

Children's homes – Interim inspection

Inspection date	09/03/2017
Unique reference number	SC399222
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	West Sussex County Council
Registered person address	Director of Social Services, County Hall, Tower Street, Chichester, West Sussex PO19 1QT

Responsible individual	Annie MacIver
Registered manager	Sharlene Vallance
Inspector	Jacqueline Georghiou

Inspection date	09/03/2017
Previous inspection judgement	Good
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection This home was judged good at the full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judges that it has sustained effectiveness. At the last inspection in November 2016, four requirements and two recommendations were made. The first requirement was regarding the statement of purpose. This requirement has been met. The registered person has ensured that Ofsted has been notified of revisions to the document and has sent it to Ofsted within the required timescale. The second requirement concerned the use of devices for the monitoring or surveillance of the children. Although the children are now being informed about the use of such devices, including the use of viewing panels in the bedroom doors, written consent for them has not been obtained from the children's social workers. Consequently, any decisions to use these devices are not subject to transparent agreement or shared decision making. The third requirement relates to the appointment and registration of the person in day-to-day charge of the home while the registered manager is on secondment. This requirement has been met. The registered manager has resigned her position and Ofsted has been appropriately notified. A new manager has been appointed and an application for registration has been submitted. The lines of management accountability and responsibility are clear. The fourth requirement related to ensuring that full records are kept in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect, and the action taken in response. This was to include the conclusion of the investigation. This requirement has been met. Detailed records are now kept of all allegations of neglect or abuse, and are explicit about any actions taken and the conclusion of the investigation. This clearer audit trail enables easier monitoring. One recommendation related to the decor and presentation of the home. While some redecoration has occurred, overall the bare walls, the lack of soft furnishings and pictures and the use of heavy-duty furniture result in an institutional environment which is not conducive to the domestic needs of the children. This recommendation is therefore repeated.	

A further recommendation was made to ensure that education and healthcare plans explicitly record the prescribed use of physical restraint measures, where these may be deemed necessary as a consequence of a child's impairment or disability. Children are now better protected by clearer, written guidance for staff to follow in the event that bedrails, for example, are used as a necessary measure to protect their safety. Children have been supported by staff to understand the reasons for these measures through the use of social stories.

Children are making progress in all aspects of their lives. Staff provide encouragement and support through their creative use of individualised social stories, resulting in the children being empowered to understand events within their life and home. Recently, one child has successfully moved to another home. Staff's effective use of social stories enabled him to understand the process and be less anxious about it. The other children were able to say goodbye appropriately, thus minimising the potential disruption to their lives. One child's social worker said, 'He has come along in leaps and bounds. Staff have helped him to express how he feels and to understand his own behaviour, and to make choices about this. Where, once, he would hit out when frustrated, he now looks for other, more positive, means to release his frustrations.'

Staff actively support children's education and provide a range of activities which enhance their learning. Staff work closely with teachers to ensure effective communication and a consistency of approach. Children progress well in education, and staff ensure that this is celebrated within the home by displaying their work, certificates and acknowledgements of achievement.

Children form meaningful and trusting relationships with staff. Staff know the children well and are able to engage with them effectively, thus ensuring that children have a voice in decisions about their lives and their home. Staff work well with the children's families to promote positive relationships. Staff ensure that parents' views are incorporated into all aspects of planning for the children. One parent said: 'The staff are brilliant. They know him so well, and I know that he is happy.'

Children's intimate care needs are sensitively met, and are supported by detailed risk assessments and care plans. Children are successfully consulted about their needs through the use of social stories and, in this way, are able to express their views and wishes.

Children are safeguarded effectively. Policies and procedures are clear, and staff receive regular training to support their knowledge, which includes training specific to working with children who have learning disabilities and limited communication skills. The manager ensures that children's risk assessments are updated regularly and that plans incorporate preferred behaviour management strategies in order to minimise the use of physical intervention. Staff are trained in the safe use of physical intervention, where this is necessary to safeguard the children. Staff utilise

the children's preferred communication methods effectively to enhance the children's understanding of their own behaviour, following physical interventions. One child has made significant progress in terms of being able to verbalise the impact which another child's behaviour has upon him, and staff have more effectively supported the child to express his frustrations positively, resulting in a significant reduction in the behaviour which would otherwise lead to physical intervention. Staff are further supported by a learning development officer who provides training and consultancy in relation to behaviour management strategies. The manager monitors the use of physical interventions robustly and challenges practice positively during the supervision process.

Rigorous monitoring systems ensure that children are afforded a high standard of care. Staff supervision and appraisal records demonstrate that staff are able to reflect upon their practice, resulting in improvements which benefit children. An example of this is the development of creative communication, observation and listening skills which ensure that children's wishes and needs are central to the home.

Children have access to independent visitors and the regulation 44 visitor. Staff utilise social stories to explain to children the purpose of the visits made by the regulation 44 visitor and to encourage children to express their views to her.

Information about this children's home

This service is run by the local authority, and is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to three children with severe learning disabilities.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
23/11/2016	Full	Good
01/03/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
15/12/2015	Full	Outstanding
12/03/2015	Interim	Good progress

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) meet the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to children's homes regulations including quality standards'. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The registered person may only use devices for the monitoring or surveillance of children if the monitoring or surveillance is for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child concerned, or other children; the placing authority consents in writing to the monitoring or surveillance; so far as reasonable practicable in light of the child's age and understanding, the child is informed in advance of the intention to do the monitoring or surveillance; and the monitoring or surveillance is no more intrusive than necessary, having regard to the child's need for privacy. (Regulation 24(1)(a)(b)(c)(d))	01/06/2017

Recommendations

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

- Children's homes are to be nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of their children; they will, in most cases, be homely, domestic environments. In doing so, homes should seek as far as possible to maintain a domestic rather than 'institutional' impression ('Guide to children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 16, paragraph 3.9)

What the inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspection we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

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 whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

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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