

2549726

Registered provider: Worcestershire Children First

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

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

The manager has applied to Ofsted to register.

Inspection dates: 31 August and 1 September 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 15 March 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
15/03/2022	Full	Good
23/11/2021	Full	Inadequate

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

A strength of this home is how staff work with families to make sure children have the best possible care and an enjoyable time during their stay. Staff consider children's likes and interests so that activities can be planned which children will enjoy. For example, children are taken swimming, to the park and to football matches. Staff also encourage children to try new activities. This means children have opportunities to try something new, find new interests and have fun on their stays.

Staff have developed plans for children. These plans include targets for children to work towards. However, they do not always include how staff will help support children's cultural or religious needs. Plans are easy to read and they provide staff with the information they need to be able to give consistent care to children. As a result, children make progress with their independence, communication, social skills and self-care skills.

Children and parents benefit from a well-planned introduction to the service. This careful planning helps staff to gain a good understanding of each child's needs and preferences. For example, staff gather information about children's food preferences, whether they prefer a bath or a shower, and strategies to help children when they become anxious or upset. This child-centred approach enables children to feel safe and comfortable during their stays.

Following children's stays, staff ask children to give feedback on the things they have enjoyed or would like to do on their next visit. This information is used to improve the stays for children. As a result, children feel listened to and know their views are valued.

The environment is comfortable and welcoming. Staff personalise children's bedrooms before each stay with bedding and items that the children like. Children are also encouraged to bring personal belongings from home to help them settle. The home is spacious and pleasantly decorated. It is enhanced by having a sensory room and a large outside space with climbing equipment and a trampoline. This encourages play and provides fun for children.

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

Children are kept safe at this home. Staff know children well and have developed plans which clearly tell staff about children's behaviours and strategies. However, plans are not always updated with new behaviours or strategies, and staff are not signing those plans to show they have read and understood them. These omissions could mean staff do not have the up-to-date knowledge they need to help children stay safe.

The high staffing ratios and staff's knowledge of children contribute to children's safety and there are few incidents. Staff have not had to use physical intervention, and children have not gone missing from the home.

Assessments are carried out prior to children accessing the service. The manager completes a compatibility assessment to make sure children are suitably matched. However, during the inspection, the manager could not find one of these assessments for a new child, and the assessments did not clearly show how he had assessed suitable matches. This means that staff are not always informed of why certain children should not access the service together.

Children visiting can present with marks and bruises. Staff show professional curiosity in recording and checking how children have received these. However, when the manager reviews the documentation, he does not always record his assessment and why he feels there are no concerns. This means that the rationale for his decision-making is not always clear.

Children who use technology are kept safe online. Staff monitor what children are accessing, and there are parental apps on the Wi-Fi.

Staff help children to learn about risks at a level they understand. For example, staff teach children about road safety and stranger danger. In the home, children are helped to understand the fire evacuation procedures with practices. As a result, children are helped to understand dangers and how to respond to them.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is managed by a manager who has high expectations of himself, the staff team and the care given to children. He is child-focused and puts the children's needs at the centre of everything.

Staffing at the home has been a challenge due to some staff leaving for personal reasons or career development. Managers are in the process of recruiting new staff, but in the short term they have reduced the number of overnight stays available to children. Managers have been proactive and discussed this with families. This means that when children stay, there are enough staff who know the children well.

Staff spoken to by the inspector say that they feel well supported by managers. They receive regular supervisions and a variety of training. Staff felt that the insights training was particularly beneficial. However, staff have not refreshed their knowledge of children's communication systems for some time, such as sign along and the Picture Exchange Communication System. This could mean that staff's skills are not up to date with current practices.

Feedback from professionals and families was positive. All were complimentary about the home and manager. Most felt that the changes the manager has made were needed. Parents said that they felt more confident in leaving their child in the

manager's care and were looking forward to seeing how the managers further develop the service.

The manager has good oversight of the home and has developed systems to monitor and audit the quality of care. He has identified shortfalls and put in place action plans to improve areas. However, the manager has not completed his six-monthly review report or sent it to Ofsted. As a result, the regulator does not have up-to-date information on the home's progress.

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— 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)) This specifically relates to staff signing to show they have read and understood children's risk assessments and behaviour plans. This requirement was raised at the last inspection and is restated.	14 October 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)) This specifically relates to staff adding new risks or behaviours, along with strategies to manage those risks or behaviours, to children's risk assessments and behaviour plans.	14 October 2022

The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children (“a quality of care review”) at least once every 6 months. In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating— the quality of care provided for children; the feedback and opinions of children about the children’s home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. After completing a quality of care review, the registered person must produce a written report about the quality of care review and the actions which the registered person intends to take as a result of the quality of care review (“the quality of care review report”). The registered person must— supply to HMCI a copy of the quality of care review report within 28 days of the date on which the quality of care review is completed; and make a copy of the quality of care review report available on request to a placing authority, if the placing authority is not the parent of a child accommodated in the home. The system referred to in paragraph (2) must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff. (Regulation 45 (1) (2)(a)(b)(c) (3) (4)(a)(b) (5)) This specifically relates to the manager completing the six-month review within timescales and sending the report to Ofsted.	14 October 2022
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Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff help children to maintain and develop their cultural or religious beliefs as far as practicable and where appropriate, through participation and instruction, and by observing religious requirements including dress and diet. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 17, paragraph 3.22)
- The registered person in a short-break setting should ensure that the short-break service offers the chance for children to develop friendships, by carefully matching groups. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 40, paragraph 8.20)
- The registered person should ensure that they continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. The registered person should record their assessment and why there is no further action, for example when reviewing body charts for children who have marks and bruises. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)
- The registered person should support staff to be ambitious for every child in the home and to gain skills and experience that enable them to actively support each child to achieve their potential. For example, the registered person should support staff to update their knowledge and skills in communication methods and tools to support children's communication. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 52, paragraph 10.5)

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: 2549726

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Worcestershire Children First

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

Responsible individual: Daniela Carson

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Debbie Bond, Social Care Inspector

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