

SC373958

Registered provider: East Sussex County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is operated by a local authority. It provides care and accommodation for up to four children who are experiencing complex life and developmental challenges.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since August 2020.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

Inspection dates: 26 to 27 May 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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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	outstanding
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The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 14 May 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/05/2019	Full	Outstanding
25/06/2018	Full	Outstanding
06/09/2017	Full	Outstanding
24/01/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The two children at this home benefit from receiving an exceptionally high standard of care. Skilled staff build positive relationships with the children and take a nurturing approach to meeting their complex needs. The staff demonstrate patience and resilience and an understanding of the underlying causes of the children's anxieties and behaviour. One professional stated, 'I find the ability for this team to reflect, not only as individuals but also as a team, very impressive.'

Staff find creative ways to communicate with the children, such as using notes during periods of high anxiety. This helps the children to build trust and rapport and express their views freely. External professionals who are supporting the children have been able to adopt these methods. This approach has enabled one child to engage more positively with a range of professionals who are key to supporting her transition from the home.

Both children at the home are engaging well with their educational provision and are making good progress. Excellent partnership working with education professionals has resulted in a highly personalised, bespoke education package being developed for one child. This approach has resulted in the child taking an interest in learning and acquiring new skills and has had a positive impact on her confidence and self-esteem.

The children have access to a range of specialist support services. A tenacious approach is taken to securing the right service for each child. For example, private therapeutic provision is now being sought for one child who has struggled to work effectively with the local child and adolescent mental health service. Another child has been supported by a member of the local authority's placement team, which is a service usually only available to children in foster care.

The staff take a sensitive approach to preparing children for new admissions to the home. They follow this up by monitoring how the children are feeling and coping in the weeks following the new admission's arrival. Creative approaches are taken to engaging the children in activities that provide opportunities to build positive peer relationships. Equal priority is given to encouraging individual interests and activities.

The children at this home are making excellent progress across many aspects of their lives. Children learn to manage their anger and frustration more effectively and there is a reduction in aggressive behaviour. One child has significantly reduced the number of times she goes missing. Children learn to communicate more effectively, improve their social skills and interact well with their local community. One professional told the inspector that 'she [the child] is now looking to the future with an optimism she would not have had six months ago.'

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

The managers and staff at this home have a clear understanding of each child's vulnerabilities and their associated risks. The staff have the skills to develop meaningful and trusting relationships with traumatised children. This is a strong protective factor because it ensures that the children have the confidence to share their fears and anxieties. This is intrinsic to the effective safeguarding culture that helps prevent children coming to harm.

The risk management processes are frequently reviewed and updated following significant events. This ensures that the strategies for protecting children are relevant to new and emerging risks. However, in a small minority of cases, the risk management process has not met the usual high standards. For example, an assessment of potential ligature points around the home has not been undertaken and, in one case, there is not a clear strategy for maintaining a child's dignity during periods of high anxiety. Due to the high levels of supervision provided by the staff, these minor shortfalls have not resulted in children coming to any harm.

There are highly developed behaviour management plans for each child. These plans often benefit from having expert oversight from external child-care professionals. Because of this, children benefit from receiving a consistent response to any unwanted behaviours they may display. The staff maintain clear boundaries which are explained to the children. This strong and effective practice has resulted in a decrease in the number of incidents involving unwanted behaviour.

The use of physical intervention to manage behaviour is proportionate. However, there are some weaknesses in how these incidents are recorded. The records do not always give a clear indication of the circumstances leading to an incident, the techniques used to de-escalate the volatile situation or describe the actual physical intervention that was used.

There is a strong and effective response to children who go missing from the home. Good liaison with the relevant agencies usually results in missing children being located promptly. During this inspection the staff clearly demonstrated a high level of professional curiosity regarding a child's latest missing episode. This enabled the staff to identify a range of possible triggers for the child's behaviour and how they would respond and support the child on their return to the home.

Excellent working relationships with external safeguarding professionals ensure that emerging concerns are identified and addressed in a timely way. Child protection matters are referred to the relevant agencies and detailed records are kept of the actions being taken. The children are made aware of these actions and this helps them to understand why the adults are concerned for their welfare and the steps they are taking to keep them safe.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Strong and effective management of the home ensures high standards of care are maintained, and children are kept safe. The registered manager makes full use of well-developed quality of care monitoring systems. Consequently, he has comprehensive oversight of the standard of practice in the home. This ensures that any emerging areas for development are addressed promptly.

The monitoring of children's progress is a particular strength at this home. Monthly audits of children's progress identify the effectiveness of targets and strategies and are used to inform care planning. The audits are a clear source of information that can also be used by external professionals to moderate and amend their practice with the child. Consequently, there is an effective response to the changing needs of the children.

Members of the wider leadership team recognise the complex needs of the children currently living at the home. They have taken the decision to only accommodate these two children at this four-bedded home. This has been key to ensuring that the children's needs are met, and the high standards of care are maintained. This demonstrates a strong commitment to delivering a service that puts the best interests of children first.

The admissions process further demonstrates this commitment. The impact risk assessment for the most recent child demonstrates that thorough consideration was given to how the children might respond to each other. It also examined whether the knowledge and skills of the staff team would be sufficient to meet both children's needs and what resources would be needed to ensure the safety and well-being of the children and staff. This high-quality assessment has ensured that both children's placements have remained stable, and their differing needs are fully met.

The line management and supervision arrangements ensure that the registered manager and the staff feel well-supported and empowered to undertake their roles. The registered manager has been fully supported to develop his management skills. Staff supervision and staff annual appraisals have not always been completed in a timely way. This is partly attributable to the additional work resulting from the COVID-19 restrictions and meeting the complex needs of highly vulnerable children.

The registered manager leads by example and demonstrates strong networking skills. This has resulted in new resources and support agencies being identified. For example, a new relationship with an organisation specialising in supporting children with specific mental health difficulties, is currently being developed. Good partnership working with statutory agencies also ensures that children have prompt access to specialist provision and staff can benefit from being able to consult external child-care professionals.

Leaders and managers promote and oversee a strong culture of reflection and learning. Analysis of serious incidents takes place, and staff are given the opportunity to consider and debate how subtle changes in their practice may lead to

more positive outcomes in the future. This demonstrates that managers and staff have high aspirations for the children and a commitment to consistently meeting their needs.

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, 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 registered person must prepare and implement a policy ("the behaviour management policy") which sets out— how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the children's home; and the measures of control, discipline and restraint which may be used in relation to children in the home. 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— details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure; a description of the measure and its duration; details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure; the name of the person who used the measure ("the user"), and of any other person present when the measure was used; the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure. (Regulation 35 (1)(a)(b) (3)(a)(ii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii))	9 July 2021

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. This is with particular reference to risk assessing potential ligature points around the home and ensuring there are effective strategies for responding to children's unsafe

behaviours. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)

- The registered person should ensure that they maintain good employment practice as set out in regulations 31-33. They must ensure that recruitment, supervision and performance management of staff safeguards children and minimises potential risks to them. This is with particular reference to ensuring that staff supervision and annual appraisals are completed within specified timescales. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)

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: SC373958

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: County Hall, St. Annes Crescent, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 1UE

Responsible individual: Elizabeth Rugg

Registered manager: Steven Crowe

Inspector

Stephen Collett, Social Care Inspector

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