

2682000

Registered provider: Blue Elephant Childcare Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home was registered in May 2022 and provides care for up to four children. It is owned and managed by a private locally based organisation that operates several other homes in the area.

A suitably qualified registered manager oversees the home.

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 August 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 previously inspected

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: not applicable

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Children's ability to find a sense of belonging and permanence was disrupted for two children within weeks of moving into the home. This occurred following a serious allegation. The staff at the home responded effectively to safeguard all children, and one child was moved. Immediate notice was served on a second child because staff were unable to find an approach to help him to manage his emotional responses.

One child has remained at the home. Although it is early days, they are beginning to build trust in and relationships with the staff. Their school attendance is good. This child gets on well with teachers and is supported by the carers to do well. The child is working part time in a local café. They have friends who visit the home, and arrangements have been made for them to stay overnight at their friends' houses. The manager and carers work in partnership with important adults in this child's life. Feedback from stakeholders about this child is positive. They feel included in the decisions made and kept up to date with any issues.

Until placements were disrupted, children were engaged in several activities linked to their hobbies and favourite activities. They enjoyed days at theme parks, bike riding, and spending time with friends.

The history of children's time in the home is insufficient, not well organised and lacks appropriate commentary. There is a danger of this information and memorabilia for children being lost.

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

Details of presenting risks were not fully available or understood when the children were placed at this home. It is unlikely that the issues related to the two children needing to move on could have been fully predicted. However, risk assessments lacked sufficient detail to inform carers of the developing risk and how to respond successfully.

The manager and carers respond effectively when children make allegations. They report to the necessary agencies without delay and take immediate action to keep children safe.

One child is staying out overnight without permission. Carers work in partnership with professional and other stakeholders to minimise the associated risks. Carers have managed to introduce some age-appropriate boundaries and expectations. They are building a meaningful relationship with the child, and this is beginning to have a positive influence on behaviour.

Behaviour management is positive in that it is focused on building relationships with children and avoiding any use of physical intervention. However, on rare occasions, the use of physical interventions may have prevented further concerning issues and helped to keep the child safe.

The care team lacks sufficient skills, experience and time working together as a team. They were unable to manage the responses of a child suffering anxiety and distress. It took a while for a suitable alternative placement to be found. During this time the situation became untenable for the child and the carers involved.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The skills and experience needed for a new manager and a new care team to provide effective care for three children with complex needs have been underestimated. Not all carers can manage and protect the welfare of children with complex needs and behavioural difficulties as described in the statement of purpose.

Several weeks into this home opening, some incidents caused disruption and carers were unable to cope effectively. One child had to move on as a result. Record-keeping suffered and carers were not provided with the frequency and quality of formal supervision sessions required. This included four carers new to working in a children's home. Carers report that they have confidence in the manager and feel supported. Reflective practice and the support offered to carers following incidents are not evidenced.

Leaders and managers are aware of the developments needed. Following these incidents, careful analysis has led to an action plan for change. A team day has taken place and additional meetings are in place to aid team development. The manager has been provided with an experienced mentor two days a week to develop her management skills. Additional experienced senior carers have been added to the team. The organisation has employed a safeguarding consultant to work with the team. A new recording system has been introduced to avoid errors or shortfalls in records. The system is much more directive and useful in terms of reporting and analysis. These changes have yet to be fully implemented and/or embedded in practice.

Leaders and managers work in partnership with other agencies, particularly the placing authority and commissioning team. Within the wider organisation a clinical psychologist is available to support behaviour management. A wealth of training is available to carers, and the manager has arranged specific training related to the needs of children.

Analysis of placements has been carried out with the placing authority and commissioners. They have sought to understand and avoid a repeat of the issues which led to the less than good outcomes in this home for two children. Further meetings are planned.

The environment remains well maintained, homely and furnished to a high standard.

There is a determination to get things right and a commitment to providing for local children.

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 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; ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(c))	30 September 2022
The registered must 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; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies;	30 September 2022

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)(b))	
The registered person must ensure that all employees— receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(b))	30 September 2022
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which— include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child and— are kept up to date. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)) In particular, ensure that records are clear and information is easy to access, and avoid subjective and institutional language.	30 September 2022

Recommendation

- Staff should understand their important role in encouraging children to reflect on and understand their history, according to their age and understanding. Staff should keep, and encourage children to keep, appropriate memorabilia of the time spent living at the home and help children record significant life events. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards'; page 62, paragraph 15.5)

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: 2682000

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Blue Elephant Childcare Ltd

Registered provider address: Unit 30, Chivenor Business Park, Barnstaple, Devon
EX31 4AY

Responsible individual: Lucy Squire

Registered manager: Rebecca Sampson

Inspector

Janice Hawtin, Social Care Inspector

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