

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC373958
Inspector	Anna Williams
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	Janet Fairless
Date of last inspection	22/01/2014

Inspection date	03/06/2014
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	There has been no enforcement action since the last inspection.

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	adequate
Outcomes for children and young people	good
Quality of care	good
Keeping children and young people safe	adequate
Leadership and management	adequate

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	adequate
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This children's home provides good outcomes for young people and a good quality of care. However, there are areas for development relating to the leadership and management of the service and safeguarding young people.

Young people are positive about the home. They talk warmly of staff and feel staff listen to them. Relationships between the young people and staff are both constructive and nurturing. Partnership working is a strength of the service. A wide range of external professionals work well with the staff team to offer an individualised approach to care planning. Positive feedback has been obtained from family members of young people. Diversity is creatively and positively promoted throughout the home.

Areas of shortfall identified during this inspection relate to the training and supervision of relief staff within the home. One regulatory breach is identified with regard to recruitment practice. This was addressed during the inspection. The use of restraint is low. However, current restraint records do not capture formal staff debriefs and de-escalation techniques used. This a regulatory breach. Some significant events relating to the welfare of young people have not been notified appropriately to Ofsted. The Registered Manager does not have a formal system in

place to capture feedback from young people, their families and social workers. These comments would then form part of the Registered Manager's internal monitoring system.

Management oversight is not fully effective within the home at present. The Registered Manager had already identified some of the shortfalls highlighted within this inspection. However, other shortfalls had not been recognised. The Registered Manager has a development plan in place. It identifies focused areas of improvement for the home.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This home is registered to provide care for up to four young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is managed by a local authority.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
22/01/2014	Interim	good progress
05/06/2013	Full	good
25/01/2013	Interim	good progress
24/07/2012	Full	good

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

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 Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any restraint, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose which shall include all the information as listed within (3) (a - i) and (4) (a and b) (Regulation 17B)	04/07/2014
26 (2001)	ensure that full and satisfactory information is available in relation to staff in respect of each of the matters specified in Schedule 2 (Regulation 26 (3) (d))	04/07/2014
27 (2001)	ensure that all staff employed by the registered person receive appropriate training and supervision; with specific reference to relief staff (Regulation 27 (4))	04/07/2014

30 (2001)	ensure if, in relation to a children's home, any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 5 takes place, the registered person shall without delay notify the persons indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table (Regulation 30 (1))	04/07/2014
34 (2001)	ensure the review of the quality of care in the home includes formal consultation with children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities. (Regulation 34 (3))	04/07/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure children understand how their views have been taken into account, and where significant wishes or concerns are not acted upon, they are helped to understand why (NMS 1.2)
- ensure there is a written record of all medication, treatment and first aid given to children during their placement (NMS 6.15)
- ensure risk assessments of the whole children's home environment are carried out, to identify any potential sources of harm to the children are recorded in writing and regularly reviewed, in particular the rear garden and access to the railway line, and children's risk assessments (NMS 10.8)
- ensure staff members who are placed in charge of the home and other staff at particular times (e.g. as leaders of staff shifts) have substantial relevant experience of working in the home and have successfully completed their induction and probationary periods (NMS 17.5)
- ensure that investigations into allegations or suspicions of harm are handled fairly, quickly, and consistently in a way that provides effective protection for the child, and at the same time supports the person who is the subject of the allegation (NMS 20.8)
- ensure records kept are well maintained and better organised; specifically the child protection and safeguarding records. (NMS 22)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Young people have a positive view about the home and the impact it has had on them. Comments from young people include 'I would give the home 10 out of 10! I feel my behaviour is better now, since living here', and 'I feel I am more mature now and I smoke less'. Parents reflect positively on the home, comments include 'I feel the staff offer my child a stable home. They make my child feel at home there'.

Young people's attendance at school is generally good. Some young people are also engaging with work experience. They speak enthusiastically about the skills they are learning through these work-based programmes. This supports their transition into adulthood and employment. Young people's academic achievements are good, taking into consideration individual children's starting points. Some young people have achieved certificates for outstanding progress and exceeding their school targets. This is openly celebrated and praised.

Young people engage in a good range of activities. Within the home, young people enjoy computer games, cooking, arts and crafts, and time in the garden. Community based activities are varied. These include youth club, the local carnival, theatre trips, car boot fairs, cinema trips, theme parks, golf, seaside visits and restaurant meals out. These all provide opportunity for positive local engagement and new experiences. Some young people take part in the 'children in care council' programme. This offers opportunity to meet new friends and take part in special events. This helps build confidence and develops them socially.

