

2548569

Registered provider: Worcestershire Children First

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home was previously owned by the local authority. It re-registered in October 2019 when the local authority moved to be a holding company. The home is registered to provide care for up to four children who have suffered adverse childhood experiences that have led to associated trauma and presenting complex behaviours.

The registered manager post is vacant. No new manager has been appointed and two deputy managers have taken on additional responsibilities.

Inspection dates: 26 and 27 October 2022

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 **requires improvement to be good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 21 June 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection:

This home was judged inadequate at the last full inspection, on 21 and 22 June 2022. On 18 July 2022, Ofsted carried out a monitoring visit to examine the progress made by the provider in meeting three compliance notices and a notice restricting accommodation. While some progress had been made, not enough had been done to ensure the safety of the children living in the home. As a result, a compliance notice in relation to regulation 12 of the Children's Homes (England)

Regulations 2015 was issued again. The notice restricting accommodation remained in place.

A further monitoring visit was undertaken on 31 August 2022 to review the notice restricting accommodation and progress made to meet the compliance notice in respect of regulation 12. Ofsted determined that the compliance notice had been met. The restriction of accommodation notice remained in place.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/06/2022	Full	Inadequate
29/03/2022	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
09/02/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

At the time of this inspection, one child was living at the home. The child receives consistent help and care from a dedicated and patient staff team. A minimum ratio of one-to-one staff support ensures that the child receives the support that he needs. The child is receiving good-quality care from staff who know him well.

The child has developed good relationships with key members of the staff team. This has enabled him to build confidence to talk openly about his feelings. There has been significant progress in this area since the last inspection. As a result, the child has been able to seek support for, and an understanding of, issues that are important to him.

Since the last inspection, the child has played an active role in his care planning. This has been important throughout a significant period of change. The move from the home is being carefully planned together with the child. When the child has not been happy with aspects of his care planning, he has been able to express this. Managers and staff have supported appropriate challenge to ensure that his voice is heard. They have been excellent advocates at a time of uncertainty.

The child is self-motivated to attend school regularly. There have been delays in a timely review of the child's education, health and care plan. This has the potential to compromise the child's educational attainment. However, managers are proactively addressing this with the education provider.

Staff work hard to develop good relationships with children's families. A parent told the inspector that staff know her child well and she feels involved in decisions made about him moving on from the home. Staff often drive the child to see his family, and staff are helping the child to develop friendships with peers. This helps the child to retain a sense of his identity and promotes continued relationships with people who are important to him.

Overall, the child's healthcare needs are promoted. Healthcare plans have been updated and a new system has been implemented to monitor the child's health and nutrition. However, managers have not taken timely action to review the child's medication when he has not taken this for some time. This could have implications for the child's health and well-being.

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

To keep the child safe, staff quickly seek help, advice and guidance from managers and other professionals. The managers and staff regularly attend multi-agency planning discussions. Communication with people in the child's support network is effective, ensuring that up-to-date information is shared. This helps to keep the child safe.

Managers have ensured that staff have training in relation to the risks identified for the child. Specialist advice, support and training for staff has been arranged in response to current and emerging risks. This has enhanced staff knowledge and equipped them with the skills necessary to better safeguard the child.

There are clear and individualised risk assessments in place for the child. Managers review these regularly and ensure that they provide the most up-to-date information and guidance for staff. Staff follow the strategies set out in these risk assessments, which promotes the child's safety.

Online safety remains an area of vulnerability. However, progress has been made in this area to mitigate and reduce risk to the child. Staff have taken an active interest in who the child is contacting online. Staff help the child to understand risks online and encourage the child to speak up if they are concerned about something. As a result, the child has begun to open up about his online world. This is supporting his safety.

Since the last full inspection, there has been a significant reduction in incidents. There have not been any safeguarding allegations, missing-from-care episodes or physical interventions. In addition, children's records now give clear guidance for staff to follow if incidents occur.

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

It has been a challenging time for the home. The registered manager left in August 2022. The provider has made the decision to close the home and they are therefore not attempting to recruit a new manager. The two deputy managers have temporarily stepped into the role and are providing effective oversight.

During the inspection, staff said they have been affected by the uncertainty around the home's closure. This is because they do not know when the home will be closing and when they will be moving to new roles. Although the closure is imminent, the provider has remained focused on ensuring robust and child-focused planning is in place to support the child in a move from the home. They are unable to provide timescales as they are working at a pace that is in line with the child's needs.

Staff told the inspector that they receive good support from their immediate managers. One member of staff described the deputy managers as 'amazing'. Regular supervision for permanent staff includes a focus on the child's individual experiences and needs. However, the two deputy managers have not received supervision consistently since the registered manager left the home. This is a missed opportunity to provide essential support at a challenging and uncertain time.

Staff have access to training, the majority of which is online. Staff undertake the organisation's mandatory training, such as in first aid, safeguarding and fire safety. However, managers had not identified that food hygiene training had not been

undertaken by staff. This oversight was a result of changes in the provider's electronic system. This was rectified during the inspection and there is a plan for staff to undertake this training.

External stakeholders, including the child's social worker and parent, are positive about the care provided to the child. They complimented the home on the role they play in advocating for the child and challenging other professionals when they do not feel decisions being made are in the child's best interests.

The home's statement of purpose details the quality and purpose of care. However, managers have not provided Ofsted with the most up-to-date copy of this document as required by regulation. This restricts the regulator's oversight of the quality of care proposed for children. A requirement has been raised to rectify this.

The home is due to close, no manager is being appointed and staffing is uncertain moving forward. Until the home closes, the focus is on supporting the child to move on from the home. As a result, the restriction of accommodation remains in place.

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 health and well-being standard is that— the health and well-being needs of children are met; children receive advice, services and support in relation to their health and well-being; and children are helped to lead healthy lifestyles. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff help each child to— achieve the health and well-being outcomes that are recorded in the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 10 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)) In particular, ensure that all children's health needs are sufficiently monitored and reviewed in line with their plans.	6 December 2022
The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ("the statement of purpose") which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1. The registered person must— notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16 (1) (3)(b))	6 December 2022
The registered provider must appoint a person to manage the children's home if— there is no registered manager in respect of the home; and the registered provider— is an organisation or a partnership;	6 December 2022

does not satisfy regulation 28; or is not, or does not intend to be, in day-to-day charge of the home. If the registered provider appoints a person to manage the home, the registered provider must, without delay, give HMCI notice of— the name of the person so appointed; and the date on which the appointment takes effect. (Regulation 27 (1)(a)(b)(i)(ii)(iii) (2)(a)(b)) This requirement was raised at the last inspection and is restated.	
A person may only manage a children's home if— having regard to the size of the home, its statement of purpose, and the number and needs (including any needs arising from any disability) of the children— the person has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills to manage the home effectively and lead the care of children. (Regulation 28 (1)(b)(i)) This requirement was raised at the last inspection and is restated.	6 December 2022
The registered person must ensure that all employees— receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(b)) This specifically relates to all employees receiving practice-related supervision.	6 December 2022

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: 2548569

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Worcestershire Children First

Registered provider address: County Hall, Spetchley Road, Worcester WR5 2NP

Responsible individual: Adam Johnston

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Natasha Skinner, Social Care Inspector

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