

SC373958

Registered provider: East Sussex County Council

Monitoring visit

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 for up to four children who are experiencing complex life and developmental challenges.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since August 2020.

Inspection date: 27 January 2022

This monitoring visit

The monitoring visit was undertaken in response to a series of safeguarding notifications submitted to Ofsted in recent months. These safeguarding notifications raised concerns about the safety and well-being of the children at the home. They indicated that children have frequently gone missing from the home, and the police have been called to support the staff to manage the children's behaviour. There have been several incidents where children have self-harmed, and one child in particular experienced a significant decline in their mental health. Further enquiries made by Ofsted established that in late October 2021, two children had to temporarily move out of the home. These children could not be kept safe in the home due to the level of disruption taking place.

Since the last inspection in May 2021, four children have moved into the home. Two of these children moved into the home at short notice. These moves were not planned well. On two occasions, compatibility assessments, used to determine the likely impact of the children moving in, were either completed on the day the child moved in or after the move had taken place. Although the compatibility assessments identified each child's complex needs and likely behaviours, they did not consistently define how these needs would be met or how potential behaviours would be managed. This was despite there being clear indications that some of the children already living at the home could be at risk of being drawn into negative and unsafe behaviours.

One compatibility assessment gave clear indications that it could be unsafe for a particular child to move into the home. Despite this, the child did move in, although the rationale for the decision is not contained within the compatibility assessment. Within a short time, the child became involved in unsafe behaviours in the home and in the local community. There were incidents involving violence, theft and the consumption of alcohol, and there was an increased risk of becoming sexually exploited. Other children in the home were also involved in these incidents.

As a result of this poor planning, some children have suffered harm. One child felt pressured into going missing from home with peers and is likely to have been bullied. Another child showed a rapid decline in her mental health and engaged more frequently in self-harming behaviours. This child had previously been settled at the home and was making good progress. However, the situation deteriorated to the point where she had to move from the home to be kept safe.

On one occasion, a child living in the home and a child who had recently moved out of the home, placed themselves at significant risk of harm. They climbed a tree adjacent to the home, and onto a branch overhanging a railway embankment. This was at night. Staff were eventually able to persuade them to come down. There has not been a proactive response to this incident. No risk assessments have been completed in respect of the tree and the associated dangers. Consequently, the staff do not have clearly defined strategies to follow should a similar incident occur in the future.

There has also been a failure to act on a recommendation made by Ofsted at the May 2021 inspection. The recommendation related to risk assessing potential ligature points around the home due to there being two children at the home who had used ligatures to try and harm themselves. The risk assessment has not been completed, despite there being several occasions in recent months when a child was using a ligature.

The registered manager and the staff have worked hard to contain the situation over recent months, but the group dynamics among the children have become unmanageable. At this monitoring visit, a senior manager in the organisation was not able to give a clear account of whether quality of care monitoring systems have identified where mistakes were made and whether there has been any learning from the situation.

At the time of this monitoring visit, the situation at the home had been more settled over the previous week. Two of the children have recently started full-time education, and another child has received good support to address recent difficulties in the community.

Despite this, Ofsted has serious concerns about how the recent succession of children moving into the home has had a detrimental impact on the group dynamics and the safety of the children. There have also been significant failures in terms of

risk management. Consequently, Ofsted will issue two compliance notices in relation to these shortfalls and will monitor the situation closely.

The response to the one requirement and one of the recommendations made at the full inspection in May 2021 was not examined during this monitoring visit. These have, therefore, been repeated in this report.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
26/05/2021	Full	Outstanding
14/05/2019	Full	Outstanding
25/06/2018	Full	Outstanding
06/09/2017	Full	Outstanding

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)) This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	9 July 2021
*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—	6 March 2022

that staff— 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. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)) This is with particular reference to ensuring risk assessments are undertaken in respect of potential ligature points and the tree adjacent to the back garden.	
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(h))	6 March 2022
*The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; 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 children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home's statement of purpose; that arrangements are in place to— manage and review the placement of each child in the home. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(ii))	6 March 2022

*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendation

- The registered person 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

The purpose of this visit was to monitor the action taken and the progress made by the children's home since its last Ofsted inspection.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC373958

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: Steven Crowe

Inspectors

Stephen Collett, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022