

SC462583

Registered provider: Norfolk County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority home provides short breaks for children who have a family crisis and emergency care for children who do not have a permanent placement. Four children can stay at the home at any one time.

The manager registered with Ofsted in August 2023.

Inspection dates: 3 to 4 February 2026

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: 26 November 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
26/11/2024	Full	Good
12/12/2023	Full	Good
25/01/2023	Full	Good
20/07/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Staff know the children well and have close, trusting relationships with them. Children enjoy spending time together. This supports positive friendships and provides the children with a sense of belonging. Children feel secure and confident in the adults that care for them.

Children's rights are respected and promoted. Children enjoy access to a range of social, educational and recreational opportunities, including activities in the local community. They have learned about and raised money for a charity. Children have enjoyed trips to the local library and had visits with Santa at Christmas. Children experience positive opportunities that support their learning, development and sense of enjoyment.

Staff understand each child's preferred methods of communication and consistently support these. Some children enjoy spending time together, and staff respectfully give them space to be with their friends while remaining available from a safe distance. One child uses a talking mat to share their views and feelings, which staff facilitate sensitively. As a result, children feel listened to, understood and valued.

Although children have not made use of it, the complaints procedure is simple and suitable for all ages. The children know how to access it. They feel confident raising any concerns directly, without needing to submit them anonymously. Children feel listened to, empowered to express their views, and reassured that any concerns will be taken seriously.

Staff have creatively made the home feel homely, however the need for renovation and redecoration detracts from this. There is a large crack in the wall that requires extensive repair work. Some furniture is worn and damaged. The bedding is old and well used. This does not provide children with a comfortable and nurturing environment.

Older children who are new to short breaks are sensitively welcomed with a well-designed welcome pack. However, younger children and those who use alternative methods of communication are not provided with an age appropriate or accessible equivalent. As a result, some children do not receive all of the essential information they need.

When children are admitted in an emergency, managers and staff make every effort to gather as much information as possible beforehand to ensure the child's needs can be met safely and effectively. However, emergency admissions have had an unavoidable impact on other children already scheduled to attend. This is managed as sensitively as possible, but it still results in some children missing out on their planned short break. This means that children who have been identified as needing time away from caring responsibilities or demanding home circumstances do not always receive the respite that

supports their wellbeing. For some children who rely on short breaks as a safe, consistent space, particularly those with ongoing safeguarding concerns or irregular school attendance, missing this time can reduce opportunities to see trusted adults and experience stability.

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

Staff know the children and understand their risks well. Staff understand how children's past experiences affect them and ensure that they have regularly updated risk assessments and care plans. Children feel emotionally secure and confident, knowing they are valued and understood.

Children feel protected and are kept safe from harm. Managers and staff provide a safe haven for children whose lives are often complex and challenging. Social workers report that some children have caring responsibilities at home, and that accessing short breaks gives them valuable space and time to relax and experience being children. Staff offer them a consistent, secure environment along with meaningful opportunities to play, rest and feel safe.

Staff understand the risks that using the internet may pose for children. Effective strategies are in place to keep children safe and to support them in learning how to keep themselves safe online.

Staff only use physical intervention as a last resort and solely to prevent a child from harming themselves or others. Staff use calm and nurturing techniques and help children learn safe ways to manage their feelings and behaviour.

Many children spend time with different peers during their visits. The manager gives thoughtful consideration to who children spend time with. This careful planning has helped children build positive relationships and has contributed to an environment where bullying does not occur. Staff actively teach and model kindness and respect, and children are supported to practise these skills with one another.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is suitably qualified, well established and experienced. They hold high aspirations for what children can achieve. The expectations for the standard of staff practice are high. The manager has a good understanding of the home's strengths and areas for development and is working through a plan for continuous improvement.

Children are supported by an experienced and stable staff team, without any staff changes in the past year. This continuity provides children with a strong sense of stability and consistency. Children feel safe and secure because they can rely on familiar adults and predictable care.

Supervision sessions take place regularly. A recent change to the supervision format has introduced more reflective practice and deeper professional discussion. The new template supports richer, more meaningful conversations, encouraging staff to explore the reasons behind their decisions and actions. This approach helps to embed continuous learning, strengthen safeguarding awareness, and promote the use of theory to inform practice.

Managers have ensured staff have received appraisals that include honest and constructive reflections. These support improvements in staff performance, knowledge and skills, helping to maintain an evolving and continually developing workforce.

The manager has requested and received information from an external agency outlining risks in the local community. This information has not been used to inform the home's location risk assessment or planning. This means that risks have not been fully evaluated or anticipated reducing the manager's ability to implement protective safeguarding measures.

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.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that emergency admissions are only accepted where the home can meet the child's needs without compromising the planned support and respite for other children accessing the short breaks service. ('Guide to Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.6) ('Guide to Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.6)
- The registered person should ensure that children's homes are nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of their children, they will, in most cases, be homely, domestic environments. Children's homes must comply with relevant health and safety legislations (alarms, food hygiene etc.); however 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 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should produce a children's guide. The children's guide must be made available to all children when their placement in the home is agreed (or on arrival at the home if the placement is made in an emergency) and must be age appropriate, provided in an accessible format and explained to each child to make sure they understand it. ('Guide to Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards', page 24, paragraph 4.21)
- Under regulation 46, the registered person should review the appropriateness and suitability of the location and premises of the home at least once a year. The review should include the identification of any risks and opportunities presented by the home's location and strategies for managing these. They must also consult and take into account the views of each relevant person. ('Guide to Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards, Page 64 paragraph 15.1)

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: SC462583

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich, Norfolk, NR1 2DH

Responsible individual: Joanne Reeve

Registered manager: Anneka Hardy

Inspector

Sarah Cooper, Social Care Inspector

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