

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	20/05/2015
Unique reference number	SC031490
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Secure Unit
Registered person	East Sussex County Council
Registered person address	County Hall, St. Annes Crescent, LEWES, East Sussex, BN7 1UE

Responsible individual	Ms Elizabeth Rugg
Registered manager	Mr Nigel Hewitt
Inspector	Mr Kevin Whatley

Inspection date	20/05/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Adequate
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Requires Improvement
The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.	
how well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires Improvement
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires Improvement
outcomes in education and related learning activities	Not inspected on this occasion

SC031490

Summary of findings

The children's home provision requires improvement because:

- The homes Statement of Purpose does not accurately reflect all aspects of care and intervention being provided. While no young person has been admitted inappropriately not all types of admission are mentioned in the current Statement of Purpose. For example, those accommodated under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act.
- Staff have not received specific training that matches the complex needs and behaviours of young people. In particular caring for young people with self-harmful behaviour.
- Despite a number of young people making progress in reducing problematic and risk taking behaviours, there remains a high incidence of self-harmful behaviour. In a number of incidents young people have required hospital treatment.
- Young people do not always benefit from consistent staff practice. In a few instances this led to an increase in the risk young people posed to themselves.
- Young people generally live in a home that is safe and secure. However, actions to reduce all environmental risks are not completed in a timely manner.
- The risks posed by young people are not consistently reflected in assessments or shared with others agencies responsible for looking after them.

The children's home strengths

- The quality of relationships between staff and young people is good. Young people say they really enjoy living in the home and share positive relationships with staff.
- Young people generally make good progress, notably in improving levels of self-esteem and self-worth and engaging in education.
- Managers are committed to meeting the specific needs of young people and are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the home and the areas that need to improve. Managers advocate on behalf of young people and ensure external agencies are reminded of their responsibilities toward them.

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 meets 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 with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ('the Statement of Purpose') which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1; in particular that every aspect of care and accommodation being provided is confirmed including admitting young people subject to the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (Regulation 16 (1))	31/07/2015
<p>13. (1) The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that-</p> <p>(a) helps children to aspire to fulfil their potential; and (b) promotes their welfare.</p> <p>(2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to-</p> <p>(b) ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate; in particular that agreed approaches to caring for young people are consistently applied in practice (c) ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each young person; specifically that staff have up-to-date training on how to care for young people with self-harming behaviours</p> <p>(Regulation 13 (2) (b)(d))</p>	31/07/2015
The registered person must ensure that the home is at all times conducted in a manner which is consistent with its statement of purpose; in particular, that the use of staff radios is appropriate, protects confidentiality and enhances a homely atmosphere (Regulation 16 (5))	30/06/2015
12. (1) The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.	30/06/2015

<p>(2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure-</p> <p>(a) that staff-</p> <p>(i) 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; specifically, by informing escort companies of specific risks associated with individual young people</p> <p>(v) understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; in particular, following risk management strategies</p> <p>(d) that the premises used for the purpose of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health; in particular, ensure flooring is suitable</p> <p>(Regulation 12 (2)(i)(v) (d))</p>	
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Recommendations

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

- ensure young people have access to all areas of the home unless there are specific reasons why this would not meet a young person's needs; such as the therapy/play room (The Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards, page 15 paragraph 3.10)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This secure children's home is managed by a local authority. It is approved by the Department for Education to restrict young people's liberty. As well as the living accommodation, there are facilities for administration and education provided on the site.

The children's home can accommodate up to seven young people who are aged between 10 and 17 years and subject to Section 25 of The Children Act 1989. Admission of any young person under 13 years of age requires the approval of the Secretary of State.

