

# SC037454

Registered provider: West Sussex County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

This home is operated by the local authority. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to five children. The overall aim of the home is to provide high-quality care in a warm and caring environment, where the children are supported to come to terms with their past and current difficulties and begin to prepare for their future.

The registered manager has been registered with Ofsted since November 2020. He was not present at this inspection. There is currently an interim manager at the home who was present throughout the inspection. The responsible individual was also present on the first day of the inspection.

### Inspection dates: 8 and 9 November 2022

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account** **good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of last inspection:** 2 August 2022

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** inadequate

### Enforcement action since last inspection:

A compliance notice under Regulation 12: The protection of children standard, was issued on 10 August 2022. Following a monitoring visit to the home on 13 September 2022, an amended version of this compliance notice was reissued on 22

September 2022. At this inspection, the steps in the compliance notice were found to have been met.

## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
02/08/2022	Full	Inadequate
25/05/2021	Full	Outstanding
28/11/2018	Full	Good
09/01/2018	Full	Outstanding

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good**

Following a period of disruption in the home earlier in the year, effective measures have been taken to restore a sense of calm and good order. A homely atmosphere has been created and the staff have become more skilled in maintaining appropriate boundaries. The children have benefited from these changes. One child said the home is calmer, the children get on with each other and, as a result, they can sleep better at night. Most of the children have made some progress towards meeting their goals, although one child remains at risk of coming to harm. This is not attributable to any shortfalls in practice by the staff.

The staff know the children well and have a good understanding of their individual needs and vulnerabilities. They can rationalise the behaviour of the children and link this to the past negative experiences they may have been subjected to. The staff were observed to be attentive towards the children, taking an interest in how their day had been and in their longer-term plans. The children are all at different stages in building positive relationships with key members of staff.

The children's engagement with education remains variable, although one child has made excellent progress at college. The managers and staff have demonstrated a strong commitment to working in partnership with education providers to enhance the prospects of the children increasing their level of engagement with their education provision.

A more aspirational approach is being taken to helping the children engage in activities and develop their social and independent living skills. Most of the children have made progress in this area, commensurate with their starting points and level of ability. This can be partly attributed to the staff taking a more determined and creative approach when the children struggle with their motivation. In one case, there has been a slight delay in developing an independent living skills plan for a child who has a plan for moving on from the home.

The staff are familiar with the health needs of the children, and they take steps to promote a healthy lifestyle. Staff support the children to access specialist healthcare services, in relation to both their physical and mental well-being, when it becomes apparent that the child will benefit from a specific intervention. A strong and effective working partnership has been established with the child and adolescent mental health service. This partnership also benefits the staff, who have access to professional guidance on how to meet the emotional needs of the children.

There is a strong commitment to hearing the views and opinions of the children who live at the home. The children's house meetings are effective forums for hearing the children's views. One child, who has struggled to engage fully in the life of the home, makes a special effort to make sure they can attend the children's meetings. The children know how to make a complaint and the managers and staff have taken

a more considered approach to whether a child's concerns constitute a formal complaint.

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

Leaders and managers have developed and implemented a comprehensive action plan to improve safeguarding practice at the home since the last full inspection in August 2022. This has had a positive impact and, because of the actions the staff have taken, the potential for the children to come to harm has reduced. The staff are now more confident in implementing the home's child protection policies and procedures, and they are better equipped to manage any challenging situations that may arise.

The staff are tenacious in their approach to developing trusting relationships with the children. In most cases, there is strong evidence to indicate that the children will speak to the staff about any concerns they may have. When a child appears more reluctant to engage, the staff reflect on what has worked well to build the relationship, and what more can be done to gain the child's trust.

Practice relating to the assessment and management of risk has improved significantly. The children's individual risk assessments now reflect the extent of the child's vulnerabilities and are promptly updated when any significant information becomes known. The risk assessments contain effective measures to reduce the potential for the child to come to harm, and these are being implemented in practice. Despite this good progress, one example was found where an agency member of staff had not read all the children's updated risk assessments, and was therefore not familiar with all the strategies in place to keep the children safe.

Since the inspection in August 2022, the staff have increased their knowledge and skills in relation to contextual safeguarding. Consequently, they are more alert to indicators that a child could be being exploited. The staff now demonstrate increased levels of professional curiosity regarding the children's friends and associates, and any changes they detect in a child's behaviour and presentation.

There has been an excellent response to children who go missing from the home. The staff have been persistent in trying to locate any missing children at the earliest opportunity. There has been a co-ordinated response from the manager and senior staff, which has ensured effective multi-agency planning to reduce the risks associated with children going missing. A specialist exploitation social worker commented on the quality of the planning that went into responding to a child returning from a missing episode.

A recommendation was made at the inspection in August 2022 in relation to ensuring that the interior of the home was well maintained. Although the shortfalls identified in August 2022 have been rectified, some of the fixtures and fittings in one child's bedroom were not secure. This presented an unnecessary risk to the child's health and safety.

A more reflective approach is now being taken to promoting positive behaviour and positive relationships between the children. Consequently, the staff are now more likely to identify behaviour management strategies that are not working, and think about alternative methods for responding to any unwanted behaviours. The children have been encouraged to engage in positive activities together and the children are now more likely to use agreed forums, such as the children's house meetings, to resolve any emerging conflicts.

There has been a thorough response to any emerging child protection concerns. Effective communication takes place with the relevant safeguarding professionals when there are concerns for a child's welfare. A high standard of recording in child protection files ensures there are clear audit trails of the actions being taken to ensure the child is kept safe.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

The home has been effectively managed by an interim manager since the inspection in August 2022. The manager has been supported well by the responsible individual, who has maintained a strong presence and oversight in the home. The registered manager is due to return to the home in December 2022 and there are plans in place to support him taking back the day-to-day management of the home.

Following the inadequate judgement made in August 2022, the management team developed a comprehensive improvement plan, which has now been fully implemented in practice. This has been effective in raising the standard of practice and the quality of care being delivered. A culture of learning from practice and from mistakes has become established. This has been achieved by identifying gaps in the knowledge and skills of the staff team and taking action to assist individual team members with their professional development. There are now more opportunities for the staff to reflect on their practice and to learn from a range of external professionals during team meetings.

To assist the staff with their professional development, observed practice sessions have recently been introduced. This practice is yet to become embedded. At this stage, the standard of the recording of these sessions is neither detailed nor evaluative enough to be able to give the practitioner a true sense of their strengths and areas for development.

There is effective quality of care monitoring systems. These have been a contributory factor to the overall improvement in standards at the home. The management team reviews all significant incidents and an analytical approach is taken to whether the staff responded appropriately. The quality assurance lead for the authority has also played a significant role in shaping and implementing the home's improvement plan.

Overall, the standard of care planning has improved. The children's impact risk assessments are now being used as a tool to reflect on whether the children's individual changing circumstances are having an impact on their peers. Changes

have also been made to the format of the impact risk assessment, but there have been no recent new admissions to the home, and these changes are yet to be fully tested for effectiveness.

The staff have access to a comprehensive training programme and their training records are now being monitored more closely. More evaluation is now being undertaken of how effective the training has been, in terms of meeting the learning needs of the staff. The staff also benefit from receiving regular, good-quality supervision. The staff are feeling well supported and the morale amongst the team has increased significantly in recent weeks.

The management team maintains effective lines of communication with a range of professionals involved in the lives of the children. Strong representations have been made to educational professionals to try and resolve any issues preventing a child from engaging fully with their education. There have also been appropriate referrals made to local and national safeguarding agencies, which have resulted in a multi-disciplinary approach being taken to meeting the children's needs.

## 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—</p> <p>that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(d))</p>	19 December 2022

### Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the staff help each child to prepare for any moves from the home, whether they are returning home, moving to another placement or adult care, or to live independently. This is with specific reference to ensuring that, where appropriate, children have effective independent living skills plans in place. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 17, paragraph 3.27)
- The registered person should ensure that the home's workforce plan is used to record the ongoing training and continuing professional development needs of staff. This is with specific reference to ensuring that observed practice records are detailed and contain an evaluation of the staff member's practice. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)
- The registered person should ensure that the use of agency staff is carefully monitored and reviewed to ensure children receive continuity of care. This is with specific reference to ensuring that agency staff are familiar with the content of the children's individual risk assessments. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.16)



## **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:** SC037454

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** West Sussex County Council

**Registered provider address:** County Hall, West Street, Chichester, West Sussex PO19 1RG

**Responsible individual:** Julian Skeates

**Registered manager:** Mark Davies

## Inspectors

Stephen Collett, Social Care Inspector  
Hannah Cox, Social Care Inspector

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Manchester  
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