

1266835

Registered provider: Action for Children

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home provides short breaks for children aged between eight and 18 who may have a learning disability and/or complex health needs. The home provides care for up to five children at any given time. The home is owned and operated by a national organisation. The manager has been registered with Ofsted since April 2019.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspection on 12 April 2021.

We last visited this setting on 3 November 2020 to carry out an assurance visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 December 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
---	--

How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
---	---------------------------------

The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
---	---------------------------------

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.

Date of last inspection: 11 February 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: declined in effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/02/2020	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
05/08/2019	Full	Good
01/03/2019	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
10/05/2018	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Children enjoy visiting for short breaks at this home. They are making progress in developing their communication, social and independence skills. Children are learning to cook and love doing this activity when they visit. Since the installation of a height-adjustable cooker, more children are able to take part in cooking activities. The home has extensive outdoor space, a separate playroom and a range of sensory equipment. These areas provide children with ample space to have fun during their visits.

Staff understand the children's needs, but written plans to support these needs require improvement. Some plans are not current and others contain incorrect information about the children. The inaccuracies were addressed during the inspection. Other information in children's plans is detailed and provides clear guidance for staff, particularly regarding children's health needs. The exception to this relates to the use of a visual monitor for one child, where a lack of clear guidance has led to inconsistency, with some staff incorrectly using the monitor during the day.

Consultation with children is good. Children have chosen to call the consultation approach 'very important people meetings'. Children's views were sought in planning the building work and refurbishment of the home. This work has led to an improvement in the quality of the environment and additional specialist and accessible provision that benefits children.

The home closed during the building and refurbishment work. During the closure, staff took children on day trips to provide support for families. Parents spoken to really appreciated this.

Since the assurance visit in November 2020, there have been three medication errors. Appropriate action was taken to address the errors. However, some staff did not report the errors to leaders and managers in a timely manner as required.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Safeguarding practices and corresponding records require improvement. Notifications and reporting to the designated officer and Ofsted are not completed in a timely manner. Records do not consistently contain all the information required, including the details of concerns raised by staff. Staff who investigate incidents do not consistently date and sign their reports and statements. Although staff demonstrated an appropriate understanding of their safeguarding roles and responsibilities in discussion with the inspector, this understanding is not consistently evident in practice.

Children's behaviours are managed appropriately. However, some behaviour-support plans lack details on the distraction techniques staff are expected to use with children. This could lead to inconsistent practice.

Risk is managed appropriately. Risk assessments are detailed, current and provide clear guidance for staff.

Safer recruitment practice, including for agency staff, is appropriately undertaken. However, leaders and managers do not always obtain a reference or clarification of the reasons why employment ended for staff who have worked in several care provisions previously.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

Leaders and managers have a realistic view of the service. They understand the home's strengths and most of the areas for improvement. The manager is appropriately qualified and experienced for the role. Staff and parents are very positive regarding the manager, who they feel is supportive and approachable.

Leaders and managers have ensured that the recommendations from the previous inspection have been met.

Leaders and managers have managed the home effectively during the pandemic.

Staffing and staff retention remain an issue. Leaders and managers continue to take action to address this; however, this work is ongoing. There are currently three staff vacancies. Staff, including the manager, are covering the vacancies, but this in turn limits their ability to ensure the quality of records and plans.

Agency staff are used to meet the specific medical needs of one child. These are the same staff who provide care for the child in their family home. This approach helps to maintain a continuity of care for this child. A number of these staff are trained nurses. The manager maintains all the required information on these staff.

Staff receive a good range of training to meet children's needs, including mandatory and specialist training. Additional training is provided for staff where practice issues have been identified. Staff induction is appropriate but would benefit from leaders and managers reviewing staff's understanding of the policies and process that form part of this.

Staff receive supervision and there is evidence of staff practice being discussed. However, supervision records do not consistently confirm the actions taken when staff have raised issues about a colleague's practice. The quality of staff supervision notes varies. Some are very detailed and reflective, while others lack detail of the discussion held and actions to be taken.

Notifications are not always made to Ofsted in a timely manner and do not always contain all the required information.

Currently, the independent person is not routinely seeking feedback from social workers and parents as part of their visits. This limits the ability of the independent person to make an informed decision as to children's welfare.

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
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff— 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; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies; that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(v)(vi)(vii)(b)) In addition, staff should notify the on-call person of significant events in a timely manner.	28 February 2022
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and	28 February 2022

promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; ensure that the home’s workforce provides continuity of care to each child; understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1) (2)(c)(d)(e)(f)(h))	
The registered person may only use devices for the monitoring or surveillance of children if— the monitoring or surveillance is for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child concerned, or other children; the child’s placing authority consents in writing to the monitoring or surveillance; so far as reasonably practicable in the light of the child’s age and understanding, the child is informed in advance of the intention to do the monitoring or surveillance; and the monitoring or surveillance is no more intrusive than necessary, having regard to the child’s need for privacy. (Regulation 24 (1)(a)(b)(c)(d))	28 February 2022
The registered person must ensure that all employees— undertake appropriate continuing professional development; and	28 February 2022

receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(a)(b))	
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which— include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child; are kept up to date; and are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c))	28 February 2022
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation; an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious; there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; a child protection enquiry involving a child— is instigated; or concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry); or there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(a)(b)(c)(d)(i)(ii)(d))	28 February 2022
The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month. When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the independent person— if they consent, to interview in private such of the children, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as the independent person requires. (Regulation 44 (1) (2)(a))	28 February 2022

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that each child's behaviour-management plan details the distraction techniques to be used. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.34)
- The registered person should ensure that they seek references and/or confirmation of the reasons for employment ending from all of the applicants' previous social care employers. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)

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: 1266835

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Action for Children

Registered provider address: Action for Children, 3 The Boulevard, Ascot Road, Watford WD18 8AG

Responsible individual: Lee Furniss

Registered manager: Claire Baylis

Inspector

Wendy Anderson, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2021