

## Children's homes – Interim inspection

<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>21/02/2017</b>
<b>Unique reference number</b>	<b>SC031490</b>
<b>Type of inspection</b>	<b>Interim</b>
<b>Provision subtype</b>	<b>Secure unit</b>
<b>Registered provider</b>	<b>East Sussex County Council</b>
<b>Registered provider address</b>	<b>County Hall, St. Annes Crescent LEWES East Sussex BN7 1UE</b>
<b>Responsible Individual</b>	<b>Elizabeth Rugg</b>
<b>Registered manager</b>	<b>Nigel Hewitt</b>
<b>Inspector</b>	<b>Paul Scott</b>

<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>21/02/2017</b>
<b>Previous inspection judgement</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>
<b>Enforcement action since last inspection</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>This inspection</b>	
<p><b>The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection</b></p> <p>This home was judged <b>requires improvement</b> at the full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judges that it has <b>improved effectiveness</b>.</p> <p>Young people continue to benefit from the care and support they receive during their stay at this home. Their individual needs, risks and vulnerabilities are comprehensively assessed at the point of admission. Detailed plans are put into place to deliver focused interventions that address effectively each young person's individual behaviours, risks and vulnerabilities that have led to them being placed in a secure setting. Over time, young people find a sense of stability in their often chaotic lives. A contributory factor to this and a major strength of the home, is the positive relationships that exist between staff and young people. During the inspection, young people appeared relaxed and at ease with staff. One young person said, 'The staff are the best thing about being here, well most of them are anyway. I know I can be difficult but they try their best.'</p> <p>A comprehensive service review has been completed since the last inspection. This was commissioned by the local authority, which recognised the need to address a number of operational and performance shortfalls in the home. These concerns were further verified at the full inspection on 12 July 2016, which resulted in 11 breaches of regulations, predominantly relating to leadership and management. These activities culminated in a comprehensive service and improvement plan being developed. This plan has been well implemented by the home's management team and staff, under the close oversight and scrutiny of senior managers from within the authority. Collectively, they have demonstrated a strong commitment to driving an improvement agenda that has without doubt improved the effectiveness of service delivery.</p> <p>The manager and staff have worked exceptionally hard to address the requirements and recommendations from the previous inspection, with all but one requirement being met. This repeated shortfall relates to records of restraint and single separation, both of which are proportionately and sensitively applied in practice. There continue to be inconsistencies in the completion of these records, with a number of them found to be missing key information, such as the duration of the intervention and staff debrief. Managers recognise that some of this is down to the format of the record and are in the process of redesigning these documents to make them simpler to complete.</p>	

Procedures for managing safeguarding concerns and allegations have been strengthened. Comprehensive and well-organised records are now kept. Scrutiny of these records confirms that the manager is routinely following the organisation's safeguarding procedures. This includes contacting the designated officer for the local authority prior to any investigative steps being taken. It is also clear from these records and the notifications sent to Ofsted, that the right action has been taken to protect young people in all cases. All safeguarding concerns and allegations, of which there have been 12 in total since the last inspection, have been thoroughly investigated and concluded before temporary protective measures have been removed.

Young people's safety and security continue to be given high priority. Staff know young people well and demonstrate a good understanding of their individual behaviours, risks and vulnerabilities. Risk-management plans are followed to ensure young people get the right support when presenting high-risk behaviour, such as self-harm. Managers have issued a range of guidance to staff that is designed to improve the responses to self-harming behaviour. This includes guidance on the use of anti-rip clothing, as well as making clear the staff's responsibility in maintaining a safe, hazard-free environment. When shortfalls in practice have occurred, managers have been quick to revise protocols to ensure any future risk is mitigated. Consequently, young people live in a much safer home.

Mobility risk assessments are less generic than previously noted and now consider the specific risks associated with different activities. This improved level of planning means that potential risks are recognised and planned for prior to the mobility taking place. This has further strengthened the home's risk-aware approach to mobility, which helps young people in preparation for when they leave. Consequently, all young people have been able to engage in purposeful activities in the community and attend appointments when safe for them to do so.

Young people continue to benefit from the care and support of an extremely dedicated team of staff who are enthusiastic and resilient in their efforts to care for them. A great deal of emphasis has been placed on increasing staffing levels and reducing the over-reliance on agency staff seen at the last inspection. Ongoing recruitment strategies and rigorous interview processes have resulted in the appointment of a number of staff who have further strengthened the existing team. As a result, the need for agency staff has reduced significantly, improving the continuity of care for young people.

