

SC063814

Registered provider: Break

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned by a registered charity. It provides care and accommodation for up to four children aged between seven and 17 years who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 13 to 14 December 2017

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers good

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 15 December 2016

Overall judgement at last inspection: Good

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- The children benefit from support provided by staff who are interested in and passionate about them.

- Staff and managers have a good understanding of the children's past, their present and the plan for their future.
- There are good relationships between the staff and the children.
- The children are making progress because of the support that they receive. This includes progress in their education, health and emotional development.
- An established, consistent staff team is well led by a respected and child-focused management team.
- The staff have access to good support and training.
- Feedback from external professionals about the quality of care is consistently very good.
- The staff involve children in decision-making. This involvement includes creative engagement in whole team meetings.
- The children participate in a range of leisure activities, including new and exciting experiences.
- Risk and behaviour management is generally effective. The home has strong and beneficial relationships with local mental health providers.

The children's home's areas for development:

- On two occasions the actions taken by staff in response to incidents did not fully consider the risks to children.
- The home's own care plans are out of date and lack clarity regarding contact arrangements for children.
- The staff and managers do not receive or request copies of return home interviews. This means that they are potentially missing pertinent information to inform planning and risk assessment.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
15/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
15/12/2016	Full	Good
21/03/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
21/10/2015	Full	Good

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 have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm. (Regulation 12(1)(2)(a)(iii))	27/12/2017
The care planning standard is that children receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that each child's relevant plans are followed. (Regulation 14(1)(a)(b)(2)(c)) This is with particular regard to ensuring that the plans are up to date and accurately reflect contact arrangements.	27/12/2017

Recommendations

- Ensure that information provided by return home interviews is taken into account when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect each child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The response to risk in the vast majority of instances is good. However, on two occasions the response to known risks has not been strong enough. Despite this, there are many strengths and examples of good and very good practice at the home. Consequently, despite a judgement of requires improvement for help and protection, the overall judgement of the experiences and progress of children living at the home is good. This judgement reflects the positive outcomes for children.

The staff buy into the ethos of the home. They treat the children with dignity and respect. The staff speak passionately and empathetically about the needs of the children. The staff are invested in the children and, in turn, the children develop a sense of belonging at the home. A social worker said, 'I think they [staff] are very good with the children. They see them as individuals. They spend a lot of time with the children.' As a result, there are very good relationships between the children and the staff.

The children make good progress because of these relationships. Children who have previously been out of education for lengthy periods have returned to school. A teacher said, 'They [staff] are so good. They are on the ball. They constantly keep in contact with us so we know what is happening. They are always available if we need to talk to them. Their communication is 100%. I wish all of our children looked after were there. They are a really good bunch of people.' Another teacher said, 'The home has been very supportive with [child]. They bring him and pick him up. They have stayed with him [at school]. There is always someone who is there. They are fully supportive. They come along to the meetings. They know him brilliantly well.'

The children make progress with their health. They join gyms and participate in healthy activities. They also make progress with their emotional health. A mental health professional spoke passionately about the progress that the children are making: '[Child] has made a massive amount of progress.'

The staff encourage the children to influence day-to-day decision-making at the home. The staff employ a creative approach to whole team meetings, which involve children and staff meeting together for a number of hours, undertaking learning activities together. These sessions are led by the children.

The can-do approach of the staff and managers means that children are having new and exciting experiences. The staff ensure that the children enjoy a range of community-based activities. The children feel part of the local community. They have access to a wide range of leisure activities, including holidays abroad. For some children, this is the first time they have been on a foreign holiday.

The children are able to safely develop their independence skills because of the support that they receive. A social work manager said, 'They [staff] keep the children safe. They give them aspirations.' A social worker said, 'It was not safe for her [child] to go out on her own when she arrived. It is now safe.' Children develop some of the skills that they will need as they approach adulthood.

Introductions to the home are handled well. A child talked about how she was supported to settle quickly into the home, 'The adults are really nice, understanding and supportive. Not judgemental. They are very easy to talk to, and they want to talk to you. They want you to talk to them.' This welcoming approach helps children to adjust to living at the home.

