

SC031490

Registered provider: East Sussex County Council

Assurance inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this secure children's home

This home is managed by a local authority. It is approved by the Department for Education to restrict children's liberty. The home can accommodate up to seven children aged between 10 and 17 years. At the time of this inspection, there were three children living at the home.

Admission of any child under Section 25 of the Children Act 1989 who is under 13 years of age requires the approval of the Secretary of State.

Education is provided on site in dedicated facilities. The commissioning of health services in this home is the statutory responsibility of NHS England under the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

There is a registered manager in post.

Inspection date: 2 August 2022

Date of last inspection: 14 December 2021

Judgement at last inspection: Good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Information about this inspection

At these inspections, the inspectors evaluated:

- the care of children
- the safety of children
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers.

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children, using the social care common inspection framework. This assurance 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'.

Findings from the inspection

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance inspection.

The care of children

Children receive nurturing, therapeutic care in this home and are making progress. Staff know the children's needs and histories; continuous multi-agency assessment ensures that care practice is well informed. Children said they have positive relationships with staff and that they feel safe in the home. One child said, 'Staff help us a lot. I don't always understand my feelings, but this is the safest I have felt.'

Children are being supported to overcome barriers to education. Care staff and education staff are working together to agree strategies to support children to be reintroduced to education routines after periods of time of being out of education.

One social worker said that she was aware of the progress that a child was making due to experiencing consistent routines. She has been impressed with staff being 'child centred, nurturing and patient whatever the behaviours the child presents'.

Staff support and promote children's contact with family and friends, as agreed in their plans. One child has kept in touch with staff and children from her old school by phone and emails. Children have visits with family. Some children go out with family when this has been assessed to be safe. Some telephone calls and visits are monitored when this is necessary. Staff have clear guidance about monitoring these arrangements to ensure that children's right to privacy is respected.

Children have enjoyed planned summer activities. The day before this inspection, a magician visited the home and children reported that they enjoyed this visit as well as other activities. One child has a pet and all of the children enjoy pets being brought into the home for visits.

Children benefit from planned, risk-assessed time outside of the home. Staff have been creative by arranging for a child to experience a secure car journey, as she has not yet been able to spend time safely in the community. This was to help motivate the child to want to experience a visit to a resource.

Staff seek and take account of children's views about their plans and their daily care.

There is a multi-disciplinary health team on site to inform meeting and monitoring children's health needs. Children have improved sleep routines and diets as a result of education, care and health staff working together to influence changes to unhealthy habits and choices.

The safety of children

Children currently living in the home have complex histories and all are benefiting from detailed, comprehensive risk assessment and behaviour management plans. The multi-disciplinary team around the child review and update plans regularly. Behaviour support plans have been developed to be more child friendly so that children understand what staff are worried about, and they encourage children to contribute to them.

Staff have received training in, and are experienced and skilled in, supporting children who are at risk of self-harm. Some children in the home present specific self-harm behaviours. The managers and staff proactively seek advice and guidance, and are developing knowledge and expertise to reduce risk and minimise harm.

Some children require a high level of monitoring and supervision to keep them safe. Staff are creative and sensitive in ensuring children's safety while trying to help children cope when they are in crisis. There has been a high incidence of self-harm incidents and interventions. Most interventions are low level, but staff assess and record every incident and every measure that they put in place to manage risks as they emerge. There are a small number of occasions when records are not fully complete, and a small number of occasions when the manager has reviewed records but not signed them off. This includes records of measures such as children being separated from the group and children being managed away from the group. There has been no impact to the safety of children as a result of incomplete records.

There has also been a number of incidents when children have assaulted staff. On a small number of occasions, the police have been called to the home for support in order to prevent harm to staff and/or to prevent children harming themselves. None of these occasions have resulted in children being arrested or prosecuted. The manager works closely with police to promote local police visits to the home in a preventative way. This helps them to have a shared understanding of how they can work together to support children in crisis and reduce the risk of criminalising them.