There are still times when agency staff are used. Managers have taken steps to ensure agency staff have the necessary skills to work with this highly vulnerable and challenging group of young people. For example, they have agreed with the agency the minimum requirements in terms of qualifications, experience and training. All agency staff are now subject to a basic induction prior to working with young people. Expectations in terms of their role are made clear from the outset. For example, there is a clear directive that they should not restrain young people

unless they are trained in the home's method of physical intervention. Every effort is made to use the same agency staff wherever possible, offering some fixed-term contracts. These workers are now provided with the same training opportunities as the permanent staff and are often regarded as part of the team, with some moving into permanent employment.

All staff receive regular supervision from a suitably experienced person. Staff spoken to during the inspection confirm that this is purposeful and that they are much more confident that issues raised during supervision will be addressed, and that those noted at the last meeting have been resolved. This has resulted in improved interactions between staff, who speak very positively about the changes that have taken place.

The home's statement of purpose has been reviewed recently, and a copy of this revised document has been received by Ofsted. It provides detailed information about the home's overall aims and objectives, as well as offering the reader a good insight into the services and support on offer to young people in need of secure accommodation. The outlined principles are consistently put into practice, with young people receiving a generally high standard of care, support and protection.

Redefining the roles of the deputy managers means that they have each been delegated specific areas of responsibility which they quality assure. This has brought about an improved focus to the monitoring of the defined areas of residential care, care planning and security. The registered manager maintains overall oversight and has introduced a number of systems to help him do this. For example, through sampling the monitoring activity of his deputies and measuring against a range of key performance indicators, he is able to identify when shortfalls occur. However, some aspects of his monitoring needs further improvement to ensure he is identifying and addressing all shortfalls – for example, when behaviour management records are incomplete. This said, monitoring activity has significantly improved.

Young people can more easily access the materials needed to make a formal complaint. They no longer have to rely on staff providing materials such as complaints forms, pens and paper as these are freely available to them. There have been 23 recorded complaints since the last inspection, 21 being from young people. Complaints records are now better organised and provide good evidence that appropriate steps have been taken to manage these to a satisfactory conclusion.

A great deal of focus has been placed on developing the home's recording systems, which now better demonstrate how young people have been consulted about their care. A senior worker has taken on the role of 'young people's voice champion' and has made good progress in expanding the opportunities for young people to express their views and opinions through formal consultation. For example, the 'you said – we did' approach is now fully embedded into practice, with monthly questionnaires being completed by young people. This information, combined with

the outcomes from the weekly meetings held with young people, has resulted in a number of changes to the day-to-day running of the home. For example, the incentive and rewards system has recently changed at the request of young people.

During the inspection, a number of young people expressed their frustration with some of the rules and routines, which they perceived to be unfair and too strict, and which they felt staff were being too rigid in applying. It was clear from discussions that staff are not offering explanations that help young people understand the rationale behind some of the rules and routines, and why staff appear reluctant to use a common-sense approach when in the best interests of young people. This was evident when one young person spoke about the difficulty he has waiting for staff to let him out of his bedroom in the morning, particularly at weekends. Based on this young person's individual needs, this is clearly not in his best interests and does little to help him manage his behaviour. Positively, the manager has recognised that getting young people's views first-hand is important, and he has recently started meeting with them weekly to gather their views. This is still in its early stages, and plans are in place to increase the amount of time that the manager spends with young people.

## 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.

## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/07/2016	Full	Requires improvement
06/10/2015	Full	Good
20/05/2015	Full	Requires improvement
13/10/2014	Full	Adequate

## 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 within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>7. The children's views, wishes and feelings standard</p> <p>In order to meet the children's views, wishes and feelings standard, in particular the standard in paragraph (1), the registered person must ensure that staff:</p> <p>(2)(a)(i) ascertain and consider each child's views, wishes and feelings, and balance these against what they judge to be in the child's best interests when making decisions about the child's care and welfare.</p>	23/03/2017
<p>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. This is with specific reference to ensuring that records of restraint and single separation are completed fully and include all required information relating to the duration of the intervention. (Regulation 35(3)(a)(iv))</p>	23/03/2017

### Recommendations

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

- The registered person should ensure that all incidents of control, discipline and restraint are subject to regular and thorough scrutiny. This is with particular reference to the registered manager being more rigorous in his monitoring of restraint records and ensuring that shortfalls in recording are addressed. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.36)

## **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 that 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 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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