

2644282

Registered provider:

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is run by a registered charity. It provides short breaks for up to five children.

The provider states in its statement of purpose that the home provides care for children with autism spectrum disorder and/or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and/or learning disabilities and/or physical disabilities.

The home and the manager registered with Ofsted on 10 June 2021.

This inspection was conducted on site and involved meetings with children, staff and managers. Email and telephone contact took place with parents, family members, the local authority short-breaks coordinator and social worker.

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.

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 February 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	inadequate
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The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: not applicable

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: requires improvement to be good

This is the first inspection of this home since it re-registered with Ofsted under the new provider. However, the registered manager, staff and children have remained the same. Children and families have benefited from the ongoing positive relationships with the staff team. However, there have been several changes that have impacted on the service because of the change in the provider.

Children's experiences have been hindered because there is no dedicated minibus for the service. This means that children have had to use taxis and a hired minibus, which have both presented difficulties. Transport issues have been unsettling and stressful for children and families. On one occasion, a child became distressed in a taxi and hurt the driver and another child. Additionally, not having a dedicated minibus has impacted on the availability and ease to do activities outside of the home. Staff have tried to minimise the impact on children by providing alternative activities in the home and local community.

Two parents have made formal complaints about the changes of the delivery of the service and the facilities in the home. Parents report that their children have not wanted to visit the home anymore. One child said, 'They did not have Wi-Fi here for like six months and there are no computers anymore.'

Staff understand how children communicate their needs. They use a range of tools to communicate with children, including signs, speech and pictures. Staff recognise when children are becoming unsettled and help to reduce children's anxieties through de-escalation techniques and one-to-one support. Positive behaviour support plans enable staff to respond sensitively and consistently to children. As a result, no children have been restrained.

Children continue to make progress from their individual starting points. They have well-thought-through care plans that identify achievable targets with the support of staff, such as helping children to learn how to dress themselves. Children's progress and their care plans are regularly reviewed with key workers and parents. This ensures that children receive appropriate support and make progress during their time at the home.

One child who previously accessed the service is now a young adult and has returned to work at the home as a volunteer. Prior to leaving the service, the young adult shared with the independent visitor that he is proud of the way that staff helped him to gain confidence.

The service has continued to operate throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The registered manager reported that staff have gone above and beyond to support families during this time.

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

Safeguarding practice is compromised by the shortfalls and difficulties among the leaders and managers.

Staffing levels are not always safe. Children are not always receiving one-to-one support as outlined in their care plans. On one occasion, a member of staff had to leave the home to collect the hire minibus and left two members of staff with four children. While no incident occurred during this time, staff did not feel that this was safe practice and have raised their concerns with leaders and managers.

Children's risk assessments and care plans are not sufficient. They do not detail information about children's individual known and potential risks, or the strategies required to enable staff to manage risks. For example, risk assessments do not consider safeguarding risks to children, such as child sexual abuse or exploitation. This leaves staff without a clear understanding of the risks posed to children and potentially places children at more risk of harm.

Children do not have personal emergency evacuation plans in the event of a fire in the home. The current fire risk assessments do not consider the children's individual needs because of their disability. This does not ensure that staff are able to safely get children out of the building in the event of a fire.

Recruitment practice is not sufficiently robust. Gaps in recruitment practice do not ensure that all staff remain safe to work with children past the initial stages of employment. The responsible individual confirmed that the human resources department and the registered manager are responsible for staff recruitment and ongoing review of staff files.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Leadership and management of the home are unsettled. The home is managed by a suitably qualified and experienced manager who has transferred from the previous provider. While this has brought stability for the children, parents and the staff team, there have been changes to the delivery of the service, which has impacted on the quality of the leadership and management of the home.

Leaders and managers are open and honest about the difficulties they have experienced throughout the changeover. However, communication between leaders and managers is poor, which makes roles and responsibilities unclear and confusing. Leaders and managers have been ineffective at making improvements to benefit children. As a result, children have not had the same positive experiences when accessing the service, and parents have felt anxious about sending their children to the home. One parent said, 'My child was getting so anxious about the bus I considered not sending him anymore after coming here two years.'

Staff morale is low. Staff do not feel listened to, and they feel that the quality of care for children has been compromised. Staff report feeling supported by the registered manager but not the wider organisation. Staff are not clear about the processes in place when they raise concerns. One member of staff said, 'I have no confidence that the things being said will get done.'

Communication between the provider and the local authority is poor. The local authority short-breaks coordinator was not aware that on one occasion the staffing ratio for children who require one-to-one support had been reduced. Additionally, the short-break coordinator was unaware of the impact that transport issues are having on children and families.

The management review of the quality of care monitoring report due at the end of January 2022 has not been received by Ofsted. This limits the regulator's oversight of the home and limited the preparation for this inspection.

There is no workforce development plan for the home. This limits the manager's oversight and evaluation of the training and development needs of staff.

Ofsted has not received a copy of the home's updated statement of purpose. Additionally, the statement of purpose does not include details of the staffing structure, their experience and qualifications or the arrangements for supervision of staff practice. This further limited the preparation for this inspection.

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; 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)(b)) In particular, staffing levels must be safe and reflect children's care plans. Risk assessments must identify known and potential risks to children with clear guidance on how to manage the risks. Fire risk assessments must consider each child's individual needs to ensure that safe plans are in place in the event of a fire.	11 March 2022
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The requirements are that— full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1) (3)(d)) In particular, leaders and managers must ensure that recruitment records include up-to-date Disclosure and Barring Service information.	1 April 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. 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. (Regulation 45 (1) (4)(a))	4 March 2022
In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— seek to involve each child's placing authority effectively in the child's care, in accordance with the child's relevant plans; seek to develop and maintain effective professional relationships with such persons, bodies or organisations as the registered person considers appropriate having regard to the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the children's home is to provide care and accommodation. (Regulation 5 (a)(d))	4 March 2022

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the home's statement of purpose includes the staffing structure, experience and qualifications of staff and arrangements for supervision of staff practice. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.10)
- The registered person should have a workforce plan which can fulfil the workforce-related requirements of regulation 16, schedule 1 (paragraphs 19 and 20). The plan should: detail the necessary management and staffing structure, the experience and qualifications of staff currently working and any further training required for those staff, to enable the delivery of the home's statement of purpose; detail the processes and agreed timescales for staff to achieve induction, probation and any core training; detail the process for managing and improving poor performance; detail the process and timescales for supervision of practice (see regulation 33 (4)(b)) and keep appropriate records for staff in the home. The plan should be updated to include any new training and qualifications completed by staff while working at the home and used to record the ongoing training and continuing professional development needs of staff, including the home's manager. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)

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: 2644282

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Centre 404, 404 Camden Road, London N7 0SJ

Responsible individual: Anamaria Vrkic

Registered manager: Rabia Chaudry

Inspectors

Leanne Grant, Social Care Inspector
Colin Bent, Social Care Inspector

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