This inspection has the purpose of informing the Secretary of State on the continuing suitability for this provision to operate as a secure unit to restrict children's liberty.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
13/10/2014	CH - Full	Adequate
24/06/2014	CH - Interim	Sustained Effectiveness
11/02/2014	CH - Interim	Good Progress
09/09/2013	CH - Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Requires Improvement
<p>Young people live in a home that provides them with a generally high standard of accommodation and facilities which keeps them safe and secure. The relatively new purpose built home offers a good amount of space inside and out with displays of young people's artwork in communal areas adding a nice touch. Improvements have been made to the garden area with more robust and appropriate outdoor furnishings in place. The home has made good efforts to provide a welcoming environment for new young people. An example being the new and vibrant graffiti art work in the admissions area. This is a significant improvement and helps reduce the impact of the admission to a secure setting as young people arrive.</p> <p>Managers and staff develop individual risk assessments and behaviour management strategies to help protect young people from self-harm. Such an approach has been successful in assisting some young people to reduce their self-harmful behaviours and make considerable progress. However, and despite intervention strategies being in place, other young people have self-harmed to a level that has required hospital visits. There have also been instances when minimisation and risk management strategies have not been appropriately followed by staff. For example, external escort companies did not receive sufficient information about a young person's risk of gathering items to self-harm. While such shortfalls in practice cannot be attributed to the reasons why young people self-harm, opportunities to act to reduce risk should have been taken.</p> <p>The needs and behaviours of young people at times test the robustness of the environment. In recent weeks some young people have managed to dismantle a few items of equipment and furnishings in their rooms which have then been used to self-harm. Managers took swift actions to limit any reoccurrence and liaised with relevant professionals to ensure appropriate efforts were made to improve safety and security.</p> <p>In general, facilities are well used by young people for activities after education and at weekends. However, opportunities to utilise all aspects of the environment are not always taken. For instance the home have a playroom that is equipped to offer young people a quiet area to engage in one to one time with staff trained in providing therapeutic interventions. When these staff are absent this room does not often get used. Given the needs and complexities of the young people, such a space could provide an alternative for them to engage in one to one time with staff.</p>	

Young people benefit from strong, trusting relationships with staff which enable them to engage with the care provided. Young people say they can talk to staff easily and commented that staff are, 'great'.

Each young person's identity is valued and any specific needs, whether cultural or religious are known and met to a good standard. Equality and diversity is strongly promoted, with an emphasis on learning about various cultures and faiths. This includes part of their education curriculum, assemblies and cultural days. Young people are able to practice their religion. A quiet prayer room is available for individual and shared use. In addition, positive links with local religious leaders allow young people to have visits if they wish. This supports young people to maintain their identity, build self-esteem and enables them to develop appropriate coping mechanisms. A young person wrote, 'If you are Muslim, staff will wake you up to say your prayers.'

Young people have a clear voice in the home. Their self-confidence and ability to express their views positively increases as they engage with the opportunities provided to share their wishes and feelings. Young people take it in turns to chair and minute young people's meetings allowing them to make requests that influence their care and to while they develop social skills.

The home promotes advocacy with regular visits being made by an independent person. Details of how to contact advocacy services are displayed openly in the home. Young people say they feel comfortable talking to staff and have no concerns.

Care planning takes a full account of the needs of young people and how these will be met by staff. Admission procedures include an appropriate consideration of the complexities of each young person and the dynamics of the current group. This enables a clear emphasis on matching prospective new young people with the needs of the whole living group.

Plans are devised in cooperation with other professionals such as a child psychologist and the home's nurse. The detailed plans utilise the model of care adopted, which focuses on meeting emotional wellbeing as a foundation to providing care and intervention. Care plans provide staff with clear guidance as to how to meet the needs of young people.

