led to the intervention at the	

expense of the child's perception of the intervention itself. Management monitoring has not identified these gaps. This does not contribute to a culture of safeguarding.

The staff are able to articulate what they would do if they had concerns about practice in the home. However, on some occasions, when children have raised concerns following physical interventions, the management team has not shared these with safeguarding professionals. This does not safeguard children, nor does it protect staff.

When new staff have been recruited, the recruitment process has not been sufficiently robust. As a result, managers have not identified some anomalies in information and applications. For example, one applicant had different spellings of their middle name on official documentation. This means no exploration of the discrepancies has taken place. This does not contribute to ensuring that unsuitable people do not work with children.

The staff work to support the children to understand how to manage their behaviour. The staff discuss approaches as a team to identify what works well. They work with children in a restorative manner. For example, if children cause damage in the home, the staff support them to report this and to make amends. When children behave in a discriminatory way, the staff challenge them. As a result, children improve their behaviour over time. The staff work with children to manage their behaviour without the need for police involvement. On the rare occasion that this takes place, it is proportionate.

The children do not have unrestricted access to the internet. All the children have had e-safety training and have signed e-safety agreements. Children rarely go missing from the home. There has been one instance when two children were absent. The staff linked with the police and the children returned.

The children are able to identify staff who they would talk to if they have concerns. The strength of relationships between staff and children support this. When concerns about children's behaviour have come to light, the manager has shared these with the appropriate professionals.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement
Leadership and management needs to improve. While there are some strengths, the inspection has identified a significant number of shortfalls that managers need to address. These shortfalls have the potential to compromise the safety and the quality of care of children. A permanent, suitably experienced and qualified registered manager manages the home and has done so for eight years. She is passionate about the service and ensuring that the children are able to make progress. This makes a significant contribution to the homely atmosphere and nurturing environment. This also contributes to the strong relationships that the	

home has with external professionals and the local community.

The managers have a comprehensive understanding of the needs and experiences of the children. The home's own care plans are generally comprehensive. However, the local authority have not provided the service with up-to-date care plans. The service has attempted to challenge the local authority but this has not been effective. In addition, while the staff work with children to ensure that they are able to contribute their views to reviews, the home has not been provided with copies of review minutes. As a result, there is a lack of clarity regarding any agreed actions arising from reviews or amendments to children's care plans.

The staff are not consistently receiving frequent supervision. Supervision is an issue that has arisen in previous inspections. This does not provide staff with the full support that they need to carry out their role. When supervision does take place, the records are generally good. The staff have, or are working towards, appropriate qualifications.

Management monitoring of the records in the home is not effective. Many of the issues identified in this inspection were a surprise to the management team. For example, the manager had not reviewed the home's fire risk assessment within the self-imposed time frame. Therefore, the monitoring arrangements do not contribute to continuous improvement. The home's own review of the quality of care completed by the management team does not include consultation with the relevant staff.

The manager notifies Ofsted when significant incidents occur. However, the most recent notification did not include key information relating to the incident. This omission affected Ofsted's response to the incident. In addition, the manager has updated the home's statement of purpose but did not submit this to Ofsted as regulation requires. Both of these issues affect Ofsted's ability to effectively monitor the service.

The manager makes child-focused decisions about who comes to live in the home. Prior to decisions about children coming into placement, the manager completes an impact risk assessment. Where the manager feels that a child would not be right for the mix of children in the home at the time of application, she makes a comprehensive case to explain this. This careful consideration of placement matching increases the stability that the children experience.

Feedback from external professionals is consistently very good. The home has highly positive relationships with the wider professional network. The manager is proactive at working with families.

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 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 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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