

1266835

Registered provider: Action for Children

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and operated by a national organisation. The home provides short breaks for children aged between eight and 18 years who may have a learning disability and/or complex health needs. The home provides care for up to five children at any given time. At the time of this inspection, one child was visiting the home for a short break and another child was visiting to get to know the service.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since April 2021.

This inspection was brought forward as a result of concerns being reported to Ofsted. These related to the thoroughness of investigations when there are concerns about staff practice.

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 April 2024

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: 10 July 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/07/2023	Full	Good
15/06/2022	Full	Good
21/03/2022	Interim	Improved effectiveness
15/12/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Staff place children and their experiences at the heart of this home. Children enjoy well-planned short breaks. Staff know children well and understand their individual needs. This helps them to be responsive and provide activities and an environment that best suits the children who visit. Staff can provide a high energy adventure in the garden, or a relaxing pamper session in the lounge. Children benefit from an adapted environment, with many options available for creativity and imaginative play. During holidays children have the opportunity for adventures further afield, such as bowling, trampoline parks and fun fairs. Staff capture the fun children have in memory books, for them to take with them when they move on. Some of these books only contain photos, which means the context of the memory is not described.

Staff seek children's views at every visit. At the start of each stay, children help to plan their time and the meals they eat. At the end of the stay, staff help them to review their visit and to think about what they might like to do next time.

Staff plan well for new children joining the home. Children and their families enjoy taster sessions to get to know staff and the environment. From these sessions, staff can assess whether the environment is suitable and will offer the child what they need. Leaders have recently introduced a visual flow chart to make the process clear to parents and professionals.

Staff use clear care plans to capture how to care for children in the home. These are collaborative documents, with input from families and professionals. These plans help staff understand children's likes, dislikes and preferences. They include information about how to communicate with children and understand their world. However, there is a lack of information about children's culture and identity, and how staff can support children to develop their knowledge and sense of self.

Staff understand the targets they help children to work towards during their short breaks. On each stay, staff capture the progress made, and this is reviewed monthly. This helps staff to understand the impact of their support and any areas for development. Staff understand that for many children, being able to access a short break is in itself an excellent achievement, setting them up well for the next stage in their life and supporting increased independence.

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

Staff understand their responsibilities to keep children safe during their stay. They receive training specific to disabled children as well as other specialist training about children's medical conditions. They understand the additional vulnerabilities of the children who attend, and report concerns they have.

Concerns raised by children or their families are taken seriously. There have been three concerns raised about staff practice. Leaders conduct thorough investigations in a timely way, with oversight from safeguarding authorities. Outcomes of these investigations are clear, and learning is identified. Suggested actions include wider practice improvements that can be made, avoiding a narrow focus on individual practice.

Staff develop clear behaviour plans and risk assessments, which help staff understand how to support children to have positive experiences. As a result of these clear plans, staff provide children with consistent support, meaning incidents are low.

Children's medication is stored safely, and there are processes in place to sign this in and out for children's visits. This helps to reduce errors.

Staff recruitment follows safer recruitment guidance. Leaders scrutinise references and undertake further exploration when necessary. Leaders identify when staff have worked overseas and undertake the necessary checks. The organisation has introduced new processes to ensure the manager has oversight of relevant documents for temporary workers in the home.

The manager reviews the location of the home for safety and considers relevant risks in the area. However, this risk assessment lacks clarity about the collaboration with other professionals to inform the content.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

An experienced manager leads the home. She promotes a culture of learning and development, which is further supported by the organisation. Staff speak of the opportunities to grow and learn as practitioners and value this aspect of their role. Staff are positive about the support of their manager and senior leaders, who they say are visible and accessible. Staff enjoy working in the home.

Staff receive regular supervision. This offers them an open forum to discuss practice in the home and to explore their own performance. Team meetings supplement this, with collaborative time set aside to review children's plans and progress. Important discussions are held to explore learning from incidents, or to review procedures, such as whistle blowing.

Parents are positive about the support they receive. They say their children enjoy their stays and cannot wait to visit. Parents feel able to enjoy their own time away from their children, knowing that they are safe and having a good time. They say communication is excellent and that they always get told what they need to about their children.

The manager engages positively with the local authority and other professionals to secure the right support for children and families. When needed, the manager will challenge plans, or make referrals to services that will help to improve the care and outcomes in the home.

The environment is well maintained, and children's bedrooms are interesting with bright decoration. One bedroom continues to have two beds in it. The manager consulted with children who said they did not mind this. However, the bed is no longer required, and the manager is making arrangements for it to be removed.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children's plans reflect their culture and identity, to support staff to understand how to support them. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 14, paragraph 3.2)
- The registered person should ensure that children's photo memories include the context of events and people to help children remember their experiences in the future. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.5)
- The registered person should ensure the location risk assessment is clear about consultation with other agencies. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.1)
- The registered person should ensure that the additional bed in one room is removed to provide a more homely environment for children. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

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: Claire Cahill

Registered manager: Claire Baylis

Inspector

Clare Nixon, social care inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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