

SC399222

Registered provider: West Sussex County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority home provides short-term emergency support for children at times of crisis or significant periods of change in their lives. The home provides care for up to three children with social and emotional difficulties.

Three children were living in the home at the time of the inspection.

The registered manager left on 22 March 2024. A new manager has been appointed and has made an application to register with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 16 and 17 July 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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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	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 18 September 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/09/2023	Full	Good
24/08/2017	Full	Good
09/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
23/11/2016	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Relationships between children and staff are built on trust and mutual respect. Staff talk about and to children with warmth and sincere care. Children speak positively and emotionally about staff and the support that they receive from them. This has enabled children to form positive relationships with the adults who care for them and to make progress.

The provider has made improvements to the home. The ground floor and outside area are more comfortable and child-friendly. Children have assisted in choosing colours for decorating and one child with a talent for art has been commissioned to create wall art. However, there are still areas of the home that feel too institutional, such as the first floor corridor, which is quite bare and has numbers on doors.

Staff understand children's needs well and are committed to them getting the help that they need. Proactive staff advocate for children when they do not receive the level of service expected from partner agencies. As a result, multi-agency working has improved and enabled more effective care planning, for example, transition planning and access to substance misuse services. One child said, 'Staff do not let people fob them off. If they have not done something, staff want to know why.'

Children have plentiful opportunities to share their views and opinions and are well supported to do so. Regular child-led meetings support children to request changes that they wish to make or voice concerns that they have in relation to the home. Staff support children to prepare for meetings such as looked after child reviews so that their voice is heard and acted on.

Staff make time for children and work hard to support them with things that they need help with. Regular child-focused key-work sessions are well recorded. These provide a safe space for children to share their worries and concerns and to think about how to achieve their goals and aspirations. This helps children to know they are cared for and to make progress.

Children are supported and encouraged to access education, to learn and develop their talents. For one child who was out of school before arriving at the home and faced several challenges, this has helped him sit sufficient GCSE exams to be able to progress to his chosen college course.

Staff at the home work hard to promote successful transitions for children moving on and, where possible, maintain contact with children. This helps children to feel valued and gain perspective on their progress and achievements.

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

The home has effective links with partner agencies. The manager and staff communicate well with other professionals to manage risks and coordinate plans. The staff follow this up, carrying out direct intervention work with the children. This helps children to learn and understand the risks to them and encourages children to make safer choices. One external professional said, '[Name of child] has been able to consistently rely on the staff to go above and beyond to increase his safety.'

When children do not return home at the agreed time, appropriate processes are followed to ensure their safe return at the earliest opportunity. Committed staff make a concerted effort to ensure that children are seen following a period of being absent from the home. This ensures that significant information or concerns, such as those relating to child exploitation, can be shared in a timely way with appropriate agencies and inform plans to reduce risks to children.

Most risks to children are well understood and staff are guided by clear plans and assessments to manage risks. However, plans do not clearly outline how staff should monitor children's safety when they are thought to be under the influence of substances. For one child, this could be particularly significant. The impact of this shortfall in recording is reduced by staff awareness in practice.

Children know how to make a complaint and are supported by nurturing staff to do so. Allegations are well recorded, with identified actions. The manager and leadership team report concerns promptly to the relevant professionals and update children on outcomes. This helps children to feel safe and listened to.

The home is safe and in good repair. Regular health and safety checks are completed by a designated member of staff. This ensures that children live in a safe environment.

Thorough safe recruitment processes are followed. This assures the manager that staff he has employed are safe to work with children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is led by an experienced and qualified manager who is in the process of applying to register with Ofsted. He is supported by two knowledgeable and committed deputies. All lead by example. The managers have a good understanding of the children and their needs, as well as the home's strengths and areas for development. This promotes a strong ethos of attuned and empathic responses to children's needs.

Strong partnership working helps to build trust and engagement. Social care staff involved with the children are positive about their working relationships with the manager and staff and say that they are kept well informed. This helps children to receive consistent and well-coordinated care and protection.

Staff enjoy working in the home and feel supported by managers and colleagues. All staff receive regular supervision from an appropriately experienced senior line manager. Annual appraisals and regular reviews of new staff's progress have been completed to ensure that staff fulfil their roles and responsibilities, and development needs are identified.

Managers and senior leaders understand the importance of having effective systems in place that enable them to have oversight of the home. These have led to improvements in practice, such as achieving more consistency in integrity checks for new staff. The leadership team is relatively new and is continuing to make improvements to these systems.

Staff receive training to support them in their roles, including training specific to the needs of children living in the home. All mandatory training has been completed. This helps ensure that children are cared for by informed staff who are equipped to respond to their needs. However, the workforce development plan has not been updated. This reduces the effectiveness of the records for tracking the training and continuous professional development of staff. As a result, there are some gaps in training records. This issue has not had a negative impact on children.

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, The 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 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— 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 particularly refers to monitoring the safety of children when they are under the influence of illegal substances, including at night.	20 August 2024

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children live in a warm and welcoming environment with a homely feel. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should have a workforce plan which can fulfil the workforce-related requirements of regulation 16, schedule 1 (paragraphs 19 and 20). The plan should be updated regularly to include any new training and qualifications completed by staff while working at the home, and used to record the ongoing training and continuing professional development needs of staff, including the home's manager. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)

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: SC399222

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: West Sussex County Council

Registered provider address: West Sussex County Council, Democratic Services, County Hall, West Street, Chichester PO19 1RQ

Responsible individual: Hayley Grover

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Jacob Robson, Social Care Inspector
Jill Sephton-Wright, Social Care Inspector

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