

2591688

Registered provider: Mutual Care Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is one of two homes that are privately operated by a small company. The home is registered to provide care to two children with social and emotional difficulties. At the time of the inspection, two children were living in the home. One child has lived in the home for two years 11 months, the other has lived in the home for 10 months.

The current manager has withdrawn their application to register with Ofsted. They plan to remain working at the home as the deputy manager. While a new manager is being recruited, the manager from the other home in the company will manage this home.

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 April 2023

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 **good**

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

Date of last inspection: 2 February 2023

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
02/02/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
27/09/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The home is cosy, well-furnished and decorated to a good standard. Children's bedrooms are personalised and arranged in line with their preferences. One child chooses to sleep in a tent, the other chooses to have colour-changing lights on the wall which allows them to alert carers to how they are feeling. One child keeps a fish tank in their bedroom, however, carers do not support the child to keep it clean. The outside space is well maintained and provides opportunities and space for children to play and explore.

Carers support children to make progress. Children's progress and any changes in their presentation are closely monitored, which allows carers to have a good overview of their needs and supports precise care planning. Children are actively encouraged to express their thoughts, wishes and feelings. Carers support them to share their views verbally or by email. When children do this, carers consider and, when appropriate, act on children's views. Prompt and meaningful responses to a child's expression of their views are provided. This supports children to learn essential communication and life skills.

Carers support children to attend education. When a child is reluctant to attend school, there is clear guidance to assist staff in supporting the child to attend. Carers have communicated with teachers when concerns have arisen in relation to school attendance. This has allowed carers to share information and identify ways to support the child. Carers have requested work for the child to do at home. However, when a child does not attend school, staff have not had clear guidelines to follow in respect of supporting the child to engage in learning at home. Guidance for this was devised during the inspection.

Carers are not consistently supporting children to have healthy lifestyles. Although carers understand that children need to lead healthy lifestyles, including having a good diet, there are no consistent actions or a plan in place to support this. Currently, there is no external service providing therapeutic support to carers or children. Work to commission a suitable service is currently being undertaken.

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

Risk assessments are up to date and contain relevant information for carers. Carers work with children to increase and support their understanding of risk and how to keep themselves safe. Risks in relation to a child's use of the internet have reduced. When carers identify new risks, these are appropriately assessed. Carers communicate effectively with other professionals to share information and devise plans with the aim of reducing risk.

Incidents are managed well by carers. Carers have not used restraint to manage incidents. Recordings of incidents are thorough and informative, and children

received timely and meaningful debriefs. Carers follow plans and use therapeutic parenting techniques to support children and resolve any incidents. However, different carers have different approaches when supporting children. At times, a child may be set strong boundaries, while at other times boundaries may be more relaxed. This may cause a child to feel confused and send mixed messages in relation to what is expected of them.

Carers take appropriate action when children report that they have experienced harm. Information is shared with relevant professionals to allow for investigations to take place. When there has been a delay in receiving the outcome of investigations, carers have made continued efforts to gain updates and outcomes from other professionals, acknowledging that children need to know the outcomes. Following a child raising a concern about a carer, a prompt and full investigation took place and the outcome of this was shared with the child.

Carers have worked to build positive and supportive relationships with children. Both children living in the home identify carers who they feel able to talk to. They say they feel loved and safe. Carers have a good understanding of the children's needs and are responsive to them.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

While a new manager is recruited, the running of the home is being supported by the deputy manager and the responsible individual, both of whom have good knowledge of the children and team of carers. A clear plan has been devised, aiming to ensure that all management tasks are carried out, children are cared for and safe and the running of the home is effective.

Carers are positive about leaders and managers. They report that they are provided with guidance and support when they require it. They say leaders and managers listen to them and actively support their learning and development. All carers spoken to said a new employee assistance package provided by the company was a beneficial addition to an already positive work environment.

Team meetings are well attended. Minutes give a good understanding of the discussions that took place. The meetings focus on children, practice and learning and development. Actions and who should carry them out are clearly set out, however, there is no record of whether these actions have been completed.

Leaders and managers provide carers with good-quality reflective supervision. There is a clear focus on children and how carers are meeting their needs, as well as the well-being and development of carers.

Concerns in relation to health and safety in the home are promptly addressed. Recent fire safety checks and home safety checks identified areas for improvement. This work was swiftly undertaken, prioritising the safety of the children who are living in the home.

The recording systems developed by leaders and managers for use by carers have evolved. New documents tracking the progress of children and the recording of key conversations with children have improved oversight of carers' practice and therefore the quality-of-care children receive. The manager is aware of where documents are saved.

Daily logs are written to children. These portray warmth and the depth of relationships that carers have with children. They also show how children are provided with support and guidance, as well as an array of enjoyable and focused activities in line with their interests. They give a good insight into the child's day. Several documents are written in the first person, from the child's perspective. However, these have not been written by the children. Language used in documents relating to children is not always appropriate. If children were to access their records some of the content could lead to them experiencing confusion and upset.

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; understand the child's health and well-being needs and the options that are available in relation to the child's health and well-being, in a way that is appropriate to the child's age and understanding. (Regulation 10 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)(ii)) In particular, ensure that children are supported to have a well-balanced diet and healthy lifestyle. Ensure that children and staff have access to appropriate psychological advice and support when required.	28 June 2023
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—	28 June 2023

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;

ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate;

ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to 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.

(Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(e)(f))

In particular, ensure the children experience a consistent approach from all carers in relation to the enforcement of boundaries.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. In particular, carefully consider the appropriateness of recording the child's information using first-person narrative. In addition, ensure that language used in records is child-focused and does not put a negative focus on the child. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)
- The registered person should ensure that staff follow the home's policies and procedures to benefit the children who live there. There should be clear lines of accountability. In particular, ensure that any actions resulting from team meetings are reviewed to ensure that they have been completed. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.20)

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: 2591688

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Mutual Care Ltd

Registered provider address: Northams, St Marys Road, Portishead, Bristol, Avon BS20 6QP

Responsible individual: Lance Feldman

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Carla Simkiss, Social Care Inspector

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