

SC003792

Registered provider: Lifeworks Charity Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is run by a charitable trust. The home is registered to provide care for up to 10 children at a time, who may have sensory impairment, learning disabilities and physical disabilities. This includes up to four residential and six short-break places. Currently, three children live in the home and 14 children visit for short breaks.

The home has been without a registered manager since February 2022. However, a new manager was appointed in April 2023.

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 May 2023

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	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: 21 June 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/06/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
16/06/2021	Full	Good
03/12/2019	Full	Good
19/12/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

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

Children have developed trusted and positive relationships with staff in the home, particularly core, long-standing staff. However, staff turnover, vacancies and higher levels of inexperience have had some impact on management oversight and consistency of care.

Before children come to live or have short breaks in the home, introductions are carefully thought through, and managers and staff engage well with family members, carers and professionals to plan children's care.

The needs of children who live in the home and those who have short breaks are significant and complex. Staff support children sensitively. At times, however, balancing these needs while keeping children safe means that children's ability to move around the home freely, particularly in shared spaces such as the kitchen-diner, is compromised. During the inspection, some children visiting were not suited to be together. The manager had already recognised that a compatibility policy for children living and staying together is needed, to promote children's friendships and socialisation.

Children make progress in the home, and all achievements, big or small, are celebrated. Staff can describe the key goals they support children to achieve, which are reflected in detailed, child-centred plans. However, some of these plans are lengthy, listing many outcomes for children to achieve. The length makes it harder to keep the plans current and ensure that staff do not miss important information.

Children are supported to enjoy experiences both in and out of the home, such as sensory play, swimming and trips to the beach and local places of interest. However, in recent months, some children who have short breaks are having less opportunity to enjoy experiences that are not normally available to them outside their own home. This is partly due to the availability of staff. Additionally, limited evaluation of children's activities has meant that managers do not have a clear overview of how often and which children participate in activities, and how they have benefited. The absence of evaluation does not enhance future planning to ensure that all opportunities for children to develop are fully explored.

Children have memory books and memorabilia gathered for them. Further work is needed to ensure that these positive records of children's time in the home are up to date and as meaningful as possible, for example by dating photos and adding narrative. This would benefit children if they wish to look back at these books.

Children who are resident are supported to spend regular time with their families, who are welcomed in the home. Parents and social workers spoke positively about the support and care children receive. They would welcome further written

information and photos about children's overall progress and experiences. However, parents and social workers value the regular communication they have with the team and do receive regular information, such as incident reports.

As children get older, managers and staff support and advocate for children to help them prepare for adulthood. Staff maintain links with children after they move to new homes, which helps them feel secure and loved.

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

Staff work hard to safeguard children with very complex needs. They have benefited from behaviour support training for individual children. Risk assessments and positive behaviour plans contain helpful information and guidance for staff, but are not always updated to reflect learning from incidents.

The home has a 'no restraint' policy, which reflects the home's positive culture. While managers said that staff have not restrained any children, risk management plans do appropriately refer to staff needing to use physical intervention for some children, when there is no alternative to keep them or others safe. However, these plans do not instruct staff effectively on how to do this, which potentially leaves children vulnerable. Additionally, some staff have not yet received training in how to use physical intervention.

Records of when children become distressed or self-injure are not always thorough enough to fully understand what happened and unpick events to help future learning. Recordings also confuse the experience of the child with that of the staff member; for example, detail of staff's bruising or injuries is recorded on the child's incident record.

Helping children to recover from incidents through seeking to understand the impact on them, and their wishes and feelings, is an area for improvement, particularly for non-verbal children. Records do not evidence this well, and often the response is for children to have time out to feel calmer, but with no additional context.

Children's dignity, privacy and personal needs are carefully considered. Whistle-blowing procedures are firmly in place, which protects children. When allegations are made, managers take appropriate action to safeguard children.

Arrangements to safely recruit staff are well organised and carried out effectively, with the relevant checks and references sought and verified.

Fire drills are carried out, and the next one is due imminently to prepare new staff for all eventualities. Risk management plans to guide staff in respect of evacuation have improved.

The home has welcomed guidance from an external health professional regarding medication administration. The deputy manager regularly reviews the effectiveness

of the home's systems and no medication errors have occurred since the last inspection. Some gaps were identified with a new trial medication form. Greater explanation of the purpose of medication, and side effects, would assist staff's knowledge.

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

The home has not had a registered manager for over a year, despite the responsible individual's best efforts to avoid this. During this time, the capable and experienced