A comprehensive assessment process is in place to review the needs of young people against their initial care plan. Such reviews allow for a detailed consideration of all aspects of individual need. This takes place regularly and involves the whole staff team, teachers and psychologists. This enables all contributors to the care plan to review its effectiveness and subsequent progress

Young people receive good health care with particular emphasis on meeting their

emotional and psychological well-being. Mental health needs are identified and addressed. Mental wellbeing is seen as important and a normal part of growing up. The home have access to child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHs) which ensures young people can receive direct access to resources and intervention. The forthcoming addition of a mental health nurse to work directly with the home part time will aid this process further. Positive health promotion helps to avoid the risk of stigmatisation. Young people attend routine medical appointments with visits made to the home by opticians and doctors. Medication is appropriately stored and administered. Young people receive regular age-appropriate, confidential sexual health advice and guidance from health care specialists.

Young people enjoy nutritious meals and a healthy diet is promoted. The home caters for individual dietary needs and preferences. Young people say the food is good. Weekly meetings take place between young people and the home's cook to plan forthcoming menus and consider different meal options.

Education is highly valued and promoted in the home. There is an established culture that all young people attend resulting in high attendance rates. There is close liaison between education and care staff which ensures a learning culture permeates. This is especially important given the starting point of each young person when they are admitted; for some their progress in education has been exceptional. Young people who struggle to function in groups are provided with specific education programmes and one to one support to assist them to achieve at a pace commensurate with their abilities and current behavioural needs.

Young people benefit from assemblies in education which validate their learning and raise their awareness of current issues. Assemblies provide an opportunity for group recognition of achievements. The student of the week award contributes to young people developing increased self-esteem and pride in their progress. One young person was seen to be overjoyed with achieving this accolade for the first time.

Young people are provided with good support to enjoy activities and pursuits. The routines of the home provide structure, but at the same time are flexible and responsive to each young person's individual needs. Young people can participate in activities such as badminton, arts and crafts, alongside board games and games consoles.

Contact with families, friends and those people important to young people are promoted in line with placement plans. Young people have access to telephones with a suitable room set aside for visits from people important to them. Staff are very supportive of such arrangements with relatives commenting positively about the manner in which visits are facilitated and the caring nature of staff.

Young people are given good support and guidance as part of their preparation for

transition to community living. The home are proactive at challenging placing authorities who do not have plans in place to support young people when they leave the secure children's home. Staff liaise closely with new placements and facilitate visits by staff from these placements to meet with young people as part of agreed transition planning. Young people are also supported to visit new placements as part of their plan and, where appropriate, have overnight stays to build up relationships and familiarise themselves with their new surroundings. Such an approach assists in alleviating anxieties and enhances the chances of successful transitions.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires Improvement
<p>Young people say they feel, 'safe' and that 'it is a relief' to be in the home. Positive relationships between staff and young people are developed that enable young people to discuss their concerns, fears and reasons why they are living at the home; for example, placing themselves at risk of harm.</p> <p>Most of the current young people have histories of self-harming behaviour. Staff display a reasonable appreciation of how to meet such needs with many having experience of previously looking after young people with similar needs. The extent of some of the behaviours being exhibited is extreme. In response to these issues additional training has been arranged to enable staff to gain more specialised input as to how to care for young people who self-harm. Although scheduled to take place in the very near future this training has not yet been completed.</p> <p>Staff follow appropriate health and safety procedures which assist in keeping young people safe. These, coupled with detailed and implemented risk assessments and closed circuit television cameras (CCTV) ensure that shared areas are safe and secure environments for young people. Staff maintain contact with each other via radios. However, messages can clearly be heard by all in the vicinity. For example, whether one young person had gained their evening activity, was being discussed openly in front of other young people. While young people did not appear unduly unsettled by this, more care needs to be taken in relation to communications of this nature.</p> <p>Young people's bedrooms afford them comfort and privacy. The bedrooms in this relatively new building have a range of storage spaces for young people to use. Staff are able to see into the rooms via 'smart glass' panels that balance privacy and dignity with keeping young people safe. The floor covering in one young person's room has been removed. This is to provide further safeguards and to prevent self-harm opportunities, but this now leaves the room unwelcoming.</p>	

Improvements need to be made to ensure all bedrooms are safe and appropriately furnished for all young people.

