

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 August 2018.

Inspection dates: 31 August and 1 September 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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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	inadequate
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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: 28 March 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/03/2022	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
20/09/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good
07/01/2020	Full	Good
19/03/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

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

The children have positive experiences of living and staying in this home. The children use the sensory room to explore their emotions in a safe way, and can now access and make better use of the garden, which has been developed since the previous inspection.

Children access activities out of the home and participate in community events, such as celebrating the Queen's Jubilee, attending youth clubs and going to the park. Photos of the children's progress and of these activities are captured in the child's individual memory books. These memory books capture the children's experiences so that they can be reminded of their time in the home.

Children who move into the home, including those who move into the home on an emergency basis, have a structured and planned introduction. Planning meetings are held and information about how the child's needs can be met is exchanged between professionals, family members and the manager. The manager takes into consideration how the child's care arrangements and needs will impact on the other children already staying in the home. This affords all the children a level of stability in the home.

Professionals and family members say that the communication with the staff is good. For those children who have short-term breaks, a communication book is in place. This travels with the child between the staff and the parents, and provides a comprehensive update on the child's time spent in the home. Family members value this.

For some children, their health has improved. The staff support those children who live in the home to attend their medical appointments, and seek specialist support when required. However, for those children who visit the home for short-term breaks, the manager does not consistently obtain parental consent before the child's stay. This oversight may hinder the staff's ability to administer the child's medication and seek urgent medical advice should this be required.

Children's complex health needs are known and understood. When children require medication, staff who are suitably trained administer this. However, the manager has failed to identify that the staff do not consistently record if two members of staff have been present when audits of medication have taken place. Therefore, the provider cannot be assured that staff have followed their own medication policy.

The children enjoy their time in this home because of their positive relationships that they have developed with the staff. However, some of the children's progress is limited. While children are set targets to encourage them to make progress, these targets are not consistently reviewed or evaluated and are often out of date. This

prevents the staff from understanding the children's current developmental stage, and hinders their ability to encourage all of the children to make continued progress.

The needs of the children who access the short-break service are not consistently known. This is because these children's education, health and care planning documents are not consistently kept up to date. This prevents the staff from having access to all the correct contact details for any medical professionals that are relevant to the child.

The manager occasionally seeks the children's views using a picture exchange communication system during children's meetings, and one child has had their room personalised as a result of this. However, the manager does not consistently seek the children's views on the quality of their care. Instead, the manager seeks the children's views from their parents and carers. This prevents the children from independently contributing to the development of the home.

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

The welfare of the children is prioritised by the staff. The staff have a good understanding of the individual needs of the children. The staff know their safeguarding responsibilities, and, while action is taken to address any concerns, this is not always clearly documented in a way that is clear and easy to understand.

Children receive a coordinated response when significant incidents occur as the staff take sufficient action. The staff notify all of the safeguarding agencies, including Ofsted. This promotes the children's welfare and ensures that the appropriate action is taken to keep the children safe.

Following the requirement made at the last inspection, the staff now complete key-work sessions with the children. However, these sessions vary in quality and frequency. Consequently, not all of the children are supported effectively to understand their feelings and helped to manage their behaviour more appropriately.

The manager responds appropriately and increases the staffing arrangements for children when potential risks have been identified. However, the manager has failed to keep all of the children's risk assessments up to date and accurate. Therefore, he cannot be assured that the staff provide the children with a consistent response as the children's needs and risks change, as he has failed to provide the staff with the most up-to-date guidance on what actions they must take to keep the children safe.

The staff restrain the children to keep them and others safe when required. While the manager reviews and evaluates this practice, he has not identified the shortfalls in the staff's recording of this practice. In addition, the manager does not consistently complete debriefs with the staff and the children. When he does, these debriefs do not take place within the required timescales. This oversight prevents the manager from having all the required information so that he can complete an accurate evaluation of this practice promptly, to ensure that this is safe and

proportionate. In addition, he cannot quickly make any required changes to the child's plan if required.

The locality risk assessment has not been updated following an incident that occurred in the home. This prevents those accessing this document from being informed about all of the potential risks in the home and its environment, and how to reduce these risks. The manager has also not sought the views of wider agencies to inform this risk assessment. This prevents him from fully assessing all of the risks in the local area.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The management and leadership arrangements of the home are inadequate. Despite Ofsted raising requirements to improve the safeguarding arrangements, the leadership and management arrangements and the behaviour management arrangements for children during the last two inspections, the manager has failed to take the necessary action to improve these areas of practice. As such, Ofsted has raised requirements under regulation 12, 13 and 36 for the third time.

The manager does not use effective monitoring and review systems to improve the service. The current process for reviewing the children's documents is inconsistent and this has not identified the numerous shortfalls in the children's records, such as inaccurate and missing dates, times and signatures. In addition, the reviewing process does not track if the actions identified previously have been completed. This means the manager cannot be assured that the tasks have been completed.

The manager has failed to ensure that the home operates in accordance with the statement of purpose. While this document notes that all the staff are trained in one particular method of physical restraint, this is not accurate, as some staff have been trained in an alternative method.

Children's experiences have been hindered as they have not been able to enjoy their regular stays. The recruitment and retention of staff in the short-break setting has been problematic. As a result, the short-break provision has been closed for a significant period of time, only recently opening for limited short-break stays.

The manager does not consistently practise safer recruitment procedures. The manager was unable to provide evidence that a significant gap in one member of staff's employment history was satisfactorily explained prior to employment. In addition, the manager has failed to assure himself that a member of staff employed to work in another of the provider's children's homes is suitably experienced and qualified to work in this home.

Supervision does not consistently take place in line with the organisation's policy, and it is not consistently reflective. This prevents the manager from identifying areas of improvement for the staff. This also prevents the staff from reflecting on their practice to make any necessary changes. In addition, the manager has failed to consistently record the outcome of the discussion held during the supervision session. This prevents the manager from tracking if the previously identified actions

have been completed. Furthermore, the manager has missed an opportunity to disseminate the learning from the outcome of a complaint, as this has not been shared with the team in the team meetings.

The manager escalates his concerns about actions, which have not been completed by other professionals. This enables senior managers in the relevant local authority to address these shortfalls and helps to progress the care planning arrangements for the children.

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. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(v)) This specifically relates to ensuring that the children's risk assessments are consistently kept up to date and reflect the children's current needs and risks, and the actions that the staff must take to keep the children safe.	15 October 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— 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 work as a team where appropriate;	15 October 2022

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 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 arrangements are in place to— manage and review the placement of each child in the home; and that each child's relevant plans are followed. (Regulation 14 (1)(a) (2)(b)(ii)(c))	1 October 2022
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. The registered person must— keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision.	1 October 2022

(Regulation 16 (1) (3)(a)(b)) This specifically relates to ensuring that the home's statement of purpose accurately reflects the current staff team and its skills, training and qualifications, particularly in regard to the specific model of physical restraint used.	
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children's home; or if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that— full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3)(d))	15 October 2022
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 name of the child; details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure; the date, time and location of the use of the measure; a description of the measure and its duration; details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure; the name of the person who used the measure ("the user"), and of any other person present when the measure was used;	1 October 2022

the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and a description of any injury to the child or any other person, and any medical treatment administered, as a result of the measure; 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)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(viii) (b)(i)(ii) (c)(iv)) This specifically relates to ensuring that the physical restraint records consistently contain accurate information, and ensuring that the manager consistently completes debriefs with the staff and children after a child has been held.	
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))	15 October 2022
The registered person must review the appropriateness and suitability of the location of the premises used for the purposes of the children's home at least once in each calendar year taking into account the requirement in regulation 12(2)(c) (the protection of children standard). When conducting the review, the registered person must consult, and take into account the views of, each relevant person. (Regulation 46 (1) (2))	1 October 2022

This specifically relates to reviewing the suitability and location of the premises after a child has left the home without permission.	
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* This requirement is subject to a compliance notice.

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

Julia Hagan, Social Care Inspector
Paula Shepherd, Social Care Inspector

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