

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 four children, aged from 12 to 17, at any one time. The home has an off-site bed which is used as an emergency placement for children under the care of Suffolk County Council.

The manager registered with Ofsted in September 2021.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

We last visited this setting on 3 November 2020 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 21 to 22 September 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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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: 6 March 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: Two compliance notices were served under regulation 12, the protection of children standard, and regulation 13, the leadership and management standard, following an assurance visit in September

2020. A subsequent monitoring visit assessed that the provider had met the steps set out in the notices.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/03/2020	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
20/06/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good
07/08/2018	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
04/04/2018	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

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

There are currently three children living at the home. Since the last inspection of the home, there have been five different managers. The new manager is experienced and has been in post since 12 April 2021. However, the lack of consistent management oversight has affected the quality of care provided by the staff. The frequency of changes has not promoted a sense of confidence among the staff or stability and security for the children.

The staff do not have a good understanding of how to develop children's independence and life skills. One child's independence plan did not cover all the work undertaken by staff. Targets that were identified were not all measurable or directly relevant to promoting independence. As a result, staff and records lack clarity on the child's skills and areas to focus on. This limits staff and managers' ability to fully advise social workers on critical planning decisions about the child's future.

Despite the staff being aware that one child smokes, this was not identified in her health plan. Consequently, the staff have failed to explore ways to support the child to reduce smoking and promote good health outcomes.

The quality of the physical environment of the home continues to require improvement. There are areas of worn flooring and carpeting and one of the sinks in the bathroom has mould. During the inspection, the manager discussed the plans for the home to be fully refurbished. However, until this happens, the lack of investment means that children do not benefit from living in a home that is comfortable and welcoming.

Children's progress in education has been mixed. One child attends education regularly, and the staff have supported her to become involved in the local drama group. Such engagement in community activities has developed the child's sense of confidence and self-esteem. For another child, staff have persisted to find her preferred college course. This has re-engaged her interest in learning and supported her attendance. However, one child has not engaged in any education for a prolonged period. She has therefore made little educational progress.

The manager recognises the importance of strong multi-agency relationships. This has enabled him to positively challenge social work teams and ensure that children access assessments and the specialist support available to them.

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

The staff have struggled to manage one child's significant missing-from-home episodes. Despite weekly multi-agency professionals' meetings, at the time of the inspection, the child had not returned to the home. Immediate safety planning to protect the child has been put in place. However, the manager has failed to ensure that this is recorded in the child's risk assessment and behaviour support plan. Staff have therefore not been clear about what is expected of them and the specific actions that they need to take to assess her safety.

The other children's risk assessment and behaviour support plans do not always have the necessary detail. For example, there is limited detail of the warning signs of specific behaviours or what could trigger an incident. This means that the staff are not fully aware of how best to keep children safe.

Since the assurance visit, there have been several incidents of bullying and antagonistic behaviours between children. Although this has been recognised by the staff, there has been a failure to provide the children with opportunities to explore the issue as a group. The children have therefore not benefited from learning together to find positive ways to interact.

Staff use praise and reward to support the children. There is, however, an over-reliance on restricting children's use of electronic devices as a penalty for poor behaviour. The manager has not provided the staff with alternative options to help children to change behaviours. This means that children are not given the opportunity to be educated about unwanted behaviour or supported to reflect on how they can behave differently.

The manager deals with allegations thoroughly and effectively. He works closely with senior management, social workers and the designated officer to ensure that there is a multi-agency plan. This collaborative approach helps to keep the children safe.

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

The high turnover of managers in a relatively short period resulted in a lack of organisation and clear systems. This has, at times, led to actions being missed and not followed through. For example, the previous manager had not developed a system for managing and recording complaints. This meant that for one child the offer of mediation was never monitored and was not recorded to have happened. Consequently, the child's views and the outcome did not inform future practice.

The recording and monitoring of children's records requires improvement. The objectives in children's plans have not been specific or measurable and lack clear timescales. This has led to some of the plans not being reflective and responsive to all the children's changing needs.

The staff do not always understand how key-work sessions with the children link to meeting their identified needs. Although training has continued during the COVID-19 pandemic, not all staff have been able to undertake specialist training to meet the

children's individual needs. Consequently, some staff have not always felt confident in supporting the children's complex behaviours related to their mental health and self-harm.

The manager and the senior management team are aware of the shortfalls identified at this inspection and have prioritised new systems in the home to develop practice.

The manager has recognised the importance of coaching and supporting the staff to develop their skills, knowledge and confidence. He has encouraged senior staff to progress their unique skills and strengths through added responsibilities.

A new electronic case management system has been implemented. This allows for an organised recording system that supports staff to monitor and keep on top of tasks and regularly review children's care plans. The manager is taking steps to use this system to provide performance data to support better care planning decisions. These changes have been welcomed by staff, who feel motivated and supported by the manager to embed these changes to drive improvements.

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 quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— understand and apply the home's statement of purpose; ensure that staff— help each child to develop resilience and skills that prepare the child to return home, to live in a new placement or to live independently as an adult. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(vi)) In particular, ensure that staff have a clear understanding of, and plan for, developing children's independence skills.	25 October 2021
The health and well-being standard is that— the health and well-being needs of children are met; children receive advice, services and support in relation to their health and well-being; and children are helped to lead healthy lifestyles. (Regulation 10 (1)(a)(b)(c)) In particular, ensure that all the children who smoke are identified and their needs in relation to smoking are addressed in their health plans.	25 October 2021

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; manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iv)) In particular, ensure that risk assessments are up to date and accurate and provide clear details of what the risks are. Plans should provide effective risk-reduction strategies to keep children safe from harm and should be understood and implemented by all staff. In addition, ensure that all staff manage harmful group behaviour by supporting the children to understand bullying behaviours and helping them to develop their ability to interact positively with one another.	25 October 2021
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. 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; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(h))	25 October 2021

Subject to paragraph (6), the registered person must establish a procedure for considering complaints made by or on behalf of children. The registered person must ensure that a record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of any investigation. (Regulation 39 (1)(3))	25 October 2021
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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, replace the stained carpets upstairs and remove the mould around the sink in the bathroom. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that any sanctions used to address poor behaviour are restorative in nature to help children recognise the impact of their behaviour on themselves, other children, the staff caring for them and the wider community. In some cases, it will be important for children to make reparation in some form to anyone hurt by their behaviour and the staff in the home should be skilled to support the child to understand this and carry it out. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.38)
- The registered person should ensure that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs and should understand the role that they play in the training and development of staff. Specifically, ensure that all staff have training in understanding and managing mental health and self-harm. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11)
- The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Specifically, ensure that all staff detail work undertaken in key-work sessions and link this back to the children's relevant plans. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

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: Clifford James

Registered manager: Tobias Hall

Inspector

Leemya McKeown, Social Care Inspector

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