Good links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) ensure that all child protection policies and procedures are consistent and agreed. The manager maintains positive links with the LSCB and the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) as well as being a member of a multi-agency advisory committee. No child protection referrals have been made since the last inspection.

Strong links with specialised external providers ensure young people previously involved in, or at risk of sexual exploitation, receive swift and focused intervention programmes. This enables young people to consider their vulnerabilities and gain a heightened awareness of the risks involved with the internet and in the wider community.

A suitable 'Missing Child Policy', developed in conjunction with locally agreed protocols is in place which staff follow in practice. Individual risk assessments and approved programmes allow young people to successfully engage in mobility activities in the community. This allows young people to further develop self-protection strategies, social and life skills and supports them to prepare for transition to future placements or on to independence.

There has been one incident of a young person absconding. This was while they were in the care of escorts and attending a routine appointment. The young person was located a short while later and returned to the home safely. Since this incident additional home staff have been deployed to assist escorts where risk assessments deem it necessary.

Clear policies identify when and why searches of communal areas and young people's bedrooms can take place. These are supported by further policies to protect young people during the need for any individual search. All searches are conducted to safeguard young people and are carried out with dignity. A young person said, 'I feel safe here because they (the staff) are doing their best for me.'

A clear behaviour management policy for the home is fully understood by all young people. They benefit from a reward system which allows them to build up to higher levels of independence. Young people take great pride in their achievements and all levels are attainable. Young people's individual and diverse needs are also addressed. For example, where young people need extra support, they are provided with individually tailored programmes designed specifically to help them to develop positive social skills and behaviour. A psychologist stated, 'Staff are shoring up the safety and the boundaries to get in touch with the emotion under the behaviour. They are playing that role that a parent hasn't done for him to make sense of what is happening.'

Appropriate sanctions are used where necessary by staff. Improved recording by

staff and monitoring by managers include whether or not restorative practices are used to benefit young people. Young people can also earn positive rewards and enjoy being able to do so. They take great pride in 'getting on to the reward board'. This effectively empowers young people to develop more appropriate coping mechanisms as they learn the benefits of demonstrating positive behaviours. A young person said, 'I've had a wicked morning because I behaved myself in education for the first time since I can remember. I'm really proud of myself.'

For the most part young people respond positively to the nurturing ethos within the home. Relationships between young people, staff and each other are good. This supports and empowers young people allowing them to engage and make good progress. A psychologist said, 'The staff are a warm team and they do have a knack for building good relationships and they do that well.'

Some young people need on occasion to be cared for separately from their peers due to risks to others. This time is planned carefully and the young person receives one to one support from staff at all times. As soon as it is deemed safe for all concerned, the young person is reintegrated back in to the group. A young person said she felt, '100% supported, safe and cared for.'

Young people's good relationships with staff mean that physical interventions are relatively low in number. Individual risk assessments, known and implemented by staff, provide further safeguards to young people detailing the methods of restraint that can be utilised. Recording of events by staff is steadily improving and young people are always provided with the opportunity to see or speak with a health professional and receive medical intervention if necessary. They can also speak with an independent advocate. Young people can have their comments added to records and this provides them with the opportunity to learn from the experience and take positive steps in their behaviour to prevent the need for future physical interventions. One young person wrote, 'I talked this through with (the manager). This is right!'

Significant improvements have been made regarding the use and recording of single separation. Records now clearly demonstrate why young people are singly separated and the justification in line with government guidance. Young people are carefully monitored while alone in their rooms. Young people are encouraged to record their responses to any periods of single separation and the majority do so; one young person wrote, 'I was going to have a chill out day on my own' and another that it was 'fair enuff' following a period of directed separation.

The management and staff team are well aware of the potential for bullying behaviours and work proactively to prevent any such behaviour. Young people use opportunities provided for them in their regular meetings and through restorative justice sessions to address any issues. This allows them to develop an understanding of bullying behaviour, including discussing all aspects of E-Safety in

detail and how to prevent being bullied on line. Young people did not report any concerns about bullying in the home.

