

1270744

Registered provider: Headstart Residential Care Ltd

Assurance 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.

The home is co-located with part of the organisation's school, which one child from the home attends.

The registered manager post has been vacant since November 2022.

Inspection date: 6 February 2024

Date of last inspection: 5 December 2023

Judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Information about this inspection

At this inspection, the inspector evaluated:

- the care of children
- the safety of children
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers.

The inspector has looked closely at the experiences and progress of children, using the social care common inspection framework. This assurance 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'.

Findings from the inspection

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance inspection.

When children come to live in the home, managers consider an appropriate range of information to ensure that they are ready and able to meet the child's individual needs. Assessments make it clear that children's needs are well known and understood, with staff having received sufficient training to deliver appropriate care.

Children identify staff that they trust and use opportunities to talk about their feelings and wishes. Some of these opportunities are more structured, although mainly this occurs informally. These discussions are well documented and show that staff are seeking to understand how children are feeling.

Children's plans are well written and support staff to meet their individual needs. These plans are also clear about the risks for each child and guide staff on how to work positively with children to manage these. For one child, their plans did not include details of one of their health needs and did not reflect a recent change to their medication, although there was no clear negative impact of this. For another child, there was an isolated incident where language was used that did not reflect the child's diagnoses.

Staff liaise closely with professionals, such as social workers and mental health services, to ensure that children receive the support that they need. One professional stated that they felt well informed and enjoyed a positive working relationship with the team.

When children experience difficult emotions that result in challenging situations, staff manage these with care to enable children to be safe. When there is a need to use physical restraint, staff use this for the least time needed to ensure safety. Records of these incidents are generally well written, although on one occasion, it was not clear why a particular restraint had been used. Staff were able to talk confidently about the incident and why this had happened.

Staff are clear in their understanding of their responsibilities to safeguard children. They feel confident in raising concerns about children's well-being, and when concerns do arise, effective action is taken. Managers liaise effectively with social workers and other agencies, such as the local authority designated officer, to ensure that children are safe.

There have been no incidents of children going missing from the home since the previous inspection.

Recruitment of staff follows safer recruitment principles. Files are clear and demonstrate that managers are ensuring that staff are suitable to work with children.

Since the last inspection, the manager of the home has left the organisation. Senior leaders and an interim manager are supporting the home effectively to ensure that children are well cared for, and staff feel supported. There are clear plans in place to improve staffing sufficiency in the home, although current vacancies are well managed, providing continuity for the children.

Managers have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home and make good use of effective monitoring to enable them to make improvements. However, the manager has not yet submitted a report to Ofsted of the review of the quality of care for children. This was a shortfall noted at the previous inspection, and therefore, the recommendation relating to this is repeated in this report.

Staff feel assured by the current support in place from managers and feel positive about their roles. They value the training that they receive, although records did not clearly evidence all training completed. Staff do receive supervision sessions, although these are infrequent. Records of supervision are clear and show that staff are supported to reflect on their practice and professional development.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/12/2023	Full	Good
01/02/2023	Full	Good
01/12/2021	Full	Good
16/01/2020	Interim	Improved effectiveness

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, The 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 registered provider must appoint a person to manage the children's home if— there is no registered manager in respect of the home. (Regulation 27 (1)(a))	10 April 2024
The registered person must ensure that all employees— undertake appropriate continuing professional development; and receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(a)(b)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that all staff complete identified mandatory training and that all staff receive regular supervision.	10 April 2024

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that records of restraint are kept and enable the registered person and staff to review the use of control, discipline and restraint to identify effective practice and respond promptly when 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 actively seek independent scrutiny of the home and make best use of information from independent and internal monitoring (including under regulations 44 and 45) to ensure continuous improvement. They should be skilled in anticipating difficulties and reviewing incidents, such as learning from disruptions and placement breakdowns. They are responsible for proactively implementing lessons learned and sustaining good practice. ('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. Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact and opinion. Records must also be updated in a timely manner to provide clarity regarding children's health needs, including prescribed medicines. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

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

Jay Shekleton, Social Care Inspector

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