

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	09/09/2015
Unique reference number	SC373941
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	East Sussex County Council
Registered person address	County Hall, St. Annes Crescent, LEWES, East Sussex, BN7 1UE

Responsible individual	Elizabeth Rugg
Registered manager	
Inspector	Anna Williams

Inspection date	09/09/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Requires improvement
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.	
how well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Inadequate

SC373941

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is requires improvement because:

- The leadership and management of this service is inadequate. The home has been without a Registered Manager for over 26 weeks. A new manager commenced in post in May 2015. A complete Registered Manager's application has yet to be received by Ofsted.
- Management monitoring systems are weak. They do not identify weaknesses within risk management and care planning. Missing from home episodes are not routinely evaluated in order to capture learning. Restraint records do not meet regulatory requirements, which management oversight had failed to identify.
- Risk assessments and care plans continue to be a weakness. A previous requirement has not been met. These key documents still do not contain detailed information about actual risks and definite strategies for staff to follow.
- Staffing levels within the home do not reflect the level of supervision and support which is identified as being needed within children's care plans and risk assessments. Key working sessions are reduced currently due to pressures on staffing and the levels of individual supervision required to meet assessed needs.
- There are weaknesses in the supervision, appraisal and induction of staff. The quality and content of supervision is variable. Appraisal processes do not consider the views of children about staff who work with them. Induction of agency staff is limited to a verbal handover.
- There is not always a first aider on every shift which is a regulatory requirement. An action identified within the fire risk assessment has not been actioned for some years.
- Agency staff recruitment records do not demonstrate how these staff are safe and suitable to be working within the children's home.
- The home was judged 'adequate' in August 2014. Since then it has not shown sufficient improvement and does not yet provide children with an overall good standard of care.

The children's home strengths

- Educational success is celebrated by staff who take a strong interest in supporting children academically. Children make good progress from their starting points educationally. Staff work effectively in partnership with learning establishments and the virtual schools team.
- Children report that they feel safe living at the home and are protected by staff from being bullied.
- Children's health needs are fully met. They have access to child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) and regularly engage. Their physical health needs are identified and met through regular appointments and sound on-going support.

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

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets 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 with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
6: The quality and purpose of care standard: In order to meet the quality and purpose standard, with particular reference to key working, the registered person must ensure that staff: (2) (b) (iv) provide personalised care that meets each child's needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking account of the child's background	04/12/2015
12: The protection of children standard: In order to meet the protection of children standard, the registered person must ensure that staff: (2) (a) (i) 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; (b) that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm; (d) that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health	04/12/2015
13: The leadership and management standard: In order to meet the leadership and management standard, the registered person must:	04/12/2015

(2) (h) use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home	
The registered person must ensure that at all times, at least one person on duty at the home has a suitable first aid qualification. (Regulation 31(2)(a))	04/12/2015
The registered person may only, if individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). (3) The requirements are that— (a) the individual is of integrity and good character; (b) the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform; (c) the individual is mentally and physically fit for the purposes of the work that the individual is to perform; and (d) full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32(2)(b)(3)(a-d))	04/12/2015
The registered person must ensure that all employees receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33(4)(a))	04/12/2015
The registered person must ensure that within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes: (iv) a description of the measure and its duration; (v) details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure; (viii) a description of any injury to the child or any other person, and any medical treatment administered, as a result of the measure; (b) within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")— (i) has spoken to the user about the measure; and (c) within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35(3)(a)(iv)(v)(viii)(b)(i)(c))	04/12/2015

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

Ensure an evaluation of missing incidents is undertaken to identify any gaps in training, skills or knowledge of staff and to record and retain what worked well using this to inform the review of quality of care. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 46, paragraph 9.31)

Ensure all relief staff have any induction necessary before they commence work in the home. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 54, paragraph 10.16)

