

SC373941

Registered provider: East Sussex County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home provides care and accommodation for up to four children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home is operated by a local authority.

Inspection dates: 1 to 2 June 2017

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

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

Date of last inspection: 12 December 2016

Overall judgement at last inspection: Sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- Managers and staff have created a culture of empathy, compassion and respect for young people.

- Staff provide nurturing, encouraging and thoughtful individualised support for young people. Consequently, young people build positive relationships with staff and develop a sense of stability, protection and trust in the adults who care for them.
- The recently introduced therapeutic approach, with ongoing support for staff from a child and adolescent psychotherapist, is benefiting young people. Staff are implementing effective strategies to help young people, with significant improvement in their behaviour and emotional well-being.
- Managers and staff work extremely effectively with other professionals and agencies such as the virtual school, the child and adolescent mental health service and external safeguarding agencies.
- The registered manager is focused on developing the home and improving the experience of young people living there. Increased staffing levels and proposals to improve recruitment practice demonstrate a commitment to help young people achieve their full potential.

The children's home's areas for development:

- There are no requirements or recommendations.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/12/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
20/07/2016	Full	Good
04/03/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
09/09/2015	Full	Requires improvement

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

All young people are making progress and benefiting from their experience of living at the home. They are responding to the nurturing care provided by staff who tailor support strategies to meet young people's individual needs. One young person is settled and thriving, while other young people have made real progress resulting in plans for them to return to live with their families.

Education has a high priority. Staff demonstrate a willingness to work with school staff. When difficulties arise and young people refuse to go to school, staff remain aspirational, work very effectively with the virtual school and are proactive in seeking out alternative education opportunities. The head of the virtual school stated that staff are 'absolutely fantastic in supporting the virtual school. For one young person, there has been phenomenal working with the young person's school and there is definitely a team around the child.' With this level of support, young people have opportunities to succeed and fulfil their potential.

Staff pay close attention to young people's specific health needs. Staff liaise with the looked after children nurse to obtain guidance and ensure that young people are healthy. Effective partnership working with a child and adolescent psychotherapist ensures that young people have support to improve their emotional and psychological well-being. Young people are benefiting from the commitment of staff to implementing a recently introduced therapeutic approach in understanding young people's behaviour. Consequently, some young people are developing self-confidence and being more assertive and less anxious in social situations. Other young people are showing improvement in their behaviour, are more able to put forward their views and their language is more appropriate. A social worker commented that, 'Staff are skilled in drawing out young people's good side.'

Young people have opportunities to participate in activities and pursue their individual interests. Staff try hard to ensure that young people are appropriately engaged and active while being mindful of their developmental needs and their progress towards independence.

Young people's views are important to staff. Staff listen and respond to their suggestions and opinions so that young people feel valued and respected. One young person initiated an informal discussion with a manager and staff about the possibility of having a hamster as a pet. Her request was treated with sensitivity and taken seriously. Frequent key work sessions provide young people with opportunities to express their views individually. Records demonstrate that the content of these sessions is linked to sections of young people's care plans so that they receive personalised care to promote their development and well-being. Young people are aware of the complaints procedure and use it as a way of making their views known.

As young people develop into young adults they receive appropriate support to build their independence skills. Staff support them at a pace and level that develops their confidence and that is sensitive to their individual needs. Some young people are making huge strides in walking to the shop and home from school without staff or spending a

day at a friend's house without staff support.

Staff work positively and proactively with families to enable young people to maintain positive and meaningful relationships.

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

Encouraging, warm relationships between staff and young people are central to practice within the home. Through individualised support from thoughtful and consistent staff, young people develop a sense of stability, protection and trust in the adults who care for them. Routines and boundaries help young people to develop a sense of emotional stability. From their starting points, young people make significant progress. An independent reviewing officer stated that one young person 'is flourishing and making excellent progress, with considerable improvement in self-confidence'. Other young people are making important steps towards returning to live with their families.

