

2625941

Registered provider: Active Young People Limited

Assurance inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and managed by a private company. It is registered to provide full-time care and accommodation for up to nine children with learning disabilities.

A manager has been appointed but has yet to be registered with Ofsted.

Inspection date: 1 March 2023

Date of last inspection: 25 May 2022

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Information about this inspection

At these inspections, the inspector evaluated:

- the care of children
- the safety of children
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers.

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children, using the social care common inspection framework. This assurance 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.'

Findings from the inspection

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance inspection.

The care of children

Since the last inspection, the internal presentation of the home has greatly improved. Children's apartments and communal areas have been tastefully decorated and comfortably furnished. New kitchens have been fitted, which the children use to prepare breakfast and snacks. The children now benefit from a sensory room, which is frequently used. An agreement has been obtained for new bathrooms to be fitted in every apartment. This will further enhance the children's living conditions.

Children only move in to the home when it has been determined that their needs can be met. The manager ensures that she has all necessary information about the child. She meets with those who know the child best. She provides information about the home. This means that decisions are made in partnership and responsibilities are shared. This helps to ensure that children have a successful transition into the home.

Great care and consideration is also taken when children move on from the home. Children are at the centre of all decision-making. Their needs determine the preparation and planning that take place. Staff think creatively to minimise children's anxiety. For one child, a party bus took him to his new placement. What could have been an incredibly distressing event became fun and enjoyable. Staff also continued to work with this child for a period of time in his new home. Familiar faces helped the child to settle. It also meant that his new staff were able to learn first-hand how best to meet his needs.

One complaint has been made by a child. The child was listened to and helped to record the complaint. Action was taken by managers to ensure that all children were being appropriately cared for overnight. The child was informed of the outcome to the complaint in a way that the child was able to understand. This helps children to feel important. However, the child's response to the outcome was not recorded. As a result, it is unclear how the child felt about it.

The safety of children

Children's risk assessments are now regularly reviewed. Safeguarding measures are put in place when children's risks increase. However, not all of the actions required by staff are clearly set out. For example, it is unclear how staff should check children's phones and the frequency of these checks. This means that staff could use different approaches and important information could be missed. In addition, mobile phone checks are not recorded, which means there is a lack of accountability.

Direct work is undertaken with children when their actions leave them at risk of harm. Support is also obtained from external agencies where appropriate. This helps children to understand why and how to make themselves safer. However, there is sometimes a delay in this work being carried out. As a result, children remain vulnerable during this time.

Restraints take place to prevent children from harming themselves or others. Management oversight of these incidents is now more timely. This means that managers can quickly take action if this practice was not felt to be safe or effective. However, some staff debriefs continue to be missed. This oversight means that staff are not always given the opportunity to reflect, learn or receive support.

Measures are in place and followed to ensure that new staff are recruited safely. This prevents unsuitable people from working with the children in this home. However, applicants who have not yet been police checked are able to enter the home to be interviewed and attend training. Without a clear assessment of risk, this practice could place the children at risk of harm.

Staff complete mandatory training before they start to work with the children. However, additional training that is specific to the needs of the children is not always identified. For example, more than one child is at risk from accessing online platforms, yet staff have not received adequate training in this area. As a result, staff may not be alert to the signs of children engaging in concerning behaviours when using their devices.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

The manager came into post in October 2022. She and the deputy manager have developed a good working relationship. They have worked hard to improve the safety and care of the children. Monitoring of children's files has also improved, with the manager identifying gaps and inaccurate information.

However, staff retention remains an issue, and staff recruitment is an incredibly time-consuming task for the managers. As a result, some important documents have not had management oversight. Consequently, an inappropriate comment within a child's record was not identified and therefore not discussed with the staff member.

Supervision records are not consistently monitored by managers. This means that poor-quality supervision has not been identified as an issue. Staff are still not given an opportunity to reflect on or evidence their practice. Despite it being an agenda item, it is also unclear whether safeguarding is discussed in supervision.

Inductions for new staff are not completed in line with the company's expectations. A lack of senior staff means that new staff do not receive the support that is identified for them. In addition, induction packs are incomplete or missing. This does not help new staff to feel valued.

When practice issues are discovered, managers take them seriously. Action is taken to protect children and disciplinary procedures are correctly followed. Where necessary, managers ensure that staff reattend training to re-establish their competence. In addition, monitoring of the whole staff team is increased when this is felt to be relevant. This practice better protects children from the risk of harm.

Managers advocate on behalf of the children. For example, when an education provision is not meeting a child's needs, this is challenged. Managers request that action is taken by the appropriate people. Follow-up challenge is also made to ensure that the matter is not forgotten or overlooked. This helps to ensure that children's voices are heard and their needs are met.

The six-monthly reports undertaken by the manager lack consultation with the children about their home and the care they receive. This prevents improvements from being made.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25/05/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
22/02/2022	Full	Inadequate

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— help each child to understand how to keep safe; 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. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(ii)(iii)(v)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that staff are clear about how to check children's mobile phones, direct work with children is undertaken swiftly, and any training needs for the team are considered.	12 April 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— use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(h))	12 April 2023
The registered person must—	12 April 2023

ensure that each employee completes an appropriate induction. The registered person must ensure that all employees— receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (1)(a) (4)(b))	
The registered person must ensure that— 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. (Regulation 35 (3)(b)(i))	12 April 2023
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which— are kept up to date; and are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36 (1)(b)(c)) In particular, the registered provider must ensure that mobile phone checks are recorded, and that children's views are sought and recorded.	12 April 2023
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 feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it. (Regulation 45 (1) (2)(b))	12 April 2023

Recommendations

- The registered manager should ensure that a risk assessment is completed for staff applicants whose Disclosure and Barring Service check is being awaited prior to them entering the home. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)
- The registered manager should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, clear recording that does not stigmatise or blame children. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2625941

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Active Young People Limited

Registered provider address: 1 Suffolk Way, Sevenoaks TN13 1YL

Responsible individual: Gemma Wilkinson

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Emma Ridley, Social Care Inspector

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