

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. Four children were living at the home at the time of this inspection.

The manager registered with Ofsted on 29 January 2024. He holds a relevant level 5 qualification.

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 July 2024

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: 5 July 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/07/2023	Full	Good
27/09/2022	Full	Good
16/02/2022	Interim	Improved effectiveness
21/09/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Three of the four children were spoken with during the inspection. One child was spending time with their family outside of the home during both inspection days.

Children receive a good standard of care. Staff are warm and caring to the children. Professionals are positive about the care that staff provide to children. The manager has good oversight of the home and staff say that they feel well supported.

The home is well maintained and children's bedrooms are decorated to reflect their tastes and interests. One child has recently experienced a bereavement. Staff have bought the child a bench and a plaque to commemorate their parent and made a special area in the garden for the child to sit and remember them.

Children make good progress and enjoy strong relationships with the staff who care for them. One child's social worker said that this is the most settled that their child has been for a long time. She said that her child's progress is underpinned by the strength of relationships that they experience with staff.

The manager understands the importance of education for children in his care. When children are not accessing education, he advocates for a school place for them or a bespoke education package. The head of the virtual school said that staff work tirelessly to support children and this has resulted in increased attendance for one child.

Staff show an interest in children's likes and dislikes. This helps staff to plan varied and meaningful activities with children. Children have been supported to attend a motocross club and go for bike rides with staff. One child spoke of how they get to enjoy an ice cream after a walk on the beach with staff.

Children are supported to maintain meaningful and safe relationships with their families and friends. When children leave the home, staff keep their relationships with them. Staff's continued support of children after they leave the home helps to build relational resilience as children move into adulthood and towards independence.

All doors to the home are accessed through an electronic fob. This limits children's access to areas such as the laundry and a pantry area. Additionally, children are not able to access the kitchen and downstairs areas freely at night as they are locked. Children have to ask for a towel when they do not have a clean one as the towels are locked in the staff bedroom. This limits children's freedom and dignity and is institutional in feel.

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

Children feel safe. Social workers say that children are safer since living at the home. Children can identify a trusted adult to talk with about any concerns they may have and they know how to complain.

The head of care visits the children monthly and spends time with them. This is an additional safeguard and ensures that senior managers retain a consistent oversight of children.

Staff know the children well. They speak of children with care and have a good understanding of their vulnerabilities and strengths. Consequently, children's individual risk assessments are detailed and updated regularly.

There has been one physical intervention since the last inspection. Staff look beyond the children's behaviour. With the help of a clinical psychologist, they try to understand and empathise with how the children are feeling. This helps staff to meet the children's attachment needs.

Staff are proactive when children are missing from the home or leave the home without agreement. They search for children and work tenaciously with police and social workers. Staff advocate for children to have return home interviews. Staff welcome the children back warmly. However, the timescales for staff to report children as missing are not clear. While this has not affected the children's safety, it does have the potential to cause staff some confusion at a time when they require specific timescales and oversight.

The home's safeguarding policy clearly outlines the procedure for escalating child protection concerns to the relevant professionals. However, on one occasion, the manager failed to report allegations to the local authority designated officer (LADO). The manager has spoken with the child's social worker. But the delay in referring to LADO reduces oversight and could leave a child at risk of harm, especially as the member of staff worked in the home after the allegation was made.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager is a tenacious advocate for the children in his care. He is supported by a knowledgeable and caring deputy manager. They have established a professional working relationship which models positive practice to their staff. Staff say that the management team is approachable and available. All staff spoken with said that they enjoy working at the home and are well supported.

The manager has a good relationship with the children, and he knows what is important to them. The children's guide is child-centred and co-authored by a child, who has since left the home.

Staff receive regular and effective supervision that is further enhanced by regular team meetings and reflective space in clinical consultations. This helps staff to feel fully supported in their roles and with their continual professional development. Furthermore, new staff are motivated throughout the induction and probation process. This gives staff a sense of being appreciated and valued. Consequently, staff morale appears high.

Staff understand the risks present in the local community. The manager identifies local risks and consults with services local to the home to reduce these risks.

The manager ensures that staff are suitable by following safer recruitment processes. He takes steps to ensure that there are sufficient skilled staff supporting the children.

The manager has developed good relationships with other professionals. Social workers say that the manager works in partnership with them. They describe the levels of communication as very good, with no delay in the reporting of any incidents. All staff are up to date with the organisation's mandatory training. Since the last inspection, the manager has supported one member of staff to gain their level 3 qualification. However, one member of staff is still outside of timescales. The recommendation from the previous inspection has been re-stated.

Staff speak to the children about what they are worried about. Staff have completed some sensitive work with children around grief and children's identities. But the language used to record these is not consistently written in a child-friendly way. This can blame children for their own vulnerability. This is not in line with the therapeutic ethos in the home's statement of purpose.

The manager has met all three requirements from the previous inspection and three of four of the recommendations.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person 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— take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(vi)) In particular, ensure that allegations against staff are responded to and shared with the appropriate agencies such as the local authority designated officer.	9 August 2024
The registered person must ensure that — the privacy of children is appropriately protected; children can access all appropriate areas of the children's home's premises; and any limitation placed on a child's privacy or access to any area of the home's premises is — necessary and proportionate; kept under review and, if necessary, revised; and allows children as much freedom as is possible when balanced against the need to protect them and keep them safe. (Regulation 21 (a)(b)(c)(ii)(iii)(iv))	2 September 2024

Recommendations

- 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 specify the procedures to be followed when a child is missing from care or away from the home without permission. In particular, ensure that there are clear written timescales so that staff know when to call the police. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.28)
- The registered person should oversee the welfare of the children in their care through observation and engagement with the home's staff. In particular ensure consistent management monitoring and oversight of staff records and children's meetings. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.23)
- Any home using monitoring equipment should have a written policy describing how this will support the safeguarding and well-being of those living and working in the home in accordance with regulation 24. In particular, the manager should be clear around their rationale for using door alarms in the children's bedrooms and review this regularly. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 16, paragraph 3.16)
- The registered person should ensure that records relating to children are written in child-friendly language and that language used to describe children is appropriate. ('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: Babergh District Council, Endeavour House, Russell Road, Ipswich IP1 2BX

Responsible individual: Glynn Smith

Registered manager: Wayne Jordan

Inspectors

Majella Russell, Social Care Inspector
Saeeda Fatima, Social Care Inspector

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