Young people enjoy good health outcomes. Young people understand the importance of healthy lifestyles. All young people engage in regular exercise, such as going to the gym, football, scooter rides and countryside walks. Some young people with specific health needs have been successfully supported to learn more about their personal health needs. They now engage readily with key health appointments which is important for their physical health now and in their future. Young people take responsibility for their sexual health and well-being and attend relevant linked services. Some young people's substance misuse is reducing. Other young people no longer place themselves at risk by going missing. This reduction in risk taking behaviours is positive for young people's safety and welfare.

Young people maintain contact with family members and those significant to them. Staff suitably facilitate contact arrangements. This ensures young people maintain good attachments to those important to them.

Young people engage well with strategies to support and develop their independence. This includes young people achieving independent travel status over a suitable period of time. This increases their self-reliance and confidence. One parent comments 'my

child has definitely learnt new life skills'. Young people take part in assisting with the running of the home, such as shopping, cooking meals and general household tasks. They feel confident, as appropriate to their age and understanding, about taking on more responsibility and their adult life ahead.

Quality of care

good

Relationships between staff and young people are very positive. Comments from young people include 'staff spend time with us, I like them all', and 'the staff have taught me to do stuff, like change my attitude. Staff have kindly supported me'. Staff demonstrate good knowledge of young people's backgrounds and unique care needs. A parent comments 'I feel the staff are knowledgeable about my child's individual needs'. Young people's relationships with each other have been challenging at times since the last inspection. However, they report that the home is more harmonious now.

Effective partnerships exist with wider professionals such as the police and health workers. Local police staff comment 'we are completing effective preventative work with the children in this home. And because of this, there is better partnership working in order to keep the children safe'. A health professional comments 'the staff team understand the benefit of the outreach service. Staff actively support the children to learn about and use the service'. Arrangements for the administration of medicines are safe. However, there are minor shortfalls in the recording of medication given. This impacts on the Registered Manager's ability to ensure that all young people receive medication in line with the prescription.

Team meetings are weekly and are child-focused. These meetings often include input from external professionals such as the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. As a result, staff benefit from regular expert discussion and reflection on young people's current circumstances. They formulate and revise care plans collectively with other professionals. This benefits young people through this strong multi-agency approach.

Staff successfully encourage young people to learn about different cultures. Staff wear national dress and cook meals from different countries on a monthly basis. This creative approach allows young people to learn, ask questions and experience food from countries across the globe.

Young people know how to complain. There have been no complaints since the last inspection. However, one decision relating to the day-to-day running of the home was made without full consultation with the young people involved. The decision directly related to the safe management of the home. However, the young people were not suitably supported through the practical implications, such as bedroom swaps. In general, young people report they enjoy the regular residents meetings and feel listened to. They make choices around activities, menus and how the home

is decorated.

Staff maintain good communication links with educational establishments. Young people say staff help them with achieving educational goals and targets. Some young people are supported to attend after-school clubs. This offers young people wider extra-curricular experiences. Staff successfully promote young people's positive participation within the local community through structured activity plans. This ensures young people are engaged in regular purposeful and fun activities.

The home is located near to local shops and transport links. It offers young people a well-maintained and homely environment. Young people in general like their bedrooms. They personalise their own space with posters, pictures and mementos. Around the home there are photos on display of young people taking part in recent activities. This allows the young people to reflect on their achievements and experiences.

Keeping children and young people safe adequate

All young people are positive about the home and some say openly that they feel safe there. Comments from parents include 'the staff do protect my child and give my child good rules to follow that keep my child safe.'

There have been three incidents when a young person has been reported missing from the home since the last inspection. This number demonstrates a continued decrease in missing episodes. Policies and procedures are in place and followed if a young person is reported missing. Bullying has been identified and suitably addressed within the home. Young people, parents, external professionals and staff all acknowledge that the bullying has now significantly reduced. Staff successfully maintain high levels of vigilance to ensure the safety of all young people.

Some young people's risk assessments have not been updated to reflect significant events or changes within the home, such as other children moving in or out. This means some risk assessments contain risk management action points for staff which are now out of date. This risks confusion, especially when there are currently a higher number of relief staff working in the home.

