

SC000673

Registered provider: Action for Children

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and managed by a charitable organisation and provides care for children with learning disabilities. The home offers a short-break service for up to five children and long-term care for up to five children.

There has been no registered manager in the home since December 2024.

Inspection date: 28 January 2025

Date of last inspection: 30 October 2024

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

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 has 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.

Children's access to the short-breaks service continues to be disrupted due to staffing issues. This largely relates to staff absence through sickness. Therefore, the service is unable to ensure there are sufficient staff working to meet the children's needs. This has affected the short-break service's ability to fully support children and their families.

Children are not supported to understand why staff physically intervene to help keep everyone safe. This is because managers believe the children do not have the capacity to understand this, due to their learning disabilities. Managers have also not consulted with professionals and family members of each child to determine this. This blanket approach does not consider children's individual needs and abilities.

Not all records of incidents involving children are completed effectively. They do not consistently reflect which staff member recorded the incident or the date the incident occurred. In addition, staff do not always follow the necessary processes so managers can review these documents in a timely manner. This limits the manager's ability to oversee events effectively and hold staff accountable when necessary.

The home remains without a permanent manager, although a manager has been recruited. In the interim period, several different leaders and managers have been responsible for implementing changes required to improve the standard of care for children. However, there is an inconsistent approach among these leaders and managers in addressing the shortfalls. This means those children who live in the home on a long-term basis, do not receive the same standard of care as those children who access the short-breaks provision.

Management oversight of incident reports is inconsistent when the manager is on annual leave. This is because leaders have not put alternative arrangements in place in the manager's absence. However, those documents that have had management oversight reflect that the manager evaluates incidents and identifies strengths in practice and areas for development.

There is a tracking system in place so the manager can escalate any concerns to children's placing authorities when children's records are not up to date. However, the escalation process is unclear in terms of who is responsible for doing this and the expected timeframe. This prevents leaders and managers from evaluating if escalations are timely and effective.

Staff receive regular reflective supervision sessions by a suitably qualified and experienced staff member. However, records of supervision sessions do not consistently contain an accurate account of the discussion held. This makes it difficult to track and agreed actions, and hinders both the supervisor and supervisee from being held accountable.

Leaders and managers do not have a process in place to ensure that the independent visitor has access to all the children's information. This prevents the independent visitor from exploring all information relating to children and evaluating the quality of care being provided.

Children's risk assessments are regularly reviewed and updated in line with children's changing needs. This helps staff to be consistent in their approach to providing care to children.

Staff document any injuries to children. This includes those they sustain in the home or that staff notice when they arrive for a stay. Where there are concerns about the nature of these injuries, staff contact the children's family members and the relevant professionals. Managers have oversight of this to ensure any concerns are addressed appropriately. This helps to keep children safer.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
30/10/2024	Full	Requires improvement to be good
06/06/2024	Full	Good
31/08/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person 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 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— ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; 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; and use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(f)(h)) This requirement is reissued.	31 March 2025
The registered person must ensure that— within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes— the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure and	31 March 2025

within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(vii)(b)(i)(ii)(c)) This requirement is reissued.	
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which— include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child; are kept up to date; and are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c)) This requirement is reissued.	31 March 2025
The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month. When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the independent person— if they consent, to interview in private such of the children, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as the independent person requires; and to inspect the premises of the home and such of the home's records (except for a child's case records, unless the child and the child's placing authority consent) as the independent person requires. (Regulation 44 (1) (2)(a)(b)) This requirement is reissued.	31 March 2025

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 managers: Post Vacant

Inspector

Julia Hagan, Social Care Inspector

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