

1270744

Registered provider: Headstart Residential Care Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is registered to provide care and support for up to five children with learning disabilities. Currently, three children aged between 11 and 18 years live at the home. They live in three separate houses. The children may have a diagnosis of autism, and some may have experienced significant early childhood trauma.

Some of the children attend the organisation's school on the same site. The inspector only inspected the social care provision.

The post for a registered manager has been vacant since November 2022.

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 December 2023

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: 1 February 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
01/02/2023	Full	Good
01/12/2021	Full	Good
16/01/2020	Interim	Improved effectiveness
06/08/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children are making individually important progress from their starting points as a result of the care and support that the staff provide. They are safer, develop improved communication skills, and better understand socially appropriate behaviours compared to when they moved in to the home.

Staff value children's participation. They encourage the children to communicate their wishes and feelings and contribute to the running of the home via regular discussions and children's meetings.

The staff are sensitive to the fact that some children struggle to have things in their bedroom or pictures on their walls. However, staff make each of the children's living areas as individual and welcoming as they can. When the children allow it their artwork and photos adorn the walls, as do pictures of things that interest the children. This helps to give a sense of homeliness and represents the individuality of the children.

All of the children attend education, which is bespoke to their needs. Staff know that offering the children new positive experiences improves the lives of the children. They support the children to engage in a range of activities, including pursuing their interests and going out and about in the local community. Staff support the children to have family time as appropriate.

Although there are staff vacancies at present, the manager ensures that the children are always cared for by known adults. When agency staff are used, these are regular agency staff. This helps to maintain consistency of staff for these children, who need people who understand their particular communication and support needs. This helps the staff to build good relationships with the children. Staffing arrangements meet the needs of the children. All children are supported by at least one staff member each. Some children are supported by more than one staff member.

Staff are curious to understand the often complex needs of the children. They make continued efforts to adapt practice, which is sensitive and child centred. Care is supported by individualised plans, which include 24-hour plans and individual behaviour support plans.

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

The staff understand, and manage well, the children's complex needs. There are numerous risk assessments in place for children, which staff update when children's needs change. As a result, staff have up-to-date knowledge of the best strategies to help the children when they are struggling.

Due to the children's complex learning, communication and behavioural support needs, staff sometimes need to use physical intervention and environmental restrictions to keep children and others safe. Physical restraint is only used as a last resort. Records of restraints are not consistently clear and are somewhat disjointed. The organisation is aware of this, and the manager advised that plans to introduce an improved recording process are to be implemented.

The emotional well-being of the children is at the centre of everything in the home. Weekly therapeutic sessions are provided to all the children. These meetings form part of their weekly activities. The achievements made by children in these sessions are understood by the staff. Staff change their approach to supporting children to reflect the children's changing skills and needs.

The manager ensures that the children are supported to raise any issues that they are unhappy with. Any complaints are thoroughly investigated. Staff work quickly and transparently with partner professionals. The manager takes decisive action to ensure that children are kept safe. The manager reflects on any learning. Staff are alert to the increased anxieties that children may have after making complaints, heightened by their past traumas. Responses to children are sensitive, and every effort is made to avoid children feeling overburdened or to blame.

Children in the home feel safe and secure. Staff are highly committed to helping children to stay at the home. Decisions to move children on from the home are only taken when it has been repeatedly proven that staff cannot maintain their safety. External professionals have commented that this approach has enabled children to test boundaries and process difficult memories. For some children, this represents significant personal positive change.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home has not had a registered manager since November 2022. The current manager has been in post since June 2023. She has made an application for registration to Ofsted. The manager was previously the deputy manager. She knows the children well and is proud of their progress.

The manager is empathetic and adopts a therapeutic approach to care. She is focused on further developing staff expertise of looking after children with complex needs. She has introduced new training and engaged staff in reflective practice. Staff describe her as a strong leader who leads by example.

The manager is highly regarded by staff and external partner agencies. They say that her confidence and calm approach has had a positive impact on the running of the home. One member of staff said that the manager has helped to 'heal' and 'build bridges', following an unsettled period in the home.

The manager is aware of the strengths and areas for development in the home. She is motivated, and has begun to shape and build a strong staff team. There are some shortfalls in supervision and staff appraisals. However, the manager has begun to

make improvements to address these gaps. The manager did not complete a quality of care report for the home in the required timeframe. This has now been completed, but a copy of the report has not been sent to Ofsted. As a result, Ofsted, as the regulator, has not been provided with up-to-date information about the service.

On the rare occasion that there have been concerns about staff, records do not evidence the thorough exploration and professional curiosity of the manager.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that records of restraint enable the registered person and staff to review the use of control, discipline, and restraint to identify effective practice and respond promptly where any issues or trends of concern emerge. The review should provide the opportunity for amending practice to ensure that it meets the needs of each child. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.59)
- The registered person should ensure that they make best use of information from independent and internal monitoring, including under regulations 44 and 45, to ensure continuous improvement. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 44, paragraph 10.24)
- The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

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: 1270744

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: HEADSTART RESIDENTIAL CARE LTD

Registered provider address: 1, Swanwood Park, Gun Hill, Heathfield TN21 0LL

Responsible individual: Scott Fasciolo-Barnes

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Jane Balfe, Social Care Inspector

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