Effective behaviour management within the home means that only one restraint has occurred since the last inspection. However, the behaviour management technique certification for the member of staff who undertook the hold had expired over three months previously. This risks young people being restrained by staff who do not have current training, and who consequently may apply outdated holds. Restraints are recorded within a bound log book. However, although young people have a recorded debrief afterwards, the staff involved do not. Further to this, the log does not capture what de-escalation techniques were used to diffuse the incident. These are

regulatory breaches.

Staff spoken to demonstrate a strong awareness of safeguarding procedures. In general, the home works effectively with social workers and external safeguarding professionals to protect young people. However, one incident involving a suspicion of harm was not managed robustly. Information was shared with placing social workers, but key information did not reach the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) in a timely manner. This is not prompt sharing of important information relating to young people's welfare.

Otherwise strong recruitment practice is compromised by a gap in one candidate's employment history. The Registered Manager took immediate action and a full written explanation was provided during the inspection. However, this shortfall had not been identified through internal auditing systems to ensure a fully robust approach to safe recruitment. This is a regulatory breach.

The garden is well maintained and has high rear fences. This is because the garden directly borders a railway line. The home has suitably restricted access to this area to safeguard young people. In February 2014, British Transport Police came to the home to speak to young people about the dangers of the railway. Individual children's risk assessments consider the young people's behaviours and personal risks around the potential railway access. However, there is no written house risk assessment in place to consider the resources and on-going maintenance required to keep the garden area appropriately secure. Overall, young people are protected by suitable maintenance schedules and tests, plus staff undertake additional regular health and safety checks of the home.

Leadership and management

adequate

The Registered Manager has been registered with Ofsted since August 2012. She is a qualified social worker and holds a post-graduate qualification in public service management. She is currently undertaking the level 5 diploma to extend her knowledge base. This will benefit the staff team, as she will have up-to-date awareness of current issues and legislation. Throughout the Registered Manager's social work career, she has had experience of working with looked after children through a variety of social work roles.

At the previous inspection, a recommendation was set to ensure that internal monitoring reports are submitted to Ofsted within the required timescales. This has been met. However, these reports lack formal consultation with young people within the home, their families and social workers. This means the Registered Manager is not proactively seeking formal feedback to learn from and further progress the service.

External monitoring visits take place within required timescales and involve young

people. However, in the past year the external visitor has raised only one good practice recommendation. This is not challenging of the service and does not assist the Registered Manager in striving to improve and develop the home.

The home has recently appointed a new member of full-time staff and is also actively recruiting to a care worker post. There are now seven members of the core staff team. 'In-house' relief staff employed by the local authority supplement the core staff and support the running of the home. This avoids the use of external agency staff. However, rotas demonstrate that since January 2014, there have been 17 shifts where only relief staff have been on shift, including some overnight shifts. Some of these relief staff undertake regular hours in the home. These same regular relief staff attend some staff meetings. However, they do not receive regular staff supervision. This has the potential to impact on the quality of care given to young people. Core contracted staff receive regular supervision and feel well-supported by the Registered Manager.

Permanent staff receive mandatory training in topics such as first aid and safeguarding. Currently, six out of the seven core staff hold a relevant level 3 qualification. However, not all relief staff have completed mandatory training in key safe caring practice such as physical intervention and medication, and they sometimes lead shifts. Similarly, not all of the relief staff hold the minimum diploma qualification. This has the potential to impact on the consistency of care for young people within the home. The Registered Manager has taken steps to address this shortfall, particularly during weekends. However, this is still impacting on some future shifts when there are still occasions when no core staff are on the rota.

Since the last inspection, the Registered Manager has changed the way safeguarding concerns are recorded. A central log now provides an overview of concerns and actions taken. However, this has been back-dated and is not yet up-to-date. Consequently, the safeguarding records remain difficult to monitor and more recent concerns have not been logged centrally. This continues to make it difficult for the Registered Manager to audit effectively and look for patterns and trends within safeguarding concerns. The recommendation is repeated.

The last notification for this service was received on 7 October 2013. However, since this date there have been a number of significant events which have not been notified to Ofsted in line with regulatory requirements. This inspection also identified one event prior to this date. These notifiable events include the involvement of police within the home and serious accidents requiring hospital treatment. While the home has taken appropriate action following these incidents, the home has failed to keep the regulator up-to-date with information relating to young people's welfare. This hinders the regulator in its duty to evaluate whether young people placed remain safe.

The Registered Manager has a development plan in place. It identifies areas of development and improvement for the home. This suitably focuses on further

improving outcomes for young people.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The 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 relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.