

2549726

Registered provider: Worcestershire Children First

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is registered to provide short breaks for children with learning disabilities and can care for up to four children on any one night.

The manager was appointed in September 2021 and is yet to register with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 March 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected requires improvement to be 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: 23 November 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection:

At the last full inspection on 23 and 24 November 2021, the home was judged inadequate. One compliance notice was issued under regulation 12.

At the monitoring visit on 12 January 2022, the inspector found that the provider had not fully met all aspects of the notice; therefore, it was reissued.

At this inspection, the inspector found that the provider had taken sufficient action to meet the compliance notice issued.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
23/11/2021	Full	Inadequate

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Staff at this home are committed to providing good-quality care and experiences to children. Children have formed positive relationships with staff and staff know the children well. The inspector observed lovely interactions between staff and children. Children told the inspector that they are happy and enjoy their stays.

Staff make sure children can communicate their wishes and feelings. Children's plans tell staff how children communicate and what staff need to do to help children use their preferred methods. Following stays at the home, children are given opportunities to complete questionnaires. As a result, children feel listened to.

One of the strengths of the home is the variety of opportunities children have when they visit. These include trips to parks, swimming, going to football matches, seeing trains and going shopping, as well as a variety of indoor and garden activities at the home. Consequently, children can engage socially, make friends and take part in activities they may not have been able to do previously.

Staff work hard to help children develop greater independence. Staff develop children's plans with parents and education professionals so that there is a consistent approach to help children achieve their goals. Children are helped to make drinks, simple meals, learn about money and develop their personal care skills. As a result, children are better prepared for their adult lives.

Staff at the home celebrate children's achievements, no matter how small, with stickers and certificates. Children really enjoy receiving these and this helps develop their confidence and self-esteem.

Children who move to and from the home have well-planned moves. Staff develop and implement plans at the pace of the child and their family. Children have tea visits and extended days before staying overnight. As a result, children settle quickly and have positive stays, and families are reassured that their child is happy.

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

Staff have developed robust risk assessments and behaviour plans for children. Staff have used information from other sources, such as education, health and care plans and schools' safety plans. As a result, children's plans contain all the information staff need about children's risks and behaviours and how to respond to them. However, staff are not signing to show they have read and understood those plans.

Staff have not always made sure children's medication is administered and recorded correctly. The monitoring system in place has not quickly picked up on those errors,

which could have resulted in harm to children. Managers have now put in place a new system of monitoring, which, it is hoped, will prevent further omissions.

Staff have developed plans to make sure they are aware of children's health conditions, such as epilepsy. Children's care plans now tell staff how children may present when having a seizure and the action to take. Plans also detail how staff monitor children, particularly at night. As a result, staff are likely to know when children are having seizures and know what action to take.

Incidents are infrequent at the home because staff know children well and comprehensive plans are in place to guide staff. Staff rarely need to use physical intervention and, when they do, it is only if necessary.

Though children do not go missing from the home, staff have developed missing-from-home plans that would inform them about the action they would need to take if a child was to go missing from the home.

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

The home is managed by a child-focused manager who is committed to providing quality care to children. However, there has been a delay in the manager applying to Ofsted to be registered. This means the home has been without a registered manager since August 2021.

Staff at the home receive regular supervisions and managers have begun to develop staff's skills and knowledge, along with addressing poor performance. Some staff spoke highly of the manager and were positive about the changes being made. However, not all staff were as positive and there are some disagreements within the team, which could result in poor morale and may affect children's care.

Concerns and complaints are taken seriously by managers. Managers have taken prompt action and investigated concerns raised. However, there has been an instance of a staff member not sharing concerns about another staff member's practice. This does not demonstrate that all staff are confident to challenge colleagues' practice and report concerns.

The manager has made many improvements to children's plans and has liaised with others to gain the information needed. Parents said that the home is now much more organised. One parent said that their child's plans are improved and that they feel more assured that staff understand their child's needs. Parents also said that communication is much better.

Managers have developed new monitoring systems, which have identified shortfalls. Managers have taken action to make sure those shortfalls do not continue and that there are ongoing improvements to the home.

Managers have been creative in sourcing training and learning opportunities for staff. For example, they have contacted specialists regarding rare conditions and syndromes, and then invited parents to talk to the staff about how a particular condition or syndrome affects their child. Consequently, staff have the skills and knowledge they need to care for children who have short breaks at the home.

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 protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(iii)(v)(vi)(vii)) This specifically relates to staff understanding their responsibilities to behave in ways that keep children safe, and that staff promptly report concerns of poor practice.	29 April 2022
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i))	29 April 2022

This specifically relates to staff signing to show they have read and understood children's risk assessments and behaviour plans.	
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)) This specifically relates to managers working with staff to rebuild team morale and resolve staff conflict.	29 April 2022
The registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received into the children's home. In particular, the registered person must ensure that— medicine which is prescribed for a child is administered as prescribed to the child for whom it is prescribed and to no other child; and a record is kept of the administration of medicine to each child. (Regulation 23 (1) (2)(a)(b)) This specifically relates to staff following medication protocols when administering medication and recording medication given.	29 April 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: 2549726

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Worcestershire Children First

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

Responsible individual: Justine Bishop

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Debbie Bond, Social Care Inspector

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