

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.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

We last visited this setting on 23 and 24 February 2021 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 November 2021

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected **inadequate**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **inadequate**

There are serious and widespread failures that mean children are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded, and the care and experiences of children are poor and they are not making progress.

Date of last inspection: 23 February 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
-----------------	-----------------	----------------------

Not previously inspected		
--------------------------	--	--

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

Staff have not developed individual plans for children which promote children's safety and development. These plans are not regularly reviewed or evaluated. Consequently, children may not have progressed as much as they could have.

Staff have not used information from other professionals to inform children's plans or to aid staff's understanding of children's needs. For example, staff have not used information from a child's communication passport or their education, health and care plan (EHC plan) to inform their care planning. These are missed opportunities to fully know about a child and work in a consistent manner with partners.

During this visit, the inspector noticed a child was not wearing socks. When this was pointed out to staff, they said that maybe the child had not brought any in. Staff did not check if this was the case and did not attempt to find suitable socks for the child to wear. This was a concern, as the child was going out and it was a cold day.

Children using this service are cared for by a staff team that genuinely cares and wants children to have an enjoyable stay. Staff work hard to involve children in activities. They have researched the local area to see what activities are available. For example, there is a swimming session for children with disabilities at the local pool. Staff have arranged for children who would benefit from those sessions to have their short break on those nights. Consequently, children get to experience activities they would not normally be able to.

Staff have created an environment which is homely. When children come to stay, staff personalise each child's room with bedding and toys that they like. This helps children to feel valued and helps them to settle into the home.

Parents say they really value the service and feel that things have improved since the change in management. However, one parent asked that more care is taken in returning clothes after their child's stay.

Plans for new children transitioning into the service have improved. Transition plans are now developed with parents and go at the child's pace. This means that children have lots of opportunities to get to know the staff and other children visiting the home before they start their own overnight stays.

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

Children's risk assessments and behaviour plans do not help staff to understand the risks to or from children. There is little detail about strategies to use to reduce risks or details of how to manage behaviours. These omissions could result in inconsistent care from staff and increase the risk of harm to children or others.

Staff have not reviewed children's risk assessments or behaviour plans following incidents where children have been at risk of harm. This means that staff do not have up-to-date information on the risks for children or the action they should take to protect them.

Managers have not made sure all staff understand the home's safeguarding procedures. Not all staff have knowledge or understanding about reporting concerns about children's welfare to others outside of the home or what to do if they find bruising to a child. As a result, children could be at further risk due to staff not taking prompt action to report concerns and safeguard children.

Some children may experience unnecessary restrictions. Risk assessments do not explain why there are alarms on children's bedroom doors, and do not set out the process for reviewing this measure. As a result, managers have not assessed if these restrictions are necessary for each child, and they may have restrictions and monitoring placed on children that may not be required.

Managers have not put in place adequate systems which tell staff how to respond to medication errors, including how staff report or record errors. Consequently, children could be at risk due to lack of staff's knowledge.

Staff do not always accurately record details of when they have had to physically restrain children. It is therefore not clear if restraint practice is proportionate and safe.

Staff have not put in place plans which tell them about children's medical conditions. Plans for children with epilepsy do not say how they present when having a seizure. There are no clear guidelines about the monitoring of children when not with staff, such as during the night. Consequently, children could be at risk from unobserved seizures.

Staff do not undertake frequent fire evacuation practices with all children. Children's personal emergency evacuation plans (PEEPs) are generic and not individualised. Managers say that they think children will leave the building but this has not been established. This could leave children at significant risk of harm if there was a fire at the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The shortfalls identified during this inspection are having an adverse impact on the quality of care given to children and their safety. Senior managers were aware of some of the shortfalls at the home. However, oversight by the responsible individual had not ensured that the necessary improvements have been made.

The manager's oversight means children's plans are not personalised. They lack detail which would enable staff to give individualised care to children and to fully understand all their needs. One child has had the same target for several years. As a

result, the manager's lack of oversight means children may not reach their full potential.

Managers do not evidence their consideration of children's needs and risks and how these may have an impact on other children using the service. As a result, children may share stays with other children who may present a risk to them.

Records showing what training staff have undertaken are not clear. Staff have not undertaken training in topics such as working with children with a learning disability or cerebral palsy. Staff have not had in-depth learning to understand autism spectrum disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Safeguarding training is generic and is not specific for children with a disability. Consequently, staff do not have all the skills they need to safely care for children staying at the home.

The manager has been in post since September 2021. He has high expectations for himself and his team, and he is a child-focused practitioner. He has identified several shortfalls and is developing an improvement plan.

The manager is undertaking frequent supervision with staff. Staff say they feel supported by the manager and that things are improving under his leadership. As a result, staff morale and team working have started to improve.

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 quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— understand and apply the home's statement of purpose; ensure that staff— protect and promote each child's welfare; provide personalised care that meets each child's needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking account of the child's background; and help each child to develop resilience and skills that prepare the child to return home, to live in a new placement or to live independently as an adult. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(ii)(iv)(vi)) This specifically relates to managers ensuring that children's plans are personalised, regularly reviewed, help children to develop skills and that staff understand those plans.	10 January 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—	10 January 2022

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; 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; that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(v)(vi)(vii)(b)) This specifically relates to managers ensuring that staff understand safeguarding procedures and that robust plans are in place which safeguard children. This includes healthcare plans, risk assessments, behaviour management plans and personal emergency evacuation plans. Managers must also ensure that systems are in place for staff to record and report concerns such as when staff observe bruising to children.	
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— lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose;	10 January 2022

ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(c)(f)(h)) This specifically relates to managers ensuring that staff receive and understand all the training they need to care for the children accessing the service. This also relates to ensuring that managers understand how the quality of care has an impact on children's progress, experiences and safety. Managers should use robust monitoring systems to improve the service and ensure that staff work as a team.	
The registered person may only use devices for the monitoring or surveillance of children if— the monitoring or surveillance is for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child concerned, or other children; the child's placing authority consents in writing to the monitoring or surveillance; so far as reasonably practicable in the light of the child's age and understanding, the child is informed in advance of the intention to do the monitoring or surveillance; and the monitoring or surveillance is no more intrusive than necessary, having regard to the child's need for privacy. (Regulation 24 (1)(a)(b)(c)(d)) This specifically means that managers must assess the need for all children to have bedroom door alarms.	10 January 2022
A responsible individual must— have the capacity, experience and skills to supervise the management of the home, or the homes, in respect of which the responsible individual is nominated. (Regulation 26 (7)(b))	10 January 2022

This specifically relates to the responsible individual having oversight of the home and making sure that the home is compliant with the regulations.	
The registered person must ensure that— within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes— the name of the child; details of the child’s behaviour leading to the use of the measure; the date, time and location of the use of the measure; a description of the measure and its duration; details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure; the name of the person who used the measure (“the user”), and of any other person present when the measure was used; the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and a description of any injury to the child or any other person, and any medical treatment administered, as a result of the measure; within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so (“the authorised person”)— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(viii)(b)(i)(ii)(c)(iv))	10 January 2022

This specifically relates to incidents of physical intervention being appropriately recorded.	
---	--

* These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendations

- The registered person should only accept placements for children where they are satisfied that the home can respond effectively to the child's assessed needs as recorded in the child's relevant plans, and where they have fully considered the impact that the placement will have on the existing group of children. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 56, paragraph 11.4)
- The registered person should ensure that staff support children to wear appropriate clothing for the weather, such as socks when it is cold and wet outside. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 14, paragraph 3.2)

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

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2021