Staff identify and understand the specific needs of each young person. Comprehensive care plans, which are regularly updated, guide staff to provide targeted, personalised support. Current individualised risk assessments demonstrate that staff fully understand the risks associated with each young person. Clear strategies guide staff in providing effective interventions and appropriate measures to protect young people and advance their development. The involvement of a child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) psychotherapist in team meetings provides valuable support for staff to implement effective approaches to help and protect young people. The CAMHS psychotherapist commented that managers 'encourage team discussion, problem solving and a client-centred approach to their work which is underpinned by a wish to take a therapeutic approach and ensure trauma and resulting attachment difficulties of the young people are understood'.

Through exploring the meaning of young people's behaviour in the context of their past experiences, staff understand and respond appropriately to young people's emotional needs. Despite some challenging behaviour from young people, there have been no occasions when staff have used physical intervention to manage their behaviour. As trusting relationships develop between young people and staff, young people are able to accept the support that staff offer when young people are in a high state of anxiety and distress.

Staff respond effectively when young people leave the home without permission, applying agreed procedures to safeguard them and ensure their safe return. Return interviews occur when the police have categorised the incident as missing. The registered manager attends the local safeguarding hub where young people who are raising concerns in relation to their high-risk behaviour are discussed in a multi-disciplinary forum. This proactive approach ensures that all safeguarding measures are considered to protect young people.

Thorough recruitment processes are in place to protect young people from unsuitable adults working with them. All checks on prospective employees are undertaken before they start work at the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

A suitably experienced registered manager has been in post since May 2015. He is currently undertaking a level 5 diploma in leadership and management for residential childcare. Supported by an experienced and committed deputy, he provides valuable support and guidance for the staff team. He has an in-depth understanding of the needs of young people living at the home and the specific support necessary for them to make progress. Managers are accessible to staff through their 'open door' approach, enabling staff to obtain prompt advice and guidance. Young people are also welcomed by managers with good humour and sensitivity. Positive relationships based on mutual respect and understanding are at the heart of the ethos of the home.

The registered manager clearly recognises areas for developing the home. With the support of a dedicated operations manager, the number of members of staff has been increased to provide the level of intensive, stable and consistent support that young people with complex needs require. Recruitment practice is currently under review, with a proposal to focus more on the core values, personal motivation and emotional resilience of applicants. The aim is to ensure that young people benefit from adults who are committed to helping young people achieve their full potential and to upholding safeguarding standards while creating a warm and nurturing environment.

Staff receive a comprehensive induction and beneficial further training. A recent training programme in therapeutic parenting is having a positive effect on staff's understanding of young people's behaviour and their approach in providing support for young people with complex and often challenging behaviour. A member of staff described this training as 'amazing' and that it is having a 'real impact on my work'. The attendance of a CAMHS psychotherapist at team meetings helps to embed the practice of therapeutic parenting and supports staff to think about and implement individualised strategies to meet young people's needs. The CAMHS psychotherapist stated that she is impressed with 'the depth of reflection and thoughtfulness' of the staff. She added, 'There is a clear wish for staff to try to understand the young people they are supporting and there is a culture of empathy, compassion and respect for them, despite the challenges they are faced with.' Staff receive regular and reflective supervision focusing on the needs of young people, including matters affecting young people's safety and well-being.

Managers and staff work extremely effectively with other professionals and agencies to promote positive outcomes for young people. The head of the virtual school commented that the home is 'brilliant' in partnership working to improve educational outcomes for young people. She stated that staff have an aspirational attitude, high expectations for young people and a challenging approach to explore alternatives when education provision is not meeting young people's needs. Close liaison with social workers, the youth offending service, independent reviewing officers and CAMHS ensures that young people receive the specialist support that they need. The registered manager is proactive in challenging decisions which are not seen to be in the best interests of young people.

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: SC373941

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: East Sussex County Council

Registered provider address: County Hall, St Anne's Crescent, Lewes, East Sussex
BN7 1UE

Responsible individual: Elizabeth Rugg

Registered manager: Ian Williams

Inspector(s)

Janet Hunnam: social care inspector

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