

SC063110

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 four children with social and emotional difficulties. The home has an on-site lodge that is used as an emergency placement for children under the care of Suffolk County Council.

The registered manager left in March 2023. The new manager has been in post since May 2023 and is in the process of registering with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 July 2023

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: 27 September 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
27/09/2022	Full	Good
16/02/2022	Interim	Improved effectiveness
21/09/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good
06/03/2020	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

There are currently three children living at the home. In addition, there is an emergency bed in a purpose-built cabin in the garden. The cabin is separated from the house by a wooden fence and has its own garden and driveway. This reduces the effect of a child placed in an emergency on the children already living at the home.

Staff know the children well. They recognise their strengths and ensure that children access the activities that they enjoy. Children enjoy boxing, cadets and arts and crafts. The staff watch the children at performances and boxing matches. They celebrate the children's achievements and talk about them with pride. This helps to improve the children's self-esteem and confidence.

Staff establish positive, trusting relationships with children. Consequently, children engage in discussions with staff about the issues that are important to them. Staff have helped children to improve their understanding of bullying, managing their emotions and unsafe behaviours.

The staff encourage children's attendance and engagement with education. For some children, the use of incentives has helped to improve their attendance. Staff work closely with teaching professionals to ensure that when issues arise, they are resolved quickly, and the children are supported. The manager has helped to progress one child's application and start date at a local school. Good support with education helps to lessen children's anxieties about returning to a school setting.

Staff help children to spend time with their family and friends. The staff provide the children with high levels of emotional and practical support to maintain and build positive relationships. As a result, children's relationships with their families flourish.

The addition of the cabin to the property has led to extensive changes to the garden. There are areas that still require work to make the garden safe and enjoyable for children to play. There is a plan and funding agreed for these improvements.

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

The managers and staff understand the importance of partnership working to address contextual safeguarding risks. They have developed strong links with local police, youth offending teams and other safeguarding agencies. This has led to a coordinated approach to safety planning and effective actions that increase the children's safety.

One child has made remarkable progress in becoming safer since they moved to the home. The staff's nurturing approach and encouragement have helped the child to

considerably reduce the number of episodes of going missing from home. Risk assessments and behaviour management plans are detailed and contain presenting risks. These are regularly reviewed and updated. The staff are informed of any changes during weekly staff meetings. This helps the staff to feel confident and be consistent in their responses to the children.

Staff use physical interventions appropriately to keep children safe. Staff provide children with the opportunity to debrief and reflect on their experience. However, managers have not spoken with staff about the measure within the required time frame. Delays in oversight mean that emerging concerns relating to the restraint could be missed and not responded to promptly.

There have been incidents of children leaving the house and being reported as missing from the home. The children are at risk of harm when they go missing. Staff respond well; however, independent return home interviews are not consistently carried out. This reduces the staff's understanding of the child's experiences and the risks they encountered while they were away.

Children have not been made aware of the fire evacuation procedures for the home or cabin promptly. Therefore, children are not prepared should they need to leave the home quickly in the event of a fire.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

A dedicated and experienced management team leads the home. Managers have established excellent relationships with parents and other agencies. Feedback from the children's families and professionals is unanimously positive.

The managers have a detailed knowledge and good understanding of the children's needs. Professionals are regularly updated and informed of areas of concern. Communication between managers and professionals is exceptionally good. Children benefit from the manager's approach to cohesive, multi-agency working.

Managers have a visible presence in the home, which allows them to readily monitor staff practice. They make themselves available to staff for guidance and advice. Staff receive regular supervision sessions. Consequently, staff said that they feel supported by their managers.

Safe recruitment processes are comprehensively carried out to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children. The staff receive a thorough induction, which includes a range of mandatory training and shadow shifts with experienced staff. Good induction, support and training help staff to meet children's needs and provide continuity of care.

Managers are aware that not all staff have achieved a relevant level 3 diploma within the required time frame. However, there is a plan in place for staff to achieve this.

Managers have not ensured that staff have had their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised. This means that opportunities to drive staff developments are missed.

There is no workforce-development plan. Consequently, there is no clear strategy to steer improvements to the quality of care.

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, The 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
In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 5 (c)) In particular, ensure that there is a written record of independent return home interviews for each child. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	4 August 2023
The registered person must ensure that— within 48 hours of the use of the measure, 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 it is accurate. (Regulation 35 (3)(b)(i)(ii)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that children and staff involved in a restraint are spoken to within the required time frame. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	4 August 2023
The registered person must ensure that all employees—	8 September 2023

have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (4)(c))	
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Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the home is a supportive environment that meets the needs of the children. Specifically, they should complete maintenance work in the garden area. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that a workforce plan is in place that can fulfil the workforce-related requirements of regulation 16, schedule 1 (paragraphs 19 and 20). The plan should detail the process and agreed timescale. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)
- The registered person should ensure that all staff in a care role have the qualification in regulation 32(4) within the relevant timescale listed in regulation 32(5). The registered person may extend the time if the member of staff has not worked in the role for a prolonged period of time, such as sick leave or maternity leave. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.12)
- The registered person should ensure that there are procedures in place for welcoming and introducing each child to the home, and that they are sensitive to the needs of the child at the time of arrival. In particular, ensure that staff inform children of the fire evacuation procedure as soon as possible. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 57, paragraph 11.7)

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: SC063110

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Suffolk County Council

Registered provider address: Endeavour House, Russell Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP1 2BX

Responsible individual: Glynn Smith

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Rachel Watkinson, Social Care Inspector

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