There has been one occasion recently when a child has shared information with a professional independent of the home, which was reported as a complaint but was in fact an allegation of harm. This caused a delay in following the correct procedures to investigate the concern. This has subsequently been addressed and referred to the local authority designated officer for safeguarding. There has been no direct impact with regard to children's safety and welfare as a result of this delay.

All staff receive training in the use of behaviour management and physical restraints during their induction to the home. There has been a relatively high number of occasions when staff have used physical interventions in respect of one child. On most occasions, these are low-level holds where staff intervene to prevent an escalation of harm. The records sampled evidence that the criteria for physical restraint was met to prevent the child harming themselves or others. The instructor for the physical restraints training also reviews interventions and provides advice to ensure that physical interventions are carried out safely and in line with guidance.

Staff seek advice and work closely with the mental health team and physical health nurse within the home. They also liaise with health professionals in the community to closely monitor the child's health needs and to help to reduce the need to physically intervene.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

There is an experienced registered manager in post. Since the last inspection, the management team has been strengthened and developed. There are a small number of vacancies for care staff in the home. Some staff who have been recruited have not yet started. A small number of agency staff who are familiar with the home and the children are currently employed.

Managers are committed to supporting staff to keep children safe. They are flexible and responsive to the needs of the children living in the home and the needs of the staff group. Due to the high level of monitoring for some children, managers are assisting with direct care of children and overseeing shifts. This has been helpful in identifying good practice and areas for development. However, there has been some impact to the quality assurance of records.

The recommendation from the most-recent full inspection regarding training for education staff was not reviewed at this inspection so remains in place from the last full inspection.

The management team has taken effective action and sought advice appropriately from human resources and senior managers when they have identified any practice concerns. Apart from one example previously mentioned, where an allegation was not promptly identified, there is clear evidence of a robust response to any safeguarding concerns. The local authority designated officer was very positive about contact with managers and the quality of partnership working with the home to keep children safe. This includes managers and external professionals reviewing CCTV footage when it is helpful to do so.

Staff reported that they feel supported by managers and by peers. There are regular team meetings and reflective practice sessions for staff. Staff can also choose to have individual reflective sessions. A sample of supervision records provided evidence that there have been some gaps in supervision when staff and/or managers have not been available. Some notes are brief, and it would help staff development for some of the information to be more purposeful. However, all supervisions that were reviewed discussed and considered staff welfare.

Managers are tracking staff training and development, including the progress that staff are making in achieving mandatory qualifications. This is so that they can target support to enable staff to become qualified.

The management team has developed the environment for children. There is a sensory room and a gym that are now ready for use. The staff team is developing agreements for their use with children.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/12/2021	Full	Good
03/08/2021	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
25/02/2020	Full	Good
12/11/2019	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

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.

Requirement	Due date
<p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff—</p> <p>understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person;</p> <p>and are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(v)(vii))</p> <p>The registered person should ensure that managers and staff receive refresher training about responding appropriately to allegations against adults who work with children.</p>	3 October 2022

Recommendations

- Leaders should ensure that children with complex learning needs receive the specialist speech and language therapy support that they require to make even better progress. Leaders should provide teachers with training on effective curriculum planning and teaching, in line with current research, so that all children learn equally well across all subjects. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 29, paragraph 5.18)
- The registered person is responsible for ensuring that all staff consistently follow the home's policies and procedures for the benefit of the children in the home's care. The manager should ensure that staff are consistently following policy and guidance in respect of recording of events of children being subject to single separations and children being managed away from their peers. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.20)

- The registered person should actively seek independent scrutiny of the home and make the best use of the information from independent monitoring to ensure continuous improvement. The registered person should ensure that the independent visitor shares any concerns arising from a visit to the home in a timely way. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)

Secure children's home details

Unique reference number: SC031490

Provision sub-type: Secure Unit

Registered provider: East Sussex County Council

Registered provider address: East Sussex County Council, County Hall St Anne's Crescent, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 1UE

Responsible individual: Kathy Marriott

Registered manager: Scott Lipa

Inspectors

Cathey Moriarty, Social Care Inspector
Debbie Foster, Social Care Inspector

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