

2817885

Registered provider: Action for Children Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This six-bedded home is run by a national charity. It offers a short-break service for children with learning disabilities, physical disabilities and associated healthcare needs.

At the time of the inspection, one child was having a short break at the home.

The home is led by a registered manager.

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 July 2025

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

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

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

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

There are good relationships between children and staff. Children enjoy their short stays at the home. One family member said, 'She (the child) loves it here and settled back straight away after the home closing for a while. She loves the staff.'

Children's care plans are clear and detailed. They explain the child's needs well. This includes their complex additional needs. There is also a one-page summary for each child. This helps staff to quickly see important details about the child. They start with warm comments about the child, such as 'I am a happy boy with a contagious smile and laugh'.

Staff know the children very well. They understand how each child communicates. Pictures and symbols are used to help some children express their feelings and make choices. Staff recognise the meaning of sounds and gestures for individual children.

Children's health needs are well met. Care plans outline children's medical diagnoses and health needs. A qualified nurse leads the care of the children. However, there have been issues regarding the management of children's medication. This led to the service pausing on accepting short breaks for children pending a review of medication administration processes. A new clinical lead nurse position has been introduced. Changes in practice and policies have been made, and additional training has been undertaken. As a result, the processes for medication storage, administration and recording have significantly improved.

Some areas of the home require development to make them more accessible for children who use wheelchairs. This includes the kitchen and garden. The manager and the responsible individual have recognised this. An action plan identifies the changes being made.

Staff work closely with children's family members. This is particularly important for short-break care. Each child has an allocated named worker as a main point of contact. Families are contacted before stays. This ensures that arrangements for the child are well planned.

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

Staff understand the risks to children with complex needs. Risk assessments identify individual risks and vulnerabilities for each child. Documents explain likely outcomes for children in relation to these vulnerabilities. Care practices to reduce risk are also identified in documents for staff to follow. The manager has carried out a review of the premises. However, this does not identify known risks in the locality and how they may affect the children.

The manager and responsible individual respond well to any complaints. Additionally, they take investigations into staff practices seriously and handle them effectively.

Children may sometimes display harmful behaviour. This may be an expression of feelings or sensory behaviour. This is clearly identified in the child's care plan and risk assessment. Staff know how to help the child stay safe in these instances.

Children do not go missing from the home. Staff always care directly for the child. However, some children's risk assessments identify the potential for a child to run off. Staff are alert to this risk. This is more likely while the child is in the community with staff. There are emergency information sheets for each child.

Staff manage children's unwanted behaviour well. Physical intervention is not required or used. A brief positive behaviour support plan forms part of each child's care plan. A more detailed plan is created if required.

The manager uses safe recruitment practices for staff joining the team.

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

The transfer of the home and early period has been challenging. However, the responsible individual and the senior managers have made necessary but difficult decisions. This has included temporarily pausing the service. This has allowed changes to procedures and policies to safeguard children. Additionally, the service has provided extra training for staff and has employed a clinical lead. This has allowed the service to restart with stability and safe practices.

Staff acknowledge the challenges they have had, with morale very low at times. An interim manager covered the home in the absence of the registered manager. This was a particularly difficult period for staff. The home is now stable, with good support from the registered manager, clinical lead and responsible individual. Staff say they love working with the children.

The manager has created a comprehensive home development plan, which demonstrates her understanding of what needs to be done to make the necessary improvements. Regular team meetings now take place, helping staff work together to make the necessary changes.

The manager has not ensured that staff receive regular supervision sessions. Those held have not been reflective development sessions. This is a known area for improvement, both in quantity and quality. There has been progress in this area since the clinical lead joined the team.

Ofsted has not always been informed about changes to the home's statement of purpose. The manager must ensure that this is done in line with regulation.

A range of quality assurance processes are in place. This includes weekly and monthly checks carried out by the manager, the responsible individual and the staff. The manager is aware of the importance of her spending regular time with the children and observing staff practice.

The manager feels very well supported. She receives regular supervision from the responsible individual. She has additional external clinical support. She acknowledges the team and senior managers working closely together to help her.

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 registered person must review the appropriateness and suitability of the location of the premises used for the purposes of the children's home at least once in each calendar year taking into account the requirement in regulation 12(2)(c) (the protection of children standard). When conducting the review, the registered person must consult, and take into account the views of, each relevant person. (Regulation 46 (1) (2)) This specifically relates to assessing and mitigating any risks in the local area and liaising with relevant people.	29 August 2025
The registered person must ensure that all employees— undertake appropriate continuing professional development; receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience; and have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (4)(a)(b)(c)) This specifically relates to ensuring that staff receive regular supervision in line with the home's policy.	31 July 2025
The registered person must— keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16 (3)(a)(b))	31 July 2025

This specifically relates to ensuring that Ofsted is informed of any changes to the home's statement of purpose within 28 days.	
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Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that staff provide a nurturing, welcoming and supportive environment while setting appropriate boundaries in relation to children's behaviour. The home should meet children's basic day-to-day needs and physical requirements. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.7)

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: 2817885

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Action for Children Services Limited

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

Responsible individual: Susan Connor

Registered manager: Georgina Murray

Inspector

Shaun Caplis, Social Care Inspector

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