

2749204

Registered provider: Step-A-Side Company Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately run children's home provides care for up to two children who have experienced childhood trauma and have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties or learning difficulties.

The manager has been in post since May 2025 and is registered with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 August 2025

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	requires improvement to be good
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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: 18 December 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection:

The provider was subject to a notice of decision to vary their conditions. This expired in March 2025.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/12/2023	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

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

Children living in this home are extremely vulnerable to criminal exploitation. As they get to know each child, the manager and staff are learning about each child's lived experiences and connections in the community. This means that currently children continue to experience some risks in their daily lives that staff are not fully informed about and they are not always able to intervene in, in a timely manner.

Staff are building relationships with children and children show some trust towards them. For example, a child recently made a significant disclosure that resulted in staff supporting them to take weapons they stored in the community to an amnesty bin. In addition, children will seek help from staff when they recognise they have made mistakes. However, this usually occurs after serious incidents or events have transpired. Consequently, staff interventions are often reactive.

Staff make efforts to implement boundaries and to help children make good decisions. However, these have not always been effective and children have continued to smoke cannabis and vape in the home. The manager has good oversight of these incidents and reviews them to identify learning and adapt the staff's approach.

One child was engaged in education and obtained some qualifications that align with his career aspirations. Another child has struggled to participate in education and staff have made efforts to engage him in activities that align with his interests, for example horse riding. They have sourced a new education placement for the child starting in September. Staff encourage children's hobbies such as skateboarding, restoring bikes and fishing.

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

The registered manager identified concerns that the children's risks of being exploited were increasing. They took appropriate steps to share intelligence with professionals and review risk management strategies. However, the extent of one child's involvement in criminality was not fully understood by the registered manager, the staff team or professionals around the child, until the child disclosed this to them.

Managers and leaders respond appropriately when children raise concerns about staff's conduct. For example, they listen to children's views, consult with the local authority and, when appropriate, they share concerns with the disclosure and barring service. However, in one instance, a child disclosed serious concerns about a staff member's conduct. This went unnoticed by leaders and managers for six weeks because the staff member was intentionally deceitful and falsified records. This has adversely impacted children's perception of staff.

Staff are struggling to teach children socially acceptable behaviour. Children sometimes demonstrate limited respect and tolerance towards staff, for example making demands, swearing at staff and using threatening language. Children have sometimes encouraged each other's negative behaviours and staff have taken appropriate steps to intervene and distract children from each other.

During some behaviour incidents, children have caused significant damage to the home or had altercations with other children in the community. Staff generally remain calm and make efforts to use de-escalation strategies, which are sometimes impactful. Staff also use their knowledge of the children to inform their decision-making in tricky moments. Staff's use of physical interventions is rare, but necessary and proportionate.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

Leaders and managers were over-optimistic during the placement planning for both children. They were not robust enough in considering children's individual risks and the impact they could have on each other. Prior to the inspection, leaders and managers were reconsidering placement compatibility for one child and they had initiated meetings with the local authority to explore this further.

The registered manager has responded appropriately when children's vulnerabilities and risks have increased. For example, they have shared intelligence with the police, strengthened relationships with children's parents and made referrals to specialist services. The registered manager has also requested meetings with social workers, who have praised her approach to collaborative working. However, leaders' and managers' challenge has not always been effective securing improved outcomes for children.

The registered manager encourages staff to take a nonjudgmental and restorative approach when children confide in them about mistakes. One child told staff that he stole a motorbike and they supported him to take it to a police station. They also supported this child to take weapons to a knife amnesty.

The staff like working in the home and they have positive views of the registered manager and leaders. Staff know that they can talk with them about any concerns, and requests for additional support and training are met with agreement. Leaders and managers are following safer recruitment practises.

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, The 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; 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)(ii)(b)) In particular, leaders and managers must help children to recognise the signs of exploitation and how to navigate interactions with people who try to draw or force them back into criminality. In particular, leaders and managers must ensure that when they support children to spend time in the community, the location is safe for the child reducing the likelihood of them being at risk of harm and/or drawn into exploitation.	6 October 2025
The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— mutual respect and trust; an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—	6 October 2025

that staff— help each child to develop socially aware behaviour; help each child to develop the understanding and skills to recognise or withdraw from a damaging, exploitative or harmful relationship; strive to gain each child's respect and trust. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(ii)(vii)(viii)) In particular, leaders and managers must help children to communicate with others in a respectful manner and help them to identify when their presentation and language is counterproductive.	
In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 5 (c)) In particular, leaders and managers need to exercise more challenge towards professionals if they intend to secure improved outcomes for children.	6 October 2025

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: 2749204

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Step-A-Side Company Limited

Registered provider address: 29 Market Place, Coleford, Gloucestershire GL16 8AA

Responsible individual: Rachel Carwardine

Registered manager: Danielle Warren

Inspector:

Tara Webb, Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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