

2786401

Registered provider: Action for Children Services Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a short-breaks service for disabled children run by a national charity. The home can care for up to four children at any one time.

At the time of the inspection, 18 children were accessing the service. Three children were staying there during the inspection.

The manager has applied to register with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 November 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: 2 September 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none



Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
02/09/2024	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

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

Children are happy and relaxed at the home. Staff provide nurturing care and are committed to supporting children's well-being. However, there are some gaps in the consistency and effectiveness of care practice. Staff lack clarity about how to manage the broader developmental needs of the children, and there is insufficient structure or planning for after-school activities, resulting in limited opportunities for children to have a range of social experiences.

When children are moving on to adult services, managers and staff do not get involved in planning their moves to their next placement. This is a missed opportunity to make sure that children receive the support that they need to help the move go smoothly.

Children's care plans are inconsistent in quality. Some information about children is poorly recorded and includes negative language, with typographical errors indicating a lack of care and consideration of the child's needs. For one child, inappropriate comments were displayed on a 'celebration board' in a public area, undermining the child's success.

Children's wishes and feelings are not routinely captured using communication aids. Additionally, there is no independent advocacy service for children, to help them have a say in decisions that affect their lives.

Renovation of the communal areas is under way. However, the children's bedrooms lack personalisation, and one bedroom had an extra bed in, cluttered with items on top. This detracts from an otherwise homely and child-centred environment.

Staff are attentive to children's health needs, ensuring medications are administered safely. Children's personal care is delivered with sensitivity, and staff are mindful of children's emotional responses during personal care routines.

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

Staff do not demonstrate good awareness of how to safeguard children. In one example, a child had a suspected injury, but staff did not take appropriate steps to ensure that the child was not at risk of harm. Once the independent person identified this issue, supervision and reflective practice sessions were held with the member of staff involved and all staff received additional safeguarding training. Despite this, records do not demonstrate how their improved knowledge translates into practice. Incident records do not provide a clear description of events or any steps that will be taken to reduce the risk of a recurrence.

Risk assessments do not provide sufficient information to reliably inform staff how to support children who are distressed. Additionally, when incidents occur, managers' response is poor. For example, a staff member was hurt during an incident, but no reparative work took place to help the child understand the impact of their behaviour.

To ensure their safety, some children are monitored at night using video and audio devices. There is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that attempts have been made to gather children's views and consent to use such devices, or whether the impact on their emotional well-being has been considered.

Some children have equipment that restricts their liberty, for example, one child uses a chair that keeps them in a good position for feeding, and other children use 'safe space' beds. Decisions to use this equipment are made with children's safety and best interests in mind. However, not all children's plans demonstrate that these decisions are in line with children's wishes and are subject to regular and meaningful review.

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

Leaders and managers understand the strengths and weaknesses in their staff team. They have taken appropriate steps to try and change the culture of the home and end some outdated practice. However, the strategies implemented to date have not been wholly successful because of resistance by some staff.

Appropriate training and supervision sessions are taking place regularly, including targeted single-subject supervisions when things do not go to plan. However, these have not translated into improvements in practice or outcomes for children.

Not all staff demonstrate motivation and commitment to ensuring that children receive consistently high-quality care. Additionally, there is a lack of cohesive working in the leadership team. While individuals are fulfilling their roles, the absence of a unified approach leads to inconsistent practice.

Staff do not fully understand and implement children's care plans, which means that children do not receive predictable support. Additionally, outcomes from meetings with children's wider networks are not always recorded or shared with the staff team. This has a negative effect on the continuity of care provided to children.

Leaders and managers are not making effective use of feedback they receive from relevant parties to inform development of the service. Although areas for improvement have been identified, there are no clear or actionable plans in place to enhance the experiences of 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, 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 care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the 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 plan for, and help, each child to prepare to leave the home or to move into adult care in a way that is consistent with arrangements agreed with the child's placing authority; that each child's relevant plans are followed. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(ii)(iii)(c))	20 January 2026
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; help each child to understand how to keep safe;	20 January 2026

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; 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)(i)(ii)(iii)(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— 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; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child; 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; demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received; and	20 January 2026

use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(c)(e)(f)(g)(ii)(h))	
The children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who— develop positive relationships with them; engage with them; and take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff— ascertain and consider each child's views, wishes and feelings, and balance these against what they judge to be in the child's best interests when making decisions about the child's care and welfare; help each child to express views, wishes and feelings; help each child to understand how the child's views, wishes and feelings have been taken into account and give the child reasons for decisions in relation to the child; regularly consult children, and seek their feedback, about the quality of the home's care; help each child to understand how the child's privacy will be respected and the circumstances when it may have to be limited; help each child to prepare for any review of the child's relevant plans and to make the child's views, wishes and feelings known for the purposes of that review; and make each child aware of and, if necessary, remind them of each of the matters in sub-paragraph (d)(i) to (iii); ensure that each child—	20 January 2026

is enabled to provide feedback to, and raise issues with, a relevant person about the support and services that the child receives; is given appropriate advocacy support; keep the children's guide and the home's complaints procedure under review and seek children's comments before revising either document; ensure that an explanation is given to each child as soon as reasonably practicable after the child's arrival about— the children's guide; how to make a complaint or representations in relation to the home or the care the child receives and how any such complaint or representations will be dealt with; and what advocacy support or services are available to the child, how the child may access that support or those services and any entitlement the child may have to independent advocacy provision; and ensure that the views of each relevant person are taken into account, so far as reasonably practicable, before making a decision about the care or welfare of a child. (Regulation 7 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(b)(i)(iii)(c)(d)(i)(ii)(iii)(e))	
The registered person must ensure that— any limitation placed on a child's privacy or access to any area of the home's premises— is intended to safeguard each child accommodated in the home; is necessary and proportionate; is kept under review and, if necessary, revised; and allows children as much freedom as is possible when balanced against the need to protect them and keep them safe. (Regulation 21 (c)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv))	20 January 2026

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: 2786401

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Action for Children Services Ltd

Registered provider address: Action for Children, 3 The Boulevard, Ascot Road
Watford WD18 8AG

Responsible individual: Charlotte Jorgensen

Registered manager: post vacant

Inspector

Shaheda Dhandia, Social Care Inspector

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