

# SC000673

Registered provider: Action for Children

Assurance inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

This home is owned and managed by a charitable organisation. It is registered to provide care for up to five children with learning disabilities under short-break arrangements, and up to five children to live permanently in the home.

**Inspection date:** 3 March 2023

**Date of last inspection:** 31 August 2022

**Judgement at last inspection:** requires improvement to be good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** The full inspection of this home was conducted on 31 August and 1 September 2022. During this inspection, inspectors found several regulatory breaches in the leadership and management arrangements. These shortfalls impacted on the children's protection, safety and welfare. In response, Ofsted issued a compliance notice under regulation 13.

A monitoring visit was completed on 1 November 2022 to monitor the provider's response to the compliance notice. This visit confirmed the provider had taken sufficient steps to meet the notice.

## Information about this inspection

At this inspection, the inspector evaluated:

- the care of children
- the safety of children
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers.

The inspector looked closely at the experiences and progress of children, using the social care common inspection framework. This assurance 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'.

## **Findings from the inspection**

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance inspection.

### **The care of children**

Children have planned introductions before they stay in the home. The manager uses planning meetings to obtain all relevant information from professionals and family members. This helps the manager to consider how he and the staff can best meet the needs of the child. The manager plans a child's stay by taking into consideration the needs of other children in the home. He offers the child an initial visit before final decisions are made. This helps the children to have a settled and enjoyable stay.

The home is decorated and furnished to a good standard. The children's bedrooms are personalised. There are photos around the home of the children participating in activities with the staff. When a child moves into the home to live, important items of furniture, such as their bed, move with them. This helps the child to have a familiar environment and provides them with furniture that has already been assessed as safe. An activity room has recently been refurbished to a high standard. One child was described as 'sparkling' when she saw the refurbished room being revealed.

The staff support the children well to prepare for changes in their lives. Staff provide sensitively created social stories. These help the children to understand when family members will visit and prepare them for being introduced to new family members. This helps to improve the children's understanding of their social world.

The children are set targets to help them to make good progress in the home. Family members and professionals are consulted when these plans are created to ensure they are personalised. One child's plan aims to help the child to feed themselves independently. However, it is unclear when this plan will be implemented and how often it will be reviewed. This oversight hinders the manager from being assured that the staff are consistently supporting the child to progress and meet their individual identified aims.

When children do have clear start and review dates for their targets, they make good progress, such as learning to brush their teeth independently. This is achieved through individual sessions that the staff have with children, who capture 'How will I [name of child] know I am doing well?' and 'What [name of child] has learned' in the child's progress planner. This helps the staff to focus on making progress for the child in a child-centred way.

## **The safety of children**

Children's risk assessments are detailed and clear. They are regularly updated with new information so that the assessments remain current. Staff understand the risks associated with the children in the home and what strategies they must use to support the children when they become upset.

Staff understand the children well. They are alert to changes in the behaviour of those children who experience difficulties communicating. Staff recognise when children are unusually anxious and unsettled, and they respond appropriately. The staff's detailed knowledge of the children helps to improve the children's safety.

Physical interventions are rarely used. Staff often use guiding techniques to distract the children when their behaviour means that they or others are at risk of being hurt. Irrespective of the child's needs, the staff work hard to help the children understand their behaviour after a physical intervention has been necessary, and the records of this work are good.

The manager debriefs the staff after a physical intervention has taken place. However, the dates that these discussions are held are not consistently recorded. When they are recorded, they have been, on occasion, significantly delayed as an appropriate person has not been identified to complete these when the manager is not present. This oversight prevents the provider from being assured that the use of physical intervention is proportionate. It also delays the opportunity to address any learning points.

There has been one error in staff administering medication to children. One member of staff could not recall if a child had been given their medication, while the second member of staff believed they had. Medical advice was sought, and the child did not experience any harm as a result of this. The manager has implemented a new process to reduce the likelihood of further incidents occurring, and he has ensured that staff receive refresher training on the administration of medication.

## **The effectiveness of leaders and managers**

The manager has worked in this home for many years and knows the children and their families well. He was successful in securing the post of manager in February 2023, having been in post as acting manager since October 2022. However, Ofsted have yet to receive an application from him to register as the home's manager. This prevents Ofsted from formally assessing his skills and experience, as required to manage this home.

The manager cares deeply about the children and refers to himself as the children's 'guardian' while they stay in the home. He is committed to helping the children to make progress and is enthusiastic about implementing new processes to help the staff to achieve this. He has created a supportive ethos in the home, which the staff embrace.

Supervision sessions are regular and consider the child's needs and areas of development for staff. The manager has effected changes to the format of supervision sessions so that they are more reflective. This contributes to the learning culture that the manager is creating. The manager holds regular reflective workshops to further support the staff to improve their practice. Staff contribute towards the development of these workshops as they find them beneficial.

The staff actively participate in regular team meetings, which have clear focused agendas. These meetings provide the staff with opportunities to develop and learn. Topics such as learning from the medication error, children's revised risk assessments and children's successes are shared and celebrated.

Staffing has improved in the home. When agency staff are used, the manager ensures consistency of staff to provide continuity of care to children. This helps the children to form trusting relationships with those who care for them.

The manager escalates his concerns to the child's placing local authority when children's essential documents are not received. However, staff do not escalate these concerns in a timely manner or in line with the manager's new process. This prevents the staff from consistently understanding the current needs of each child.

The requirements and recommendations made at the last inspection have been met.

## Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement            |
|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| 31/08/2022      | Full            | Requires improvement to be good |
| 28/03/2022      | Interim         | Sustained effectiveness         |
| 20/09/2021      | Full            | Requires improvement to be good |
| 07/01/2020      | Full            | Good                            |

## 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, 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     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| <p>The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that—</p> <p>helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and</p> <p>promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child.<br/>(Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)).</p> <p>In particular, the provider must register the interim manager if the interim manager is expected to be in place as interim manager for more than 50 days. ('Social Care Registration Processes Guidance', page 153, paragraph 10)</p> | 1 April 2023 |

### Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that when the placing authority or another relevant person does not provide the input and services needed to meet a child's needs during their time in the home or in preparation for leaving the home, the home must challenge them to meet the child's needs. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 12, paragraph 2.8)
- The registered person should ensure that all records of restraint are reviewed to provide the opportunity for amending practice. In particular, the manager should ensure records capture the date that staff are spoken with following an incident to ensure it is within the relevant timescales. The manager should also ensure that when they are absent from the home, an alternative suitable person is identified to conduct debriefs with staff and children following a restraint, and to ensure that they take place within the necessary timescales. ('Guide to the Children's Home Regulations, including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.59)

## Children's home details

**Unique reference number:** SC000673

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** Action for Children

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

**Responsible individual:** Ruth Baldwin

**Registered manager:** Post vacant

## Inspector

Julia Hagan, Social Care Inspector

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