

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. At the time of this inspection, one child was visiting the home for a short break.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since April 2019.

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 June 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 21 March 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/03/2022	Interim	Improved effectiveness
15/12/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good
11/02/2020	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
05/08/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children enjoy their short breaks at the home. Staff support children's interests and help them to try new things. Consequently, children take part in a range of fun activities in the home and in the community. At the end of each child's stay, staff gather feedback from the child on what they did and did not enjoy about their visit and then use this information to plan the child's next stay.

Children's daily diaries and achievement records provide a detailed story of children's visits to the home. These documents provide a lovely memento of the progress children make.

Children benefit from the comfortable and relaxing home the staff have provided. The extensive space is well equipped, specially adapted and used well. The kitchen with adjustable-height cooker and work surfaces provides children with the opportunity to cook, enhancing their independence skills. In the extensive paddock, wheelchair-accessible play equipment provides all of the children with a safe and exciting place to play and explore.

Staff have strong and effective relationships with the children and their families. They know the children well, understand each child's needs and how these are to be met. Children's records provide clear guidance for staff. However, not all 'This is me plans' have been reviewed regularly.

Staff shortages remain an ongoing issue. This has led some short-break stays being cancelled.

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

Staff receive regular safeguarding training and demonstrate an understanding of their duty of care to keep children safe. Staff appropriately reported a safeguarding concern relating to medication administration to senior managers. Managers undertook a thorough investigation into this concern, lessons were learned and subsequent actions taken to prevent another incident. However, this incident was not notified to Ofsted as it should have been.

Staff follow detailed support plans and manage children's behaviour well. They know each child well so they can identify subtle signs of a child being upset and respond with empathy and sensitivity. This positive approach means that restraint has not been used since the previous inspection.

Incident records are generally of a good quality. However, staff are not consistently gathering meaningful feedback from children after an incident has happened. In addition, some staff are declining a debrief after an incident, which prevents opportunities to review practice and identify learning.

Risk assessments are of a good quality and are in place for the use of specialist equipment, such as oxygen. These assessments identify the risk and actions taken to reduce and/or remove the risk. Staff follow these plans in practice.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders and managers have a realistic understanding of the service. The manager monitors the quality of care and knows the home's strengths and the areas for improvement. Leaders and managers are continuing to work on staffing sufficiency issues. They carry out exit interviews with staff who leave and use this feedback to inform subsequent recruitment and retention actions.

The manager is appropriately qualified and experienced for the role. Staff, parents and social workers provided positive feedback on the manager. The manager is supportive, approachable and focused on improving the home.

Care staff receive good-quality supervision. This provides them with a good opportunity to reflect on their practice, discuss any issues and identify training needs. Agency nurses who work specifically with one child receive clinical supervision as required but not an opportunity to reflect with the manager on their work in the home.

Staff receive appropriate training to enable them to meet the needs of the children. Staff discuss their learning from this training in team meetings to share knowledge and experiences.

Staff are very positive about the support they receive from the manager and their peers. They are proud of the team and how they have all pulled together for the best for the children in relation to staff shortages. Staff talk about the children with warmth and pride.

At present, the manager does not maintain a register of children who have accessed or are currently accessing short breaks at the home as required.

Reports by the independent visitor do not support the manager well enough in the development of the home. Actions set often lack detail regarding improvement needed. The independent visitor does not consistently or clearly state in each report if the children are safeguarded effectively, and their well-being is promoted as required. In addition, the duration of these visit is often limited.

The quality of the manager's six-monthly review of the quality of care has improved but can develop further. The report does not provide a clear plan of further appropriate improvements going forward.

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 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 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))	30 September 2022
The registered person must ensure that all employees— receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(b))	22 August 2022

In particular, the registered person should ensure that regular agency nursing staff receive practice-related supervision.	
Schedule 4 sets out the other information that the registered person must keep in relation to a children's home. The registered person must— maintain in the home the records in Schedule 4; ensure that the records are kept up to date; and retain the records for at least 15 years from the date of the last entry. Schedule 4 A record in the form of a register showing in respect of each child— the date of the child's admission to the children's home; the date on which the child ceased to be accommodated in the home; the child's address immediately before being accommodated in the home; the child's address on leaving the home; the child's placing authority; and the statutory provision (if any) under which the child is accommodated. (Regulation 37 (1) (2)(a)(b)(c) Schedule 4 (1)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f))	30 July 2022
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; a child protection enquiry involving a child— is instigated; or	22 July 2022

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)(d)(i)(ii)(e))	
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; and to inspect the premises of the home and such of the home's records (except for a child's case records, unless the child and the child's placing authority consent) as the independent person requires. A visit by the independent person to the home may be unannounced. The independent person must produce a report about a visit ("the independent person's report") which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether— children are effectively safeguarded; and the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being. The independent person's report may recommend actions that the registered person may take in relation to the home and timescales within which the registered person must consider whether or not to take those actions. (Regulation 44 (2)(a)(b) (3) (4)(a)(b) (5))	31 August 2022

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children's plans are reviewed regularly. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)
- The registered person should ensure that meaningful conversations are held with children and the staff involved after an incident. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 39, paragraph 8.1)

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: 3 The Boulevard, Ascot Road, Watford WD18 8AG

Responsible individual: Claire Cahill

Registered manager: Claire Baylis

Inspector

Wendy Anderson, Social Care Inspector

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