Leaders and managers develop child-centred care plans. These plans generally take into account the local authority care plan for the child. However, one child's plan has not

been updated in a timely way to reflect changes to contact arrangements. There was a general lack of clarity regarding contact arrangements in the records and across the staff team. While no contact errors have occurred, this lack of clarity has the potential to cause distress and compromise children's well-being.

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

The home has experienced a turbulent time over recent months, resulting in the staff dealing with a large number of difficult incidents. In two of these incidents, the staff did not act in a way that safeguarded the children involved effectively. The action taken by staff meant that children were placed at risk. While these risks did not result in actual harm, the poor decision-making could have resulted in safeguarding issues. The practice was not recognised as an issue by the managers until it came to the attention of Ofsted. As a result, while there are many examples of good, strong and effective practice, these specific shortcomings mean that how well children are helped and protected requires improvement to be good.

When children go missing from the home, the staff actively look for them. The children usually return after a short time. The staff are alert to making assumptions that the duration of a missing-from-home incident is the primary indication of the level of risk involved. When the children return, the staff request return interviews from the local authority. However, when return home interviews occur, the staff do not request the records of these. As a result, the staff are missing out on potentially relevant information that could inform the way in which the staff manage the likelihood of and risk associated with children going missing.

The staff work hard to support children to manage their behaviour. When this is not successful, the staff intervene. When physical interventions are used, they are minimal and proportionate to the behaviour.

Leaders and managers encourage positive behaviour. They work restoratively with children to support this. The police are only involved when necessary, and children are not criminalised. A health professional commented:

They [staff] have the right balance between giving them [children] a positive experience of being cared for and keeping them safe with really clear, really consistent boundaries. It is a really caring and nurturing environment. The children do not feel judged, or penalised. There is always a real focus on helping the children to repair after an incident. They help the children learn how to repair relationships after an incident.

As a result, the children have greater investment in taking personal responsibility for their behaviour.

The staff and managers work well to manage bullying behaviours. When bullying or discriminatory behaviour occurs, the staff intervene. A social work team manager said,

'They [staff] had a plan in place that reduced the risk. They were very honest about it. They were brilliant. This was managed really well.'

There is a proportionate response to the risks associated with the internet. This means that staff work with the children to increase their understanding of how to stay safe online. This approach allows children to have appropriate internet access.

The staff understand how to raise concerns about colleagues and managers. Safe-recruitment checks take place. Combined, these factors lessen the likelihood of unsuitable people gaining or maintaining employment at the home.

The staff have an up-to-date knowledge of the children's risk assessments. They are aware of recent changes to the risk assessments and have a good understanding of the children's histories and historic concerns. This insight helps the staff to understand the children's triggers and needs.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager has been in post since 2007. She has relevant qualifications and experience for the role. She is supported by an experienced deputy manager. Both are held in high regard by the staff whom they manage and the professionals with whom they work. The management team has high expectation of the service and these values are shared by the staff.

There are sufficient numbers of experienced, well-trained staff on each shift. A health professional stated, 'The approach is really consistent. The children do not get confused. The approach and the boundaries are the same, and clear to children.' This means that children experience consistent care from staff who know them well, understand their needs and have the skills and time to support them effectively.

Leaders and managers have a comprehensive knowledge of the children. Decisions about children being placed in the home are risk assessed. These risk assessments consider the needs of the other children already living at the home, which reduces the risk of poor matching decisions. The management team is proactive at attempting to challenge placing authorities when children are not settling. Managers escalate these concerns when necessary.

Generally effective monitoring systems are in place. An independent person visits the home each month. These visits provide challenge and scrutiny, and assist the management team to understand the home's strengths and weaknesses.

The staff have access to a wide range of training courses relevant to the needs of the children. The staff receive regular and supportive supervisions. They say that their supervision is beneficial, and helps them to reflect on practice and manage the emotions that the role triggers.

The home has strong and effective relationships with external professionals. There are

very strong relationships with local mental health providers. Feedback from professionals highlights the consistent collaborative approach of the staff team. Each member of staff takes pride in their work. Managers empower staff with additional responsibilities, which the staff translate into creative practice.

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 differences 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 whom 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: SC063814

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Break

Registered provider address: Spar Road, Norwich NR6 6BX

Responsible individual: Hilary Richards

Registered manager: Janet North

Inspector

Ashley Hinson, social care inspector

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