Two new staff members have been appointed since the last inspection. Local authority recruitment procedures were effectively followed. This helps to ensure that the right people are employed to work with vulnerable children.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires Improvement
<p>The home is managed appropriately. The Registered Manager shows a commitment to meet young people's needs displays a resolve to look after them despite the considerable challenges some of them present. The Registered Manager and managers from the local authority are fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the home and indeed the areas that need to improve. In particular the lack of consistency in staff practice. All parties acknowledged the need for greater improvement and displayed a strong desire to address the shortfalls and improve the overall effectiveness of the home.</p> <p>The Registered Manager has a suitable level of experience being registered with Ofsted some 16 months ago. He is qualified and displays a sound understanding of the needs of young people in his care. The Registered Manager has appropriately high expectations of staff and has taken action to improve consistency when standards fall below those expected. He is mindful that some members of staff are requiring more time to develop their learning and practice.</p> <p>Requirements and recommendations made at the last inspection have been addressed. This has resulted in more robust practice regarding single separation and the giving of sanctions, improved standards of record keeping such as restraints, and improved outdoor facilities including plant holders and seating.</p> <p>The Statement of Purpose was reviewed by the home and updated in May 2015. In general it covers most aspects of care provided, though not all areas of service provision are clearly described. For example, records evidence that the home admitted a young person overnight under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE). While this is an area of care and accommodation that the home provides, and indeed was in the best interests of the young person concerned, the home's Statement of Purpose does not detail that this may occur. Therefore it is not clear how the potential impact on that individual and other young people in the home is to be managed.</p> <p>Feedback from social workers and relatives confirmed the home is run in a way</p>	

that places the individual needs of young people as the paramount concern. Extremely positive responses were received concerning the efforts made to keep young people safe and indeed the progress they make. A social work team manager wrote, '(Name) and myself have both been impressed by the way you have engaged with her; the relationship and trust she has developed with you and how this has helped her move forward positively and engage with a range of different people.'

A suitable complaints process is in place which is followed in practice. Young people say they know how to complain and feel confident to do so. Very few complaints have been made, with the Registered Manager responding swiftly and appropriately. The regularity of young people's meetings coupled with the amount of contact managers have directly with young people allows for continued communication which results in low level issues being addressed as a matter of routine.

Good levels of inter-agency working are in place to ensure young people are provided with the services they require. For example, the Registered Manager has appropriately challenged partner agencies to put in place firm exit strategies and pathway plans at the earliest possible opportunity irrespective of the length of any secure order. Social workers and health care professionals commented positively on the levels and quality of communication. Such established networks result in joint strategies aimed at assisting young people to settle and progress.

Appropriate monitoring processes are in place that routinely assess, review and evaluate the quality of care being provided. The Registered Manager completes regular reviews of care that are objective and accurately reflect the progress of young people. External independent monitoring occurs monthly which provides a useful critique of the home and the quality of care provision. A new format has seen an improvement in the evaluation of care standards which includes a much greater emphasis on capturing the views, opinions and progress of young people.

Appropriate numbers of staff are deployed night and day. A large number of staff have worked in the home for many years and are experienced in looking after young people in a secure environment. Good levels of routine training are provided with a majority of staff holding a relevant qualification in care; the few that do not currently have this are working toward obtaining one.

In the main, communication amongst staff is clear and effective. On occasion there appears some confusion regarding specific routines for certain young people. For example, inspectors observed a young person requesting to participate in a sporting activity. There then followed a period of uncertainty where staff were unsure whether this could take place or not; the young person concerned was clearly frustrated. This event highlights some inconsistency in shift planning and communication and runs the risk of creating situations of conflict that could easily be avoided.

	Judgement grade
Outcomes in education and related learning activities	N/A
Not inspected on this occasion.	

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place, however, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

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

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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