Ensure staff appraisals take into account, where reasonable and practical, the views of children in the home's care. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 61, paragraph 13.5)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This children's home provides care and accommodation for up to four children with emotional and behavioural needs. This home is managed and run by a local authority.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
29/01/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
29/08/2014	Full	Adequate
23/01/2014	Interim	Good progress
28/10/2013	Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Requires improvement
Children say they feel safe. Comments from children include 'staff help protect me from bullying'. 'It feels like I am part of a big family'. Children are helped to understand their backgrounds and histories through basic life story work facilitated by staff. A Social Worker commented that staff 'are happy to assist in carrying on the message of why the child is looked after, what the care plan is and promoting contact to promote the child's identity and cultural background.' Staff demonstrate a strong commitment to supporting each child with their educational needs supported by a strong 'Virtual Head'. Children's academic progress is openly praised through attendance at school events such as open evenings. Staff provide practical support when young people move on to college. This demonstrates to children that staff are interested in their achievements and school work. As a result, children make good progress from their individual starting points. A child's school report notes '[child] has made good progress socially and academically and it has been a pleasure to witness the transformation that [child] has made particularly in literacy, this has given [child] greater confidence in all aspects of their school life'. A wide variety of leisure activities is on offer to children, who engage in these regularly. A recent holiday is recorded vividly through words and photos. This gives children a detailed and fun record of their summer break to reflect on now and in the future. Staff recently recreated a prom night to celebrate the end of the school year. Children take part in opportunities to try new sports and clubs. These include fencing, street dance, and horse riding. This helps children discover new talents and interests. An Independent Reviewing Officer reflected that one child now has a wider friendship group and improved social skills since moving to this home. Links with local health agencies are strong. Sexual health nurses visit the home to offer regular advice and guidance. Staff thoughtfully prepared a child to have extensive dental work, which successfully took place. Guidance from a dietician was sought for one child and advice followed accordingly. Children benefit from access to child adolescent mental health service (CAMHS), including weekly attendance by some children to support with addressing past trauma. As a result of this intervention, some children now manage their emotions and anger more positively. Contact arrangements are suitably facilitated and supervised by staff. This helps children maintain attachments with those important to them. Independent living	

skills are learnt through completing simple domestic tasks. For example, children learn how to bake and keep their bedrooms clean and tidy. Young people who leave the home continue to receive support from staff through a structured outreach programme. These systems successfully prepare children and young people for the next stages in their life.

A new format for key working sessions is in place following a previous recommendation. This guides staff to record clearly any actions which need to be taken as a result of the meeting. While examples of good quality recording of keyworker sessions were evident this was not consistent in the level of recording or the use of the document. Due to current staffing levels in the home, planned one to one time with children is not occurring on a regular basis. Staff report that they prioritise the supervision of children during day to day shifts. Therefore opportunities for key workers and other staff to undertake structured sessions, in line with children's care plans, are missed.

The breadth of weaknesses across the management and organisation impact on children's overall experiences. In particular, poor staff oversight and continuing shortfalls in relation to risk assessments and care plans affects children's experiences.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
Comprehensive entries within the home's safeguarding log record most safeguarding matters. This provides the manager a central reference point to assist in identifying patterns within behaviours or incidents. Allegations or suspicions of harm are shared with relevant partner agencies, including Ofsted, promptly. Although strategy discussions take place to consider multi-agency concerns following any allegations against staff members or peers, in-house strategies are not robustly reviewed as a result. Children engage well with specialist workers who provide regular sessions about how to keep themselves safe. A Social Worker describes the home as 'a caring, nurturing environment which enables the child to settle and feel safe'. A requirement set at the previous inspection relating to risk assessments and care plans has not been met. Action taken by leaders and managers has led to children's risk assessments and care plans being more personalised and updated regularly. However, the detail within these documents remains variable. For example, risk assessments contain 'suggested' strategies for intervention. One risk assessment states 'all young people are to be closely supervised at all times if possible'. This does not provide staff with clear direction on what the level of 'close supervision should be and whether it is actually necessary. A care plan states that	

one child should have 'intensive 1:1 staff supervision at all times'. This also lacks clarity. Moreover, s, staffing levels do not demonstrate how this is provided in practice. Staff recognise that, in accordance with care plans and risk assessments, the supervision of children should be high. Staff reflect that they 'do their best' within the actual staffing levels available.

Some staff who work in the home, including the new independent visitor, are employed via an agency contract. The contractual obligation is with the individual agency to follow safe recruitment practice. The local authority does not sample a proportion of agency staff recruitment files to evaluate the quality of such arrangements. This does not demonstrate robust checking of contractual measures to ensure staff working in the home are safe and suitable. Agency staff identification is not routinely checked when they arrive. This is not safe practice and does not provide additional safeguards for children.

