

SC000673

Registered provider: Action For Children

Full 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.

The manager registered with Ofsted in May 2023.

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 June 2023

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: 31 August 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

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

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children present as being happy in the home. Children are often described by family members as being excited when they know that they are arriving for their short-breaks stay. The children who live permanently in the home have good relationships with each other. Professionals and family members speak highly of the level of care that the staff provide to the children. One family member called the service a 'lifeline'.

The staff support children well to enjoy experiences that may not be available to them otherwise. Children are offered a variety of activities. While some activities are tailored for individuals, such as going to the theatre, there are also group events such as going to the local park and going to the zoo. These group activities help the children to form relationships with each other. The home also holds party nights. Staff bought one child a Hawaiian shirt to wear at a Hawaiian-themed party night. These personalised experiences help to provide children with a sense of belonging.

Staff capture photos of these activities, along with important milestones like a child's first day in the home. These are kept in memory books for the children. Unfortunately, not all the children's memory books contain the details surrounding these photos, such as where the activity was, or the date of the activity. This prevents children from having a clear memory of the precious moments they have spent in the home.

The staff are creative in helping the children to make sense of their world. Staff devise social stories using pictures to help the children to understand how they are being helped. These are also used to inform the children of any changes that are happening in their lives. This helps the children to feel included and valued.

Children make progress with their development when staying at the home. However, targets that are set by external professionals as identified in important documents, such as education and healthcare (EHC) plans, are not reflected in the children's care plans and progress trackers. Furthermore, staff do not set new targets for those children who have successfully reached their original targets. This shortfall limits the staff's ability to help the children to make continued progress.

The home is well equipped with resources to support the children's needs. It has also benefited from some areas being recently decorated. However, some areas of the home have suffered wear and tear. There has been a delay in these identified areas being repaired, such as one child's en suite bathroom floor and the privacy screen on another child's bedroom window. This detracts from the overall homely feel of the home, and limits children's right to privacy.

The staff team has produced a guide for children, to help them to prepare for and understand what their stay in the home will be like. However, there is not a separate

guide for those children staying for short breaks, and those living permanently in the home. It is also in a written word format, preventing it from being accessible to all children. Although there is a video to accompany this, this was produced seven years ago and is now outdated. This may mislead children and their families about the home's environment and the services that it offers.

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

The staff have a good knowledge of safeguarding processes. When staff identify unexplained injuries on children, they follow the provider's safeguarding procedure. This helps to keep children safe.

Children's health needs are managed well. There is clear evidence of staff's regular and effective communication with healthcare professionals. This helps the staff to meet the children's current health needs. One healthcare professional said, 'Communication with the service is fantastic.'

Intimate care needs are met sensitively. Staff know and understand how to treat children with dignity and respect their privacy when providing intimate care. Staff also help the children to develop an understanding of managing personal boundaries and how to develop appropriate relationships. This helps to keep children safe and helps them to feel both safe and respected.

Restraints are used infrequently. Staff will often guide children away from a potentially dangerous situation to prevent any risk of harm. Children are only held when their behaviours mean that they or others are at risk of being hurt. Staff document these incidents well. After an incident, staff make efforts to help the child to understand that the measure was to help to protect them, and not a form of punishment. Parents are also informed. The registered manager speaks with staff after an incident, to help them to reflect and to consider any learning opportunities.

The home has only received one complaint since the last inspection. This was properly investigated and the manager informed the parent of the outcome of their complaint. This helps parents to feel listened to and supported. The manager uses these incidents as opportunities for staff's learning and development. He takes steps to address any shortfalls in practice. This helps to improve children's safety.

The staff use caring language when creating records about children's care. However, the language used on one body map record to describe a child's injury was unclear. This prevents the registered manager from being satisfied that a child's injury is accidental in nature.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager has a wealth of experience through working in this particular setting. He knows the children, families and staff well. The manager is committed to providing the children with individualised care and to supporting the children to

enjoy the time they spend in the home. He is described as working hard to make improvements to the service.

Staff say that they feel well supported. Staff praise the manager for the positive culture that he has created. Staff say that the home is a calmer place. Staff say that they also benefit from a more structured approach to caring for the children. This contributes towards an improved level of care for the children.

The manager considers the needs of individual children when assessing if a child can stay at the home. The manager has improved the process to escalate requests for information to a child's placing local authority. However, staff do not consistently follow this escalation process. This means that the information used to inform decision-making is not always up to date and accurate. This prevents the manager from considering all known aspects of a child's care needs before making a final decision.

Monitoring and auditing systems have improved. However, case file audits do not identify gaps in information and errors in recordings. This means that the most up-to-date information is not always available to inform the staff of the care that each child needs.

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 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))	15 August 2023
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 each child's relevant plans are followed. (Regulation 14 (1)(a) (2)(c)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that children's records, including but not limited to children's individual behaviour management and care plans, are up to date and reflect the individual needs of children.	15 August 2023

Recommendations

- The registered manager should ensure that the home is maintained to a good standard and that timely repairs are completed. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that the children's guide is age appropriate, provided in an accessible format and explained to each child to make sure they understand it. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 24, paragraph 4.21)
- The registered person should ensure that they agree with the placing authority (usually the child's parents/carers) and, if appropriate, the child's school, an approach to meeting any relevant education targets while the child is in the short-break setting. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 29, paragraph 5.22)

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: SC000673

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Action For Children

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

Responsible individual: Ruth Baldwin

Registered manager: James Clark

Inspector

Julia Hagan, Social Care Inspector

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