

# 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 and accommodation 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 August 2018.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

### Inspection dates: 20 to 21 September 2021

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| <b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,</b> taking into account | <b>requires improvement to be good</b> |
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| How well children and young people are helped and protected | requires improvement to be good |
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| The effectiveness of leaders and managers | requires improvement to be good |
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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:** 7 January 2020

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement    |
|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| 07/01/2020      | Full            | Good                    |
| 19/03/2019      | Full            | Good                    |
| 12/03/2018      | Full            | Good                    |
| 13/03/2017      | Interim         | Sustained effectiveness |

## Inspection judgements

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

Children's overall experience of living in the home is variable. Children are settled and say they feel safe. However, the home has seen a significant turnover of staff and the manager continues to experience difficulties in recruitment. Children have been affected by this. Their short-break stays have been cancelled; their family time is limited to the home due to staffing levels; and there is a lack of activities taking place. The registered manager and senior leaders acknowledge this and there is a plan in place to address this.

Not all staff know what children's care plans say or what targets are in place for them. This lack of understanding means that the staff do not have all the information that they need to provide consistent care to children.

Feedback from professionals is variable. One professional said, '[Name] is doing amazing in the home; staff are so committed.' However, another professional said, 'I wouldn't say [Name] has made any progress; if anything, they have regressed. I think [Name]'s quality of life would improve if some activities could be planned.' The lack of stability in the home means that children are not provided with consistent care.

The home does not provide children with a warm and nurturing environment. Although the home is cleaned daily, it is in need of refurbishment and redecoration in some rooms. There are maintenance tasks throughout the home that need completing. This lack of care and attention to the home is providing the children with an institutionalised environment.

Staff do not consistently support the children to engage in activities. When the children specifically ask to undertake activities, these do not happen. This means that children have limited opportunities to explore new hobbies and interests and to socialise with others.

There are limited opportunities for the children to express their views. Children's meetings take place monthly, but the children do not contribute to the agenda. When children do express their views, these are not actioned. This means that children learn that their views are not important.

Children attend school and are doing well. Staff attend education meetings and communicate regularly with education professionals. However, children's personal education plans are not routinely kept on their files. This means that the staff do not have the correct information to support the child's education progression.

Children have complex health needs and are reliant on staff. Children receive support from a range of professionals, including specialist services. Staff seek

medical support and advice appropriately, which means that children's health needs continue to be met.

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

When the manager is considering if new children should join the home, he does not complete written impact risk assessments. The manager is provided with information from the placing local authority; however, there is no written analysis on the impact of this. The lack of a robust matching process means that children may be placed inappropriately; thus, placing all children at risk of harm.

Children's risk assessments are clear, easy to read and have a detailed plan of how the risks will be managed. However, they do not always contain all the current risks for children. This means that the staff do not always have the up-to-date information about children in their care. As the manager does not evaluate and review the assessments regularly, the effectiveness of these is not assessed. This can leave children at risk of harm.

Two safeguarding shortfalls were identified during the inspection. The front door was propped open allowing access to the home and one window restrictor was damaged. The manager was unaware of these at the time of the inspection but took urgent action to address this.

Ofsted cannot be assured that children are cared for by staff who have been vetted appropriately, as safer recruitment processes are not consistently followed. A reference for one member of staff could not be located.

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

The registered manager is suitably qualified and experienced, but he is failing to provide effective leadership. He has failed to ensure that there are effective and consistent internal auditing processes in place to monitor the performance of staff and the operation of the home. The lack of consistent management oversight means that there are shortfalls in the quality of care provided to children.

Feedback from the staff is variable. One member of staff said that they are 'always well supported' by their manager. However, another member of staff said that they are 'never supported'. Another member of staff reported that there are not enough staff to meet all of the children's needs, especially when medication is being administered to children.

Some staff are not qualified to care for children. Five members of staff have not obtained the required childcare qualification within the identified time frame. In addition, the manager has failed to demonstrate what checks he has completed to explore if these members of staff hold an equivalent qualification.

Staff are not provided with clear written guidance on how they should care for children. There is a lack of key documents in the children's files, which means that the staff do not have all the necessary information to provide consistent care. In addition, there is an inconsistent approach to recording information in all documents.

Training records are kept up-to-date and identify when training needs to be renewed. However, not all of the staff have received mandatory training and training specific to the individual needs of the children, in particular supporting children who have epilepsy and autism spectrum disorder. In addition, a significant number of staff have not received their mandatory refresher medication training. This means that untrained staff have been administering medication to children on more than one occasion.

Not all staff are provided with regular supervision. When supervision does occur, it lacks any detailed discussion or reflection on the needs of the children, and there is no evidence of management scrutiny or challenge. The lack of consistency in supervision and management oversight means that the children are not provided with consistent care.

The statement of purpose is out of date and does not reflect the current staffing structure. This failure means that parents, commissioners and Ofsted are not able to scrutinise the information to ensure that the current staff have the appropriate skills, experience and knowledge to care for children appropriately and safely.

The children's guide is not up to date and does not include information on how the children or their parents can contact the Office of the Children's Commissioner. This shortfall means that the children and their families do not have all the necessary information when arriving at the home.

## 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        |
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| <p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>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;</p> <p>understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person;</p> <p>that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm; and</p> <p>that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health.<br/>(Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(v)(b)(d))</p> | 20 October 2021 |
| <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;</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | 20 October 2021 |

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| <p>ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; and</p> <p>ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(d)(e))</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                        |
| <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>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;</p> <p>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;</p> <p>demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on—</p> <p>research and developments in relation to the ways in which the needs of children are best met; and</p> <p>feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received; and</p> <p>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)(f)(g)(i)(ii)(h))</p> | <p>20 October 2021</p> |
| <p>The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ("the statement of purpose") which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1.</p> <p>The registered person must—</p> <p>keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and</p> <p>notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <p>20 October 2021</p> |

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| (Regulation 16 (1) (3)(a)(b))                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                 |
| <p>The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety.</p> <p>The requirements are that—</p> <p>the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform; and</p> <p>full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2.</p> <p>(Regulation 32 (1) (3)(b)(d))</p> | 20 October 2021 |
| <p>The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which—</p> <p>include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child;</p> <p>are kept up to date; and</p> <p>are signed and dated by the author of each entry.</p> <p>(Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c))</p>                                                                                                                                                        | 20 October 2021 |

## Recommendations

- The registered manager should ensure that the home is maintained to a good standard. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered manager should ensure that children are consulted regularly on their views about the home's care, to inform and support continued improvement in the quality of care provided. Due consideration should be given to the child's cognitive ability in the development and implementation of any consultation processes. Children should be able to see the results of their views being listened to and acted on. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.11)
- The registered manager should ensure that the children's guide helps children to understand how to contact the Office of the Children's Commissioner. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 24, paragraph 4.22)
- The registered manager should ensure that children are offered a wide range of activities both inside and outside of the home and are encouraged to participate in those activities. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 31, paragraph 6.5)

- The registered manager should ensure that systems are in place so that all staff, including the manager, receive regular supervision so that they can reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2)
- The registered manager should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

## **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:** Catherine Joyce

**Registered manager:** Terence Wintersgill

## Inspectors

Paula Shepherd, Social Care Inspector  
Emma Ridley, Social Care Inspector

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