

2806238

Registered provider: Action For Children Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and managed by a private provider. It provides care for up to four children who may experience emotional and behavioural difficulties.

There is currently one child living at the home.

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 May 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

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: good

The child was spoken to during the inspection.

A well-thought-out transition plan supported the child's move to the home. The manager worked with professionals and the child's family members to complete a detailed assessment of the child's needs before the child moved in. The assessment considered all the known risks for the child and how these might change when they moved into the home. This helped staff anticipate how to manage these risks and the child to settle quickly.

The child has made good progress in their education, with their attendance almost doubling since they moved to the home. The staff and the school are working together to implement a variety of strategies to reduce late arrivals and further improve the child's attendance. Staff provide a structured environment for the child and promote positive routines, leading to improvements in the child's diet, personal hygiene and sleep, which have all contributed to the child's progress.

Managers and staff communicate effectively with family members and professionals, welcoming them into the home, which helps to create positive relationships. The child's new social worker values the support from the staff in getting to know the child and understanding their plan and progress.

Staff support the child to spend time with people they care about. Staff liaise with the child's school to identify and promote positive friendships for the child. Staff take the child to see their friends and have invited them for tea at the home. When the child doesn't want to see family members, their wishes are respected. However, this has led to the child missing out on family time, something which is being promoted as part of the child's care plan.

The child has decorated their bedroom to their taste. To assist the child in settling in, staff arranged a trip to Blackpool for the child and their sibling. The child has enjoyed a range of other activities. However, some relationships with staff have become fractious, and the child says that some staff don't listen or address issues that the child raises. Managers are reflecting with the team about how to work through this and improve the child's experiences.

The staff do not always support the child's health needs. There has been a delay in arranging the health intervention the nurse recommended during the child's initial health assessment. The manager has since made attempts to secure an appointment at the doctor's practice. However, this has not yet happened, leading to continued delay.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

The response to missing-from-home incidents is robust. There is a clear risk assessment and process for the child, which all members of staff are familiar with and follow. Recordings of missing-from-home incidents are detailed, supporting management oversight. When the child returns to the home, staff are curious as to where the child has been and share this information with partner agencies to help safeguard the child. Staff have meaningful conversations with the child to help them understand potential risks when missing from home.

The managers and staff have implemented comprehensive safeguards around the child's mobile phone use to help reduce risk to the child. The child has agreed to the checks and the restrictions. Daily monitoring helps staff identify when they need to take an escalated response in the best interest of keeping the child safe.

Managers are implementing a restorative approach to consequences. Training on the theory and practice of promoting behavioural change has been provided in team meetings. The staff are aware of the importance of getting consequences right for the child, and they monitor their impact on the child's behaviour. Consequences are altered if they are not effective.

There has been no need for any physical interventions. Staff are all familiar with the provider's chosen model of behaviour management and use it effectively to help the child. Staff have access to a specialist trainer to have debriefs and refresh their training whenever they need to.

The staff have responded quickly to concerns about substance misuse, contacting a specialist charity and sharing resources with the team to support their understanding of the risks to the child. Staff have appropriately implemented safeguards in discussion with health professionals, family and the child. Encouragement from the staff helped the child speak to a worker from the substance misuse team and agree to meet with them again.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager has a clear vision for the home and how they want it to develop. The manager and staff feel well supported by leaders, their peers and the wider organisation. Staff report that their inductions are comprehensive, and they feel well prepared for their role. Formal and informal training and development activities are frequent, including a regular slot in the team meeting. Staff were supported to maintain their skills before the child moved in by undertaking shifts at the provider's other homes in the region.

Leaders and managers provide staff with regular practice-related supervision. Staff contribute to the agenda. Agreed actions are monitored, and discussions around development needs are purposeful. The manager encourages staff to use supervision as a reflective space to examine their own practice and the practice of others.

The manager, with support from the team leaders, has oversight of all aspects of the functioning of the home. Monitoring and review systems are thorough and effective. Leaders, managers and staff undertake a sequence of weekly, monthly and quarterly checks to help identify any gaps. In addition, the manager values the feedback from the independent person and acts on their recommendations.

The manager, responsible individual and the operations manager were all on annual leave during this inspection. The team leaders deputised in their absence but lack experience in having oversight of a children's home. There is a network of support from other managers in the region. However, senior leaders did not take sufficient action to ensure that those left in day-to-day charge of the home were appropriately qualified and experienced to fulfil this role.

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 health and well-being standard is that— the health and well-being needs of children are met; children receive advice, services and support in relation to their health and well-being. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff help each child to— achieve the health and well-being outcomes that are recorded in the child's relevant plans; understand the child's health and well-being needs and the options that are available in relation to the child's health and well-being, in a way that is appropriate to the child's age and understanding. (Regulation 10 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(i)(ii))	13 June 2025

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children are consulted regularly on their views about their care, to inform and support continued improvement in the quality of care provided. Children should be able to see the results of their views being listened to and acted upon. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.11)
- The registered person should ensure that, in their absence, there is a suitably qualified and experienced person in charge of the home. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 51, paragraph 10.1)

- The registered person should ensure that staff work with the child's social worker and family to support the child to have enjoyable time with their family. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 58, paragraph 11.14)

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: 2806238

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Action For Children Services Limited

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

Responsible individual: Barbara Bolam

Registered manager: Kirsty Donaldson

Inspector

Kirstie Sutherland, Social Care Inspector

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