

SC040191

Registered provider: Break

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is one of five children's homes run by a charitable organisation. The home provides accommodation for up to four children who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 4 to 5 December 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 21 March 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- The staff have positive relationships with the children.
- The children's engagement and attendance in education have improved.

- The home environment is welcoming and well kept.
- The children are safeguarded and there are few risk-taking behaviours.
- The children openly share their views, and have a voice in this home.
- The children benefit from many new experiences and varied activities.
- The social workers are positive about the progress that the children make.

The children's home's areas for development:

- The staff lack experience in understanding the impact of children's backgrounds.
- The bedroom furniture does not fully meet the children's physical needs.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
24/11/2016	Full	Good
29/03/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
18/11/2015	Full	Good

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 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 to aspire to their full potential and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that the staff have the experience and skills to meet the needs of each child (Regulation 13(1)(2)(c)) This is with particular regard to the approach of the whole team to behavioural consequences and their general understanding of the impact of children's backgrounds.	28/02/2018

Recommendations

- Ensure that the home meets children's physical necessities. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.7)

In particular, ensure that the furnishings in the bedrooms meet the children's physical needs.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The staff in this home have successfully created a positive environment. The staff and the children are working together to decorate the house for Christmas. The home is full of festive preparation. There is an appetising aroma of food being cooked. Mealtimes are a focal point of the day. The staff pay time and attention to the sourcing and presentation of home cooked food. They sit around the table with the children and enjoy relaxed, social mealtimes. The children adhere to an agreed table etiquette, instilling

valuable social skills. Individual dietary requirements vary significantly, and staff cater for these unobtrusively. Healthy options are strongly encouraged at every meal, and choices incorporate a preferred familiar option for less adventurous appetites. The meal options encourage the children to widen their tastes and to try new foods.

The house is clean, cosy and welcoming. The decor is fresh, and is coordinated in agreement with the children's choices. The bedrooms are clean, and generally furniture is of good quality. Despite this, the beds in two of the rooms are not suited to the children's physicality or preference. One child continues to have a mattress on the floor without a base, and another child requires a larger bed.

Educational progress is clear, particularly for one child who was previously not attending school. Recently, their attendance has increased to over 90% and has been consistently maintained. Another child has completed her education successfully and started a college placement, which she thoroughly enjoys. The college provides further social opportunities. A younger child with an alternative education provision attends the required vocational elements but struggles in the classroom, making attendance variable. One child has no school provision. A tutor is in place and meets with the child at the library. This arrangement is interspersed with home-study work sheets that the child is engaging with. However, this child urgently requires a placement at a mainstream school. The home, together with the social worker, has made a number of attempts to find a school. The staff are doing all they can to secure a place for the child. They provide a consistent structure to ensure that the child is in a routine conducive to attending school.

The relationships that the children have with the staff build stability and emotional resilience. There is a warm and easy rapport between the children and the staff. The staff pitch interactions sensitively. They know the children well, foster their interests and celebrate their achievements. These fundamental attachments to the staff help the children to experience consistent support.

The staff signpost the children to support services, and arrange visits to help the children to understand their identity, sexual health and internet safety. The staff provide good parental controls, liaising with the parents of the children's peers to ensure that relationships are safe and monitored. This open dialogue sets safe boundaries.

The staff hold residents' meetings and record any actions from these. The children confidently express their views to the staff and the manager. They do this because their ideas are listened to and contribute to the general running of the home. Key-worker sessions are held regularly and recorded well. Records capture spontaneous discussions that relate to pertinent issues.

Each child is supported in regard to their physical health, emotional health, identity and family background. The staff use family trees and life story work to help the children to understand their diverse family backgrounds. The work on family backgrounds has helped the children to deal with feelings of rejection and loss that they have experienced. Contact with the children's families, friends and significant others is

ongoing. The staff travel extensively to take the children to visit family and to meet new family members. The staff also have a good rapport with parents who telephone the home. Parents are kept informed about their children's progress.

The children experience many enjoyable and purposeful activities. These include learning to play an instrument, camping and going away to a holiday park. The children are busy with their peers out in the community. They attend regular social clubs and enjoy trips out with the staff. A child visited a premier league football club to celebrate his birthday. Another child, with help from the staff, made a gaming chair from wood. Fostering the children's interests in this way helps them to develop their abilities and believe in their own potential.

The children who are reaching adulthood are provided with a mentor from within the organisation. This person provides a connection prior to leaving care that will ensure that a line of support continues as the children leave care. Other children are encouraged to use public transport and apply for weekend jobs to encourage and build their independence.

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

The children in this home all confidently express their views and state that they feel safe and relaxed at the home. When tensions between the children have arisen, the staff have been responsive to these and make decisions in the best interests of the children. There are very few bullying incidents. One serious incident resulted in a good amount of follow-up work to prevent further occurrences. This incident was isolated, and there has been reflective work for both of the children involved to rebuild their relationship.