Staff talk to children about the dangers of going missing. For one child, this strategy, combined with incentive schemes, has significantly reduced the number of missing episodes from the home. For example, during the whole summer holidays they did not go missing. When a child is missing, staff search the local areas and inform relevant agencies. Children are suitably welcomed back and supported upon their return. Feedback from the police missing person's team is positive. They confirm that staff follow agreed local procedures and regular liaison takes place with the police. Management monitoring and oversight of patterns and trends of children's absence is weak. While the local authority monitors and evaluate missing in the wider community no formal evaluation of missing incidents in the home is completed to consider gaps in staff training, review of protocols, including policies and procedures or to record what has worked well.

There have been three physical interventions since the previous inspection. One hold involved lifting a child from the floor using their ankles and arms. This is not safe or appropriate and is not part of the approved restraint technique. De-briefs for children following restraint are not recorded, and their views are not consistently captured in the restraint log. Staff do not receive de-briefs following the use of restraint. Some entries do not contain all the required information, such as duration of the hold. The management oversight of the restraint log has not identified these regulatory shortfalls.

Children benefit from accommodation maintained to a high standard. Photos on the walls capture children's activities and holiday adventures. The heating system has now been fully repaired. This provides the children with a warm and safer environment, as portable heaters are no longer in use.

The fire risk assessment has for four years identified action to be taken in relation to fire exits. This action has not yet taken place. The authority took immediate steps to address this during the inspection. However, this had not been identified as requiring urgent action through the home's internal monitoring systems.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Inadequate
This children's home has been without a Registered Manager for over 26 weeks. The home has not had a full-time Registered Manager overseeing the home since January 2014. The provider has ensured a suitable level of interim management cover while the post was recruited to. The current manager commenced their job role in May 2015. An application to register as manager was received by Ofsted in August 2015, however it was incomplete and had to be returned. The current manager has no previous experience of working in a children's home. His professional background is over 25 years within the prison service and young offender institutions. He holds a Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management. A previous recommendation that staff undertake training in child sexual exploitation and drug awareness has been met. Staff spoken to demonstrate good knowledge of possible signs and indicators around exploitation. Other training completed since the previous inspection includes self-harm and managing sexualised behaviours. All but one core member of the staff team holds the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare or equivalent. As only two members of staff have a first aid qualification there is not a first aider on every shift. This does not ensure adequate cover to provide emergency treatment if necessary. Compatibility risk assessments are now in place for new admissions to the home. Potential hazards and risks are identified, along with actions to assist with the transition in of a new child. This demonstrates more clearly how placement decisions are made. In particular they show consideration of the needs of children already living in the home. Although regular, the content of supervision is variable in terms of quality, practice guidance and clarity of recording. This risks a lack of clear direction and under evaluation of staff members' performance. Individual professional development is difficult to track. The management of good and poor performance, including the relevant use of appraisals, is not clearly demonstrated. Children's views are not sought as part of staff members' annual evaluation. This does not allow children an opportunity to give feedback on staff practice to help them improve. Regular staff meetings take place allowing for frequent opportunity to discuss the needs of the children. Some weeks external agencies, such as CAMHS, join the team in such discussions. Care plans which guide staff on a daily basis do not reflect this input.	

Agency staff receive a verbal handover of information upon arrival, and a file to read containing up to date children's key documents. However, there is no formalised induction to the home for external agency staff covering matters such as overnight fire procedures and their specific responsibilities and management expectations.

An independent visitor visits the home on a monthly basis. They talk to children, review records and produce a report on the functioning of the home. These reports include recommendations for improved practice which are actioned appropriately. Internal monitoring systems are not wholly effective at identifying weaknesses in care plans and risk assessments, supervision and training needs. Internal reports lack in depth evaluation of patterns and trends from missing episodes in order to identify strategies to reduce them.

The statement of purpose for the home suitably describes the aims and objectives of the service. It is followed in practice. An improvement plan is in place. Some development targets set within it are very generic. For example, 'supervision' is one target. This does not demonstrate what aspect of supervision is in need of improving. Some staff spoken to were not aware of the content of the improvement plan. Without all staff being aware of their individual role in meeting the improvement plan it risks an inconsistent approach by staff in driving forward positive changes.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place, however, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, 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.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service 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*.

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