

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 five female children aged between 11 and 17 years, who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 19 to 20 July 2017

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: 26 April 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection:

Two compliance notices were issued on 22 May 2017 in relation to recurring bullying and failure to address this. A monitoring visit took place on 9 June 2017 to assess the changes. The compliance notices were met.

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home requires improvement to be good because:

- There is a culture of bullying at the home that has reduced in intensity but continues.
- The risk assessments and children's safety plans contain information that is contradictory.
- The staff do not all benefit from regular supervisions with a line manager.
- One allegation made by a child has not been managed in adherence with the home's safeguarding policy.
- The children's views are sought, although feedback from their requests is not consistently provided. There are long, unexplained delays in the installation of broadband.
- Staff meetings are poorly attended and the meeting minutes are not distributed.

The children's home's strengths:

- The children's engagement and attendance in education has improved.
- The relationships between the staff and the children are good. These relationships benefit the children.
- The numbers of missing from home incidents and self-harm incidents are reducing.
- The quality of the children's day-to-day experiences has improved.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
26/04/2017	Full	Inadequate
08/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
21/04/2016	Full	Requires improvement
08/01/2016	Interim	Declined in effectiveness

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 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 are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(vii)) In particular, implement the allegations policy.	30/08/2017
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, and help each child to understand how to keep safe. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(i)(ii)) This is with particular regard to ensuring that risk assessments include up-to-date and relevant information.	30/08/2017
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 lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose, and 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 the care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(f)) This is with particular regard to reducing the number of	30/08/2017

incidents of bullying in the home.	
The registered person must ensure that all employees receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(a)(b))	30/08/2017

Recommendations

- Ensure that children are able to see the results of their views being listened to and acted upon. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.11)

This is with regard to giving feedback to children following discussions in residents' meetings.

- Enable any child who has been restrained to have an opportunity to express their feelings about their experience of the restraint as soon as is practicable. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.60)

Inspection judgements

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

The children's experiences at the home vary. The children say that relationships are improving but the tensions in the group are volatile. The children's risk assessments continue to lack pertinent information, and the safeguarding policy has not been followed in regard to reporting an allegation made by a child. Generally, the home has stabilised and all of the children are benefiting from education placements.

The children confidently share their views and opinions. All of the children actively participated in the inspection, sharing their experiences of living at the home. The children acknowledged that the group dynamics remain changeable, and they expressed a willingness to change these dynamics. This shows some self-awareness and an ability to be reflective.

The staff organise house meetings and encourage open dialogue. The children engage in the meetings and actively contribute their ideas. Requests are not always met. The children have had no internet for five months. Despite many promises to rectify this, the internet is still not working. The manager has not explained the ongoing delays to the children. This is frustrating for the children and does not provide a means to contact their friends outside the home or to research their homework properly.

Education attendance is positive and continues to improve. One child has enrolled in a new provision and her attendance over the first six weeks averages 80%. One child's attendance dropped during the exam period; however, she took some exams and has

secured a place at a further education college. Another child has achieved an award in art and has maintained 100% attendance. Consistent attendance is actively encouraged by the staff. A child has attended her leaving prom and celebrated the end of school with her peers. This was a positive and proper ending to her education.

Relationships between the staff and the children are positive. Building relationships with the staff helps the children to form their emotional resilience. The rapport with and trust in the staff has helped to reduce incidents of self-harm. Regular key-worker sessions enable the staff to address the incidents at the home with the children, and to explore the triggers to these incidents. Staff have arranged specialist mental health support and bereavement support, giving the children extra external support when needed. This has resulted in fewer incidents.

The staff encourage the children to undertake physical exercise. The staff have provided community sport opportunities to support the children's individual interests. The staff have recently taken over the cooking of meals. The children are extremely able cooks; however, the underlying tensions between children have made communal cooking problematic. The children enjoy being in the kitchen and helping the staff to prepare meals. Menus combine frozen meals with meals prepared from scratch. Fruit is readily available and the children prepare light snacks and bake cakes. The children excel at this, and the experiences help them to develop their independent living skills.

Two of the children smoke tobacco. The staff have offered some smoking cessation support. The children adhere to smoking in the designated smoking area. This is an improvement, and shows that they understand the health and safety rules of the home.

The children like the home; they have a sense of ownership and want to keep it looking nice. The interior is homely and comfortable, and the children value this and make full use of the communal rooms.

The staff actively support family contact and they work with the children's social workers towards family reunification and rebuilding relationships. Parents say that communication is adequate, they are always alerted by the staff to any concerns, and feel that they are part of their children's care. Parents also expressed their concerns about the negative dynamics between the children.

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

The relationships at the home continue to be volatile, and there are a number of reports of bullying. One child has been targeted by two of the other children, and there are some behaviours that have provoked the two children and exacerbated this targeting. The staff try to encourage better relationships. During the incidents of bullying, there have been no physical assaults and no damage to property. Name calling and threats of harm continue. The incidents have reduced in severity but occur regularly. Although these incidents are less extreme than previously, they can leave the children feeling isolated and low in mood.

The risk assessments are updated following incidents. One child's risk assessment shows conflicting information that refers to a safety plan while also detailing incidents that suggest that the safety plan is not working. This information is recorded side by side. This fails to provide a realistic assessment of risks for this child or good oversight of these documents.

The number of serious incidents in the home have reduced since the last inspection. The children are beginning to settle down and show an awareness of their actions and the effect that these actions have on others. The staff know the children well and understand their individual trigger points. Staff apply consequences that are thoughtful and help the children to learn from their behaviours. These consequences are individualised and the records reference the child's views. Physical intervention is seldom used but is proportionate. The staff do not always capture the children's views following a physical intervention. Therefore, the children may not always understand the rationale used to justify the intervention or the extent of their behaviours prior to this.

A child made an allegation about an external adult; this was reported by the child to the manager. The manager made the head of service and the multi-agency safeguarding hub aware of this. The actions taken by the manager do not comply with the home's allegations policy. There was no referral to the designated officer, and there are no records to reflect any of the actions taken. This could compromise a further investigation.

The children rarely go missing from the home. There are two short-duration incidents of the children going missing in the last three months. Clear records of these incidents show all of the required details, and that the return interviews have been completed. This is an improvement for the children involved in comparison to their previous patterns of going missing, and is not a current concern. There are no concerns about child sexual exploitation. The staff have good links with the local police who regularly visit the home.

There are no current concerns about fire and smoking at the home, following several previous incidents. The staff have been proactive in arranging informative visits and support from the fire service. These visits have been successful and incidents have stopped. The staff remain vigilant, and fire prevention equipment is serviced and checked. The children are involved in evacuation practice, ensuring that they know what to do in the event of a fire.

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

The home appointed a permanent manager in July 2017. The manager has been in post as an acting manager since February 2017. During the period between February and July 2017, the acting manager provided cover for the previous registered manager who was on long-term leave. The new manager is a qualified social worker and has ample experience in residential child care.

The last inspection raised a number of serious concerns in regard to bullying that were

detrimental to children's welfare. The manager has made a commitment to improve this culture and support the staff to implement changes at the home.

The staff have been through a long period without a manager, which had led to a lack of accountability. The manager works closely with the two deputy managers. The deputy managers know the children well and prioritise spending quality time with them at the start and end of each day. Their knowledge of the children keeps the management team aware of the day-to-day issues. The tensions between the children continue. Contrary to the aims of the home that are set out in the statement of purpose, there remains a culture of bullying. There are improvements in this area since the last inspection.

The team meetings are not attended well by the staff, and the minutes from these meetings are not always made available. Therefore, actions are not shared and the staff who did not attend are unaware of the decisions. This does not drive change or generate consistency of approach to children's care.

Most of the staff have received regular supervisions for their roles, but the two deputy managers have not. One of the deputy managers has had one supervision in six months, despite the level of concerns about the home. This was being completed by the head of service and has since been passed to the manager. The lack of supervision means that staff are not fully supported in their roles. The records of the other staff member's supervision show that practice issues are discussed and that there is a good focus on children's progress.

The external monitoring is working well. Questions are raised by the independent visitor and practice is reflected on. The required checks are made against the records and this safeguards the children. There is a renewed focus on management checks and a better structure is being developed to ensure that this continues.

The team includes a number of new staff who are growing in confidence, and building their knowledge of the children. The staff hold a relevant level 3 diploma, or they are working towards it. The staff are resilient and committed to their roles.

Relationships with professionals are generally positive. Social workers are generally positive about the care. They say that the relationships that the children have with staff are helpful. Parents are realistic and appreciate the positive outcomes while acknowledging that there are bullying incidents at the home.

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 difference 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 who 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: SC063110

Provision sub-type: Children's home

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

Responsible individual: Clifford James

Registered manager: Justin Fenn

Inspector

Deirdra Keating, social care inspector

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