The risk assessments are kept live and contain current incidents and risks that are pertinent to each child. New children are assessed carefully against the other children to ensure that matching is compatible. The group gets on well and relationships are generally amicable.

The children in this home do not usually leave the home without agreement from the staff. They all enjoy free time in the community with their peers and respond well to curfew times, staying in touch with the staff. There have been a few short-duration local incidents of absence without permission, the reasons for which have been recorded clearly. Examples include an upset with the staff, and a decision that a child did not agree with. These incidents peaked during a period when a child's placement broke down; they have since reduced significantly and remained minimal. Therefore, this is not a present concern.

The rewards and sanction records have been split, with a specific log for recording sanctions only. This division has enabled better monitoring. The manager has provided constructive feedback to encourage staff to think more restoratively about helping the children to learn from their behaviours. This has encouraged the staff to think about their practice. There are no anti-social behaviours and no risky behaviours outside the home, and there are very few in the home. Generally, behaviour is extremely good.

The staff are trained in how to safely prevent children from inflicting self-injury or hurting others, by using safe holds. The number of holds peaked during a period in which a child was extremely unsettled. The actions taken during this period included an analysis of behaviours as the holds increased. The staff met with other professionals to discuss reasons for these incidents, and strategies to reduce their numbers. The holds are reasonable in keeping the children safe, and reduce any impact on other children and staff when incidents reach a certain level. Following a placement review, there has been a significant reduction in safe holds.

The notifications increased in July 2017, when there was a placement breakdown and a child was moved from the home. These notifications included several allegations about members of staff, which resulted in one staff member being suspended, and several complaints. The concerns were resolved; an internal investigation was carried out that upheld some points. The allegations are all concluded and closed. The management and investigation of these issues was carried out in a professional and transparent manner that safeguarded the children and the staff.

There have been a number of social media safety concerns reported by staff and the parents of peers. Each incident has been recorded and reported appropriately. The staff have taken preventive action, and incidents have been caught in the early stages. The children are in the habit of being open with staff and reporting their concerns. This has resulted in the staff following up the concerns that have been reported. The staff have received training in spotting the signs of child sexual exploitation. They are informed and vigilant, and this has worked to prevent incidents escalating and protect vulnerable children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager of this home has been in post since April 2016. He has wide experience of working in residential childcare and is qualified to level 5. Management of this home continues to place the children's needs first and foremost. The organisation's vision to provide a positive family environment is working well.

The experience and maturity of the staff team continue to be developed. There are a number of part-time staff, which can make communication in the team difficult. There are also staff vacancies, and the retention of staff is poor. Not all staff understand how best to help the children to learn from their mistakes. Bespoke training has been booked in an effort to give the staff a shared value system that reflects restorative and compassionate work. The lack of knowledge and understanding in this area has been recognised by the manager in the review of care. Internal monitoring is very good. File audits, record monitoring and a general review provide an honest and critical oversight that identifies areas that require improvement. External monitoring is adequate, and children have the chance to speak to an independent visitor who comes to the home. This provides an additional safeguard.

The staff are supported by a line manager who conducts regular supervisions. Identified staff performance and practice issues are discussed and recorded in the supervision notes. The development plan identifies staff training and experience as pivotal in improving the quality of care. The plan links well to the analysis of events and incidents in the home. It also reflects the review of the home undertaken by the manager. The development plan and manager's review present a focused and clear strategy to improve the quality of care at the home. Mandatory training is provided by the organisation, and all staff have, or are working towards, the required level 3 diploma. This qualification equips staff for their roles.

The majority of social workers spoken to say that they are happy with the quality of care provided. All of the social workers can see that positive and consistent progress is being made by the children they have placed. The children are happy, settled and stable at the home. The staff team advocates for the children and provides a positive home environment for them. The manager and deputy provide a good point of contact and cascade information out to the staff team.

The staff challenge other professionals when required. There is a wealth of evidence demonstrating how schools have been challenged to find a place for a child following a breakdown in his previous education placement. Multi-agency working is strong; work takes place with external professionals to identify concerns, and the actions needed to reduce them. This safeguards the children who have specific vulnerabilities.

The children view the home as theirs; they have a sense of security and belonging. Previous placements remain in contact, and most of the staff take pride in their roles. The children at this home are valued by the staff and have a voice. The staff listen to the children's views, which are reflected in activities, menus, holidays, decor and rules.

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.

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: SC040191

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Break

Registered provider address: Spar Road, Norwich NR6 6BX

Responsible individual: Hilary Richards

Registered manager: Lee Roberts

Inspector

Deirdra Keating, social care inspector

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