

2529667

Registered provider: Devon County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home provides short break stays for children with disabilities. On occasion, they provided longer term placements for children already accessing short breaks. The home is owned and operated by the local authority. A qualified manager is in charge of the home and has applied to Ofsted for registration.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

We last visited this setting on 16 December 2020 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on our website.

Inspection dates: 13 to 14 July 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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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 September 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: Requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: None

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/09/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good
12/06/2019	Full	Inadequate

Inspection judgements

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

Relationships between children and carers are not characterised by the consistency and familiarity needed for children with complex needs. Some children have subtle communication methods that are not be easily understood by people who do not know them well. More than 40 different staff have worked in the home in less than 12 months. This includes a significant number of agency workers.

While parents are positive about the short breaks provided, some are also concerned about staffing issues and the number of agency workers involved. One parent commented that they 'do not feel sufficiently informed about who will be looking after their child'. Concern was also expressed about the forward planning of activities so that both parents, staff and children can be prepared in advance.

A focus for the manager and staff has been on continuing to provide short breaks for children during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. Children continue to enjoy spending time in the home and are excited about staying. Each child has development targets and a clear record is kept of their progress. In recent months, full-time care has been provided to a child in an emergency when other options for a home were not available. Despite this environment not being ideal as a permanent home, this child has made significant progress in acquiring personal and social skills while living here. Plans to move the child to a new home have been of a good quality and well-orchestrated to meet the needs of the child, and to avoid them having any anxiety.

Children have carefully considered care plans agreed with parents and carers. For most children, these short breaks offer a unique opportunity to socialise and share time with other children outside of a school environment. Children are encouraged to make choices about all aspects of their time in the home. Recently they have been making decisions around decorating and personalising bedrooms. Further improvements to the environment are planned.

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

Not all staff have been given the opportunity to practise fire drills. This could compromise the safety of children if staff are unsure how to manage evacuations in an emergency.

Medication recording, administration and storage require improvement. Recording of medication administered 'when necessary' lacks sufficient detail. An information leaflet was missing from a bottle of non-prescribed medication and a record sheet moved for scanning to the electronic recording system could not be found. Improvements have been made to other medication processes and the majority of records since the previous inspection.

The manager does not have sufficient oversight of the recruitment checks for all agency staff who are working or have worked in the home.

Children are able to express discontent if they are unhappy, uncomfortable or in pain. Staff are trained to respond to these needs.

Staff receive appropriate safeguarding training and are clear how to report any concerns. Risk assessments and reviews also support the safety of children. Any visitors to the home are carefully vetted. Security of the building does not allow for unwelcome guests. Most of the children are very vulnerable and would not be safe or understand how to keep themselves safe out in the community. They do not go missing from this home.

The home has the equipment needed to support the specialist and complex needs of the children attending for short breaks. Health and safety checks are performed routinely and include servicing of any the specialist equipment.

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

Ineffective recruitment of staff and staffing shortages caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have impacted across all judgment areas.

A qualified manager is in charge of the home and has applied to Ofsted for registration. She is supported by a dedicated deputy manager and the responsible individual.

Strengths and weaknesses of the home are understood and included in development plans. Some developments are thwarted due to staffing shortages. However, improvements can be seen in several areas, including the environment, recording systems and the quality of care plans for children.

Professional supervision which allows staff to reflect on their practice, roles and responsibilities, alongside considering the ongoing needs of children, has not been provided to agency staff. Some of these staff have done several shifts in the home.

Staff take pleasure in looking after the children who stay in this home, and the majority enjoy their work. A small number of staff, most who have left or are leaving this employment expressed discontent about rotas, a lack of weekends off and access to training. The manager is trying to deal with these issues.

Effective working relationships exist with schools and specialist health services such as occupational therapists and speech and language therapists. They share the progress made by children so that improvements can be replicated in different environments. Therapists have also provided training to the staff in the use of new or specialist equipment used for and by children.

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 registered person must ensure that the employment of any person on a temporary basis at the children's home does not prevent children for receiving such continuity of care as is reasonable to meet their needs. (Regulation 31 (1))	30/01/2021
The registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received into the children's home. (Regulation 23 (1)) In particular, ensure that records include why PRN medication is administered, that information leaflets are kept with all medication and that the medication cabinet is kept clean.	30/08/2021
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only employ a person to work at the children's home if full and satisfactory information is available for the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1) (3)(d)) This particularly relates to checks for agency workers.	30/08/2021
The registered person must ensure by means of fire drills and evacuations at suitable intervals, that persons working at the home and so far as is reasonable practical, children are aware of the procedure to be followed in the case of fire. (Regulation 25 (1)(d))	19/08/2021

Recommendations

- The registered person must have a system in place so that all staff, including the manager, receive supervision of their practice from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'; page 61, paragraph 13.2)
- The registered person must ensure a close working, informative relationship with those with parental responsibility for children, usually their parents or other carers. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'; page 11, paragraph 2.5)

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: 2529667

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Devon County Council, Chief Executive's Directorate, County Hall, Topsham Road, Exeter, Devon EX2 4QD

Responsible individual: Glenn Lobb

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector(s)

Janice Hawtin, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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