

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 who experience social and emotional difficulties. The home has an on-site lodge that is used to provide emergency support for children under the care of Suffolk County Council.

At the time of this inspection, four children were living at the home.

The registered manager left in December 2024. The current manager started in post in February 2025 following a period of managing in an interim capacity. The manager has submitted a complete application to register with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 May 2025

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

requires improvement to be good

How well children and young people are helped and protected

requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

requires improvement to be good

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.

Date of last inspection: 29 July 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
29/07/2024	Full	Good
05/07/2023	Full	Good
27/09/2022	Full	Good
16/02/2022	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Due to shortfalls relating to the help and protection of children and the leadership and management of the home, improvements are required before children receive a consistently good service. Shortfalls include allegations not always being shared promptly by staff or acted on immediately by leaders and managers, practice concerns not always being addressed with staff, physical intervention records not being clear, monitoring of physical interventions not being strong enough to identify potential concerns, ineffective staff responses to a medication error, and inconsistent supervision support for the new manager and staff. There are positive aspects to children's experiences and progress, but if not addressed, the issues outlined have the potential to significantly undermine this.

At the time of the inspection, two children were living in the main house, and one child was living in the lodge. During the inspection, a further child arrived to live in the main house.

Children experience well-planned moves into the home. Two of the children have lived in the home before, and one child requested to return when they could no longer live in their previous home. Before children move into the home, the managers meet with them, their current care providers and their social workers to share information and plan transitions.

Children's bedrooms are personalised. A child's bedroom was painted the colour of their choice before they moved in. Another child used spray paint to decorate their bedroom.

One child is due to move into supported accommodation. This child has lived at the home for two years. The home has supported this child in developing independence skills and assisted them in undertaking a positive pre-birth assessment when they were preparing to become a parent.

Feedback from professionals is consistently positive. Professionals feel that they are kept up to date and believe that staff are skilled and able to support children in crisis. One professional said that for their child, the home and staff were 'the constant calm ship along that choppy sea'.

Children have not always had full-time education provisions. Staff help children understand the importance of education and encourage healthy routines that support engagement. When children have been unable to attend school, the home has worked closely with the virtual school and education providers to create innovative plans for supporting children in returning to off-site education.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Children have made several allegations in relation to staff since the last inspection. Managers have not always received prompt information from staff, resulting in insufficient measures to ensure children's immediate safety. Once managers are made aware of allegations, they do not always promptly refer them to the relevant agencies, such as local authority designated officers. Leaders and managers were aware of most of the incidents, having carried out an internal review at the request of Ofsted. Another example was identified during this inspection. When investigations into allegations have identified staff practice concerns, these have not always been addressed during supervision sessions with staff.

On occasions, staff have held children to ensure their safety. Staff have received specific training for the needs of the individual children they care for. However, records of the use of restraint are not always clear, and staff have not always received a debrief following a restraint. On one occasion, a child made historical disclosures to staff in relation to previous abuse. Later that day, staff restrained the child in a lying-down position on their bed. Managers failed to recognise that restraining the child in this manner could have been traumatic due to their disclosures of past abuse.

There has been one medication error for a child since the last inspection. Over the course of 24 hours, the child received four incorrect, lower doses of medication. Managers and staff did not seek medical advice, believing that an underdose of medication could not cause harm. The child was informed about the error and told staff, 'No wonder I'm not feeling better yet.'

For one child, who has lived in the home since December 2024, there has been a significant reduction in the level of risk. This child is no longer misusing illegal substances, going missing from care, or displaying aggressive behaviour. They now have a part-time job, and they are engaging in education and therapeutic support. When asked about what had changed for this child, the child told their social worker that they now have a safe place to return to.

For one child, there has been significant concern in relation to specific risks. Numerous incidents have resulted in hospital admissions, and police have been regularly called to provide support. Leaders, managers and staff provided stability for this child during an extremely difficult time.

The home worked closely with a psychotherapist service when direct therapy was not available. Staff and managers were receptive to this advice and used it to improve their practice. This collaboration contributed to a significant decline in the number of incidents involving a child recently, resulting in the child becoming significantly safer.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

There have been multiple changes to the leadership and management structure of the home since the last inspection. The registered manager ceased the day-to-day running of the home in June 2024. Since then, they have cancelled their registration, and two interim managers have been appointed. One of these is now the permanent manager and has applied to register with Ofsted.

The manager has received regular supervision since January 2025. Before this, only two supervision sessions had been recorded since the last inspection in May 2024.

Staff have not received regular supervision, including during a period of significant challenges in terms of children's risks and changes in leadership and management. Additionally, when practice concerns arise, managers do not consistently address them appropriately during supervision.

Ofsted receives notification of any serious incidents that occur in the home. However, notifications have not always been received within the required time frame, and one did not contain relevant information in relation to an allegation against staff.

The manager's reviews of incidents, restraints and missing-from-home episodes are generally reflective, and they consider steps to prevent reoccurrence. However, there are several records that do not contain any management review. This limits the manager's ability to use monitoring and review processes to improve the quality of care offered in the home.

Staff are generally skilled and experienced. There is an exceptionally low turnover of staff. Most staff have a relevant level 3 qualification or above.

The manager's quality of care reviews are well written and contain a good level of analysis. They demonstrate that the manager has a good understanding of the needs of the children and the strengths and weaknesses of the service.

External monitoring reports are evaluative, and the manager responds positively to them, using the feedback from these reports to implement necessary improvements.

The manager follows safer recruitment processes and ensures that appropriate checks are carried out when agency staff are used. When possible, the same agency members of staff are used to ensure continuity for children.

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
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— 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; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies; that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(v)(vi)(vii)(b)) In particular, ensure that when children raise safeguarding concerns, these are reported to managers and the relevant authorities without delay and are appropriately explored and recorded.	8 May 2025
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 aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare.	12 June 2025

In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(f)(h)) In particular, managers must ensure that: reviews of restraints adequately consider how the restraint affects the child, taking into account the child's previous experiences; reviews of incidents, including restraints, identify when these are not clearly recorded; reviews all incidents, including instances of children going missing from the home, consider actions to prevent reoccurrence.	
The registered person must ensure that— within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes— a description of the measure and its duration; 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. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(iv)(b)(i)) In particular, ensure that: records of restraints identify the position children are held in during a restraint;	12 June 2025

staff take part in debriefs following incidents of restraint within regulatory time frames.	
The registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received into the children's home. In particular 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 to no other child. (Regulation 23 (1) (2)(b))	12 June 2025
The registered person must ensure that all employees— receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(b)) In particular, ensure that supervision is regular, used to address incidents of poor practice and to provide support to further improve practice.	12 June 2025
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious; there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. A notification made under this regulation— must include details of— the matter; any actions taken by the registered person as a result of the matter. (Regulation 40 (4)(b)(c)(e) (5)(a)(i)(iii))	12 June 2025

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that when there are questions or concerns about a child's medication, particularly if there has been a medication error, they approach an expert such as a general medical practitioner, community pharmacist or designated nurse for looked-after children. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.15)

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 IP1 2BX

Responsible individual: Glynn Smith

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Andrea Bounden, Social Care Inspector

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