

SC000673

Registered provider: Action for Children

Interim 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 provides care and accommodation for up to five children with learning disabilities under short-break arrangements and up to five children to live permanently.

The inspector was unable to speak with the three children who live in the home as they were not present.

The manager registered with Ofsted in August 2018.

Inspection date: 28 March 2022

Date of last inspection: 20 September 2021

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

This inspection

The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection

This home was judged requires improvement to be good at the last full inspection.

At this interim inspection, Ofsted judged that it has sustained effectiveness.

Children's day-to-day experiences have improved, as they are now being offered a wide range of activities outside of the home. One professional identified this as a key area of improvement. Providing the children with new experiences supports them to develop their social and communication skills. This also allows them to benefit from opportunities to learn about the world around them.

While progress has been made in some areas, there remains a lack of consistency. As such, three out of the six requirements made at the last inspection have not been addressed. These have been reissued. These relate to the protection of children, the leadership and management arrangements and the need to maintain children's case records.

The home has been through significant refurbishment and redecoration since the last inspection. This includes redecoration throughout the home, two new kitchens being fitted and the playroom being refurbished. However, one child who regularly removes their curtains does not have privacy when undressing, as the ground-floor bedroom window can be viewed from outside. This means that the staff are not supporting this child to protect their dignity and privacy.

Supervision of the staff is now taking place regularly. Records about the individual children's needs are now separated and put in the children's case files, which now include the children's targets and outcomes. However, there remains no evidence of reflective supervision. This means that the staff are not being given the opportunity to reflect on their practice and then make any necessary changes.

Key-work sessions have been implemented since the last inspection. However, the quality and frequency of these vary. There is also often no clear aim or outcome of the sessions. On one occasion, it was identified that a key-work session should take place to gain feedback following an activity. However, this did not take place. In addition, following a recent missing-from-home incident, a key-work session was not completed with the child. The lack of consistency in completing these identifies that this practice is not fully embedded and that there is a lack of scrutiny from the registered manager.

The recording of restraints is not completed as required. The debrief with the staff is not recorded, and it is not clear who conducted the debriefs. On one occasion, it was identified that the registered manager did not sign and date the record in the required timescale. This means that the registered manager cannot be assured that restraints are safe, appropriate and proportionate.

Ofsted have not been notified of one serious incident. This failure means that Ofsted is unable to scrutinise the information to ensure that appropriate action is taken to keep the children safe.

Generally, children do not go missing from the home. This is attributable to the staffing ratios and the security measures in the home, which reflect the complex needs of the children. However, recently, when one child did go missing, the staff did not complete the correct paperwork in accordance with their own policy and procedure. While this shortfall did not impact on the child on this occasion, the lack of understanding by the staff of the missing-from-home procedure could potentially place children at risk.

The recruitment and retention of staff remain an issue in the home. As a result, the short-break provision has been closed for a significant period of time, only recently opening for limited short-break stays. Scrutiny of safeguarding records have also identified that staffing levels have been a factor in two incidents. This is a view shared by other professionals. Senior managers acknowledge this ongoing challenge and have a plan in place to address this.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
20/09/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good
07/01/2020	Full	Good
19/03/2019	Full	Good
12/03/2018	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
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— 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; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; and 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 are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(v)(vii)(b)) This specifically relates to impact risk assessments, risk assessments and missing-from-home procedures.	28 April 2022
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—	28 April 2022

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; 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; demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— research and developments in relation to the ways in which the needs of children are best met; and feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received; 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)(a)(c)(f)(g)(i)(ii)(h))	
The registered person must prepare and implement a policy ("the behaviour management policy") which sets out— how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the children's home; and the measures of control, discipline and restraint which may be used in relation to children in the home. The registered person must ensure that— 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 (1)(a)(b) (3)(b)(i)(ii)(c)) This specifically relates to restraint records.	28 April 2022

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))	28 April 2022
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation; an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious; there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; a child protection enquiry involving a child— is instigated; or concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry); or there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(a)(b)(c)(d)(i)(ii)(e))	28 April 2022

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the design of the home, including the children's bedrooms, include any necessary adaptations to meet the privacy of children with disabilities ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 17, paragraph 3.24)
- The registered person should ensure that the 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. This relates to the use of key-work sessions. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 22, paragraph 4.11)

- The registered person should ensure that the 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)

Information about this inspection

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full 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

Inspector

Paula Shepherd, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022