

2779744

Registered provider: Step Forward Care Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is run and managed by a private provider. It provides care for one child who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

The manager and home were registered in November 2024.

One child was living in the home at the time of this inspection. One child has left the home during the inspection cycle.

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 June 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account

requires improvement to be good

How well children and young people are helped and protected

requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

requires improvement to be good

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: none

Inspection judgements

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

The manager does not have the relevant statutory documents, including the child's care plan, or raise concerns with the local authority when the statutory review of the child's care does not take place. In addition, the manager has not ensured that the child has a personalised in-house care plan. This means that staff are without a plan to inform what care and support should be afforded to the child. Any progress the child makes cannot be tracked to inform future care and may lead to inconsistencies in how the child is cared for.

There is no education plan for the child. The manager has not provided effective escalation to ensure that educational work is sent to the child, who is currently not attending school. Staff do engage the child in some activities to occupy the child's day, for example they attend a surf club and visit museums. However, this has a minimal impact in helping the child to maintain their academic learning.

Children's transitions into the home are mixed. One child experienced a well-planned and gradual move in. However, one child's transition was rushed, and staff did not have an effective care plan to follow to meet the child's needs. The manager gave notice on the child after one week. The staff have been supported by the home's therapeutic lead to reflect and identify what could have been done differently to prevent future placement breakdowns.

The child is developing positive relationships with staff, who use humour and enjoyable experiences to help them connect with the child. Staff and the manager have sought to establish a positive working relationship with the child's parent. The parent said, 'They are helping me and [name of child].' The child said that they enjoy living at the home and being with staff.

The provider ensured that repairs were completed in a timely manner when significant damage was caused to the home. The current child is gradually personalising the home in line with their interests.

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

The manager did not investigate an allegation made by a child about a staff member. In addition, no discussion took place with the child about the matter. This does not help children to feel listened to. The manager's understanding of the role of the local authority designated officer is vague. This prevents effective action being taken to safeguard children.

Risk assessments are generic and lack personalisation to the child. The risk assessments contain risks that are not relevant and makes finding the most important guidance difficult. Some aspects of the plan do not give staff specific detail to follow. This reduces staff being able to implement the plan effectively. Staff do understand the risks for the child, but these gaps in the risk assessments may lead to inconsistencies in safeguarding practice.

Staff engage children in discussions about worries such as substance misuse or personal hygiene when these issues arise. However, due to the lack of care planning for children, these discussions are reactive rather than preventative. This will limit the quality of help the child receives and the progress they make.

When staff need to hold a child, it is proportionate to keep them and others safe or prevent significant property damage. Staff attempt to engage the child in discussions afterwards. However, this is not always effective. The recording of discussions with children are not linked to the intervention and can be difficult to source.

When de-escalation and physical intervention are not effective, staff contact the police to support keeping the child safe. The manager identifies and shares concerns when responses from the police are not helpful, with a view to ensuring that support from the police is helpful to the child.

The manager requested support from a child's local authority prior to giving notice to attempt to stabilise the child's placement. However, this did not have an impact.

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

The management team has only recently identified the need to ensure that the child has a care plan in place. The manager and responsible individual outline concerns with the system they use to generate plans. However, to date, no steps have been taken to improve the system. As the child has no care plan, the manager has limited oversight of the child's progress. Furthermore, it hinders their ability to be assured that staff are meeting the child's needs effectively in line with the child's statutory plan.

Leaders have not provided challenge to the child's local authority when essential statutory documents have not been received for the child. The child was admitted to the home without these. In addition, the manager has not recognised when incorrect information has been shared.

Staff are included in discussions about whether they can meet a child's needs prior to the child moving to the home. However, the manager's assessment of suitability does not include an evaluation to inform decision-making, and does not consider any potential challenges to caring for the child. This continues to be an area of development, despite the first child leaving the home in an unplanned way.

Staff benefit from regular practice-related supervision and an induction into working at the home. Staff speak positively about the support they receive from the managers. Training relevant to the children's needs, and support from the therapeutic lead, are strengthening staff's practice. The manager ensures that reflective practice is embedded to support staff to learn from incidents individually and in team meetings.

Staff are recruited safely to the home. Managers take effective action to assess new members of staff's suitability to work with children.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person 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 must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child's needs; 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 (b)(c))	9 June 2025
The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff— provide personalised care that meets each child's needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking account of the child's background. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(iv))	9 June 2025
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—	9 June 2025

that staff— understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(v)(vi)(vii))	
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— 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 use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(f)(h))	9 June 2025
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that arrangements are in place to— manage and review the placement of each child in the home; and that each child's relevant plans are followed;	9 June 2025

that the child's placing authority is contacted, and a review of that child's relevant plans is requested. (Regulation 14 (1)(a) (2)(b)(ii)(c)(e))	
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Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that there is a review of the location and premises. The review should include the identification of any new risks and opportunities presented by the home's location and strategies for managing these. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.1)

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: 2779744

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Step Forward Care Limited

Registered provider address: 45 Cheswick Drive, Newcastle Upon Tyne NE3 5DF

Responsible individual: Paul Jackson

Registered manager: Joanne Reiling

Inspector

Jess Elliott, Social Care Inspector

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