

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	24/11/2016
Unique reference number	SC060034
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Break
Registered provider address	Schofield House, 1 Spar Road Norwich, England, Norwich NR6 6BX

Responsible individual	Hilary Richards
Registered manager	Melanie Julier
Inspector	Ashley Hinson

Inspection date	24/11/2016
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

SC060034

Summary of findings

The children's home's provision requires improvement because:

- The inspection has identified a number of shortfalls that the management team needs to address to support children fully and to mitigate risk.
- Recruitment records in relation to agency staff do not meet the regulatory requirements.
- The children's care plans are not sufficiently clear in relation to physical interventions nor do they provide a clear picture of risks or risk management for staff.
- Personal emergency evacuation plans are still not consistently good enough.
- Approaches to health and safety checks are not strong enough. Some checks have been missed and insufficient action has been taken when issues have been identified.
- Case files do not routinely contain the most recent version of the children's plans or the minutes of relevant meetings that have taken place.
- Some case records lack clarity.
- There is some variability in the cleanliness of the home.
- One eligible member of staff has not completed a relevant level 3 qualification.
- A number of staff have yet to complete child sexual exploitation training.

The children's home's strengths

- The children engage in and enjoy a range of activities that they would not otherwise experience.
- Feedback from families and professionals is consistently extremely good.
- The staff made a significant contribution to safeguarding a particularly vulnerable child.
- The service has responded with great flexibility to a number of emergency placements and supported families who are in crisis.

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
12: The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standard, the registered provider must ensure that staff: (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. This is with particular regard to ensuring that children's personal emergency evacuation plans are updated promptly after incidents occur and that care plans fully address known and predictable risks.	09/12/2016
12: The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standard, the registered provider must ensure that: (2)(d) 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. This is with particular regard to ensuring that health and safety checks take place within the stipulated time frame and responses to any identified issues are sufficient to protect children from avoidable hazards.	09/12/2016
13: The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard, with particular regard to reviewing the quality of care, the registered provider must ensure that staff: (2)(h) use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.	31/12/2016
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. If an individual is employed by a person other than the registered	09/12/2016

person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, recruitment checks must satisfy the requirements of paragraph 3 of regulation 32. (Regulation 32 (1)(2)(b)(3)(d) Schedule 2) This is in particular reference to ensuring that the provider can demonstrate how they satisfied themselves of the suitability of workers provided by an agency.	
The registered person must ensure that an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification, the level 3 diploma for residential childcare (England) ('the level 3 diploma'), or a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the level 3 diploma, by the relevant date. (Regulation 32 (4)(5))	28/02/2017
The registered person must ensure that within 48 hours of the use of the measure of control, discipline or restraint, 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 that it is accurate, and within five 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))	31/12/2016
The registered person must maintain records ('case records') for each child which include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child which are kept up to date and are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c)) This is with particular regard to ensuring that the home has a record of any review of the placing authority's plan for the care of the child.	31/12/2016

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that all parts of the home are kept consistently clean. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.7)
This is with particular regard to the cleanliness of the walls and windows in the playroom.
- Ensure that staff have the knowledge and skills to recognise and be alert to any

signs that might indicate a child is in any way at risk of harm. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 43, paragraph 9.12)

This relates in particular to ensuring that the staff who have yet to do so access training in child sexual exploitation.

Full report

Information about this children's home

A registered charity owns this home, which provides short breaks for up to six children at any one time. The children who use the service have a learning disability or a social and communication disability within the autistic spectrum. The children may also have associated physical disabilities.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
10/11/2015	Full	Good
27/03/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
23/01/2015	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home	Requires improvement
The inspection has identified a number of shortfalls that the management team needs to address to support the children fully and to mitigate risk. A core group of dedicated staff support the children. They know the children well, and have good relationships with them. Each child has a care plan to ensure that staff understand their needs. However, these plans are not sufficiently clear in relation to physical interventions. One child who has been involved in the majority of the physical interventions has no reference to this in her care plan. This does not provide staff with the overview that they need. Case files do not routinely contain the most recent version of children's plans or the minutes of relevant meetings that have taken place. Chase up of missing documentation has not been sufficient, with managers acknowledging that they have not sought these. This lack of assertiveness means that the staff may be unaware of actions allocated to them at these meetings. The absence of a formal record of the meetings means that there is a risk that the staff are unaware of actions and are unable to challenge any misinterpretation in the minutes. There is some variability in the cleanliness of the home. While most areas are clean and tidy, the playroom was less so in comparison, with dirty windows and walls. Although this does not compromise the children's safety, it does not contribute to a welcoming or homely environment. Recently the home has experienced significant staffing shortages. As a result there has been a heavy reliance on agency staff. Inevitably, temporary staff do not know the children as well as the core staff know them and this affected the consistency of the service that the children and their families received. The core staff report that, 'We tried to have consistency but it was hard to achieve.' The management team has now recruited additional staff. These staff are in the infancy of their induction and while their arrival has improved morale, the broader impact is yet to be established. Despite the staffing difficulties, the staff ensure that the children are able to engage in a range of activities and experience enjoyable short breaks. Parents are positive about the range of activities available. One said, 'He gets to do things with them that I cannot do at home.' Another parent reinforced this, noting that the experiences that their child has during short breaks have enabled them to follow up with similar whole-family activities. They said, 'The staff think about things that will interest him. He does things that we had never done with him, things that we are	

now able to do.'

Although the short-break nature of the service means that there is a focus on experiences rather than progress, the staff still support children to develop their independence skills. Parents consistently report that their children make progress. A social worker said, 'There has been a massive push to get him to become more independent. They have really helped with that. They have improved his independence skills and got him to problem solve.' Another parent was clear about the progress her child had made in relation to her anxiety and behaviour, saying, 'She has emerged from crisis.' Professionals also commented on this, with a social work manager saying that the support from the staff and the subsequent improvements in behaviour meant that, 'The service has enabled the child to continue living at home.'

The children all attend school and the management team liaises with the children's schools. The staff will often visit schools to observe children and they attend school reviews. This encourages good understanding and a joined up approach between schools and the home. Parents and professionals report good communication with the staff in the home. A parent said, 'We have good, open and honest dialogue.' A professional said, 'I have lots of correspondence and they always share their progress with me.'

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
The help and protection offered to children requires improvement. The children are not yet receiving good help and protection. There are shortfalls but these can be addressed and there is nothing to suggest at this stage that they have led to children suffering harm. However, unchecked they have the potential to do so. Personal emergency evacuation plans (PEEPs) are still not consistently good enough. This has been a recommendation at the last two inspections. Despite this, PEEPs have not been consistently updated following incidents that have occurred during fire drills. In some cases, a more up-to-date PEEP was on the computer but it was not in the file that the staff access to understand what to do in an emergency. This does not safeguard children. The children's individual risk assessments are now incorporated into streamlined care plans known as 'all about me plans'. These risk assessments are not consistently good enough. One child who is at significant risk of child sexual exploitation has no explicit reference to this in her plan. Another child has information about potential behavioural difficulties but no assessment of how to	

address this. This does not provide a clear picture of risks or risk management for staff. The core staff have a good understanding of the children's needs but these documents are particularly important, given the number of new and temporary staff working in the home.

Approaches to health and safety checks are not strong enough. Some checks do not routinely take place within agreed timeframes. When checks have taken place, they have not generated a response sufficient to keep children safe. Water temperature checks identified temperatures that were too low in the months preceding the inspection. However, this did not result in any action to address the issue. The organisation's health and safety manager tested these again during the inspection to ensure that they were safe.

The children's behaviour is generally very good. Parents and professionals report that staff manage the children's behaviour well. No children have gone missing from this home. There have been no incidents of bullying since the last inspection.

The staff are aware of the risks posed by the internet. Some staff have undertaken training relating to child sexual exploitation but others have not and no dates for this training have been identified for those staff. However, the home has been proactive in responding to concerns regarding one child at risk of child sexual exploitation. This included linking with the police and assertively participating in multi-agency safeguarding meetings. As a result, the staff made a significant contribution to safeguarding a particularly vulnerable child.

The management team liaises appropriately with safeguarding professionals when there are issues about staff practice. The staff are aware of the routes to raise concerns about practice. Senior managers are known by and accessible to the staff team. This increases the likelihood that concerns will be shared.

The staff complete activity risk assessments in advance of activities taking place. Managers review and monitor these. After an activity takes place, the staff reflect upon the experience to identify if any changes will be necessary for the next activity. This helps to ensure that activities are safe.

The staff receive training in relevant core areas, such as physical intervention, safeguarding, first aid and medication. Procedures for handling medicines are in place. The staff are alert to potential issues with medication and monitor records to ensure that they identify any discrepancies. As a result, there have been no medication errors.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement
Shortfalls in practice have been identified but there is capacity to address those issues. However, internal management monitoring processes need to improve considerably to enable this. At present, they are not strong enough to generate or sustain improvements. External monitoring reports, if acted upon, have the potential to support progress. The organisation has an action plan that recognises some of the areas for improvement and has identified additional resources to support this. A permanent, suitably qualified manager manages the home. She has been in post for nine years and works closely with the deputy manager. Two skilled and experienced senior staff support them. The manager has met the requirement made at the last inspection. Further efforts have been made to consult with families. However, two of the three recommendations are unmet. These relate to using internal monitoring to ensure continuous improvement and ensuring that staff keep personal emergency evacuation plans up to date. Some case records need to improve. For example, records relating to restraint are not consistently good enough. Some records lack clarity and in three instances there has been no debrief with the staff. Monitoring arrangements have not identified this. However, other documents, such as incident forms are clearer and offer a comprehensive record of incidents. The staff recruited by the service have appropriate checks in place. However, although all have criminal records checks in place, recruitment records in relation to agency staff do not meet the regulatory requirements. This does not enable managers to satisfy themselves that staff working in the home are suitable. Managers and staff receive regular reflective supervision. The majority of the staff have a relevant level 3 qualification, or hold alternative qualifications which the provider has mapped to assess equivalence. However, in one case, a member of staff who has been in post for over two years has not yet attained the qualification. The managers make considered decisions about the care needs of the children in the home. They liaise with the local authority to ensure that care packages are appropriately managed. The service has responded with great flexibility to a number of emergency placements and has supported families in crisis. Feedback from professionals is consistently very good. They cite the flexible caring nature of the service as a strength. A professional spoke of the inclusive approach to communicating with parents with learning difficulties, saying, 'They work and adapt to make things better.' They also said, 'When mum could not transport her child and we were struggling to find out how we were going to get him there, I	

spoke to the home and they went out of their way to drive, collect and then return him in order to prevent him feeling distressed.'

Parents and carers are consistently very positive about the quality of the service and the relationship that they have with the staff. A parent said, 'The staff are really nice with him and kind towards him. They know him really well and know how to interact with him.' Another said, 'They know her, they really do. She is a hard one to get to know and they know her.'

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 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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