

SC045408

Registered provider: Surrey County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home provides a short-break service for up to two children who experience social, emotional and mental health difficulties. It is operated by Surrey County Council and the local NHS trust. There was one child staying at the home at the time of the inspection.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since September 2022.

Inspection dates: 6 to 7 August 2024

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 3 May 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
03/05/2023	Full	Good
29/11/2022	Full	Good
29/03/2022	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
06/10/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children make exceptional progress in relation to their emotional well-being when they come to stay at this home. This is because they are looked after by staff who are deeply committed to building and maintaining positive relationships with them. Staff stay in contact with children after they leave, which helps children to feel secure and cared for. One child said, 'The staff should be praised for what they do, they meet us with open arms, and they make us feel safe.'

The processes that are followed when children move into and out of the home are extremely thorough and thoughtful. Managers and staff work closely with children's families and other professionals to ensure that short breaks are planned meticulously. Children's agreement to stay at the home is sought. This makes children feel empowered and helps to ensure that they engage positively with assessments and support.

Children have clear placement objectives to improve their mental health. They benefit from having opportunities to participate in a wide range of activities. This includes activities that introduce them to therapeutic strategies that help to improve their confidence and self-esteem. The parent of one child told the inspector that their child still successfully uses the strategies they learned when they came to stay at the home.

Staff and managers demonstrate a deep commitment to acting on children's wishes and proactively advocating for children. In one example, a child asked to stay longer at the home so that they could complete their exams, and this was arranged for them. The child told the inspector that they were overjoyed by the staff team's commitment to them.

When staff have concerns about children's health, they arrange for children to have appointments with medical professionals. This is done in consultation with children's parents. For example, some children have benefited from medication reviews.

Children leave messages about their stays on artwork that is proudly displayed in the home. The messages are for other children and staff and demonstrate that children are overwhelmingly appreciative of the support they receive to improve their mental health.

Children's progress is measured by assessments of their emotional well-being when they arrive and when they leave. The results show the remarkable progress that children make. Children's parents and external professionals spoken to during the inspection were unanimous in their praise for the quality of care that the children receive. Additionally, thank you letters written by children demonstrate that they highly value staff and managers.

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

The home has been adapted to ensure that it is safe for children. The adaptations do not restrict children's liberty and the home is not institutionalised. The environment is calming and therapeutic.

Staff understand and implement children's care plans and risk assessments, which clearly describe the actions staff should take when risks arise. The plans are written in collaboration with children. As a result, staff are looking after children and keeping them safe in line with their preferences.

Many of the children who come to the home have a history of displaying behaviour that puts them at risk of harm. When they come to the home, the frequency of this behaviour dramatically reduces as children learn other ways of coping and expressing their feelings.

Children rarely go missing from care because staff build strong relationships with them in a short period of time. Staff proactively encourage children not to leave the home without permission and go with them if they do choose to leave. Managers work closely with the police. There are agreed protocols in place to ensure a quick response from the police if children who are at risk of harming themselves go missing from care.

When children make allegations about staff, managers respond robustly to ensure the safety of children, involving external safeguarding professionals when necessary. Effective and open communication with other professionals further underpins the safeguarding culture and promotes children's safety.

Careful planning and matching takes place to ensure that children who stay at the home together have needs that are compatible. When the manager assesses that children need to stay on their own at the home, she makes sure that this happens.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The therapeutic model of care at the centre of the home's ethos has been designed by leaders and managers. The home exists to ensure that children who are experiencing mental health difficulties get the support that they need in a community setting. Managers share their expertise about this exceptional model with other local authorities.

The registered manager is ambitious and has a clear vision about how to provide excellent care for children who are in crisis. She is highly motivated and ensures that children have a positive time at the home while achieving the goals that are important to them and their families.

Robust recruitment practice ensures that the adults working in the home are suitable to work with children and that they have the attitude and skills that they need to provide high-quality care.

The registered manager recognised that there were risks associated with agency staff working at night in the home. She took decisive action and appropriately challenged senior leaders to reach a resolution which improved children's safety and well-being.

Children's views and participation in decisions that affect them are given high priority by managers. Managers speak with pride when describing children's progress and the commitment from the established staff team.

Staff say that they enjoy working at the home and they have a great deal of respect for the management team. One staff member told the inspector, 'It is a privilege to work in such a wonderful environment.' They said that the manager is always available to talk through problems and to help with finding solutions.

Focused team meetings provide staff with opportunities to improve their knowledge and understanding about how to meet children's needs. Staff receive clinical supervision that is used as a reflective and developmental tool. Records do not demonstrate that all staff receive supervision at agreed intervals. Nonetheless, staff are clear about their developmental goals.

The strong leadership of the home and the quality of care create an environment where staff are proud to work and in which children make remarkable progress.

What does the children's home need to do to improve? Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that a note of the content and/or outcomes of supervision sessions is kept and ensure that both the person giving the supervision and staff member have a copy of the record. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.4)

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: SC045408

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Surrey County Council

Registered provider address: Surrey County Council, Quadrant Court 35 Guildford Road, Woking GU22 7QQ

Responsible individual: Lisa Wade

Registered manager: Samantha Heighes

Inspector

Sonata Brisley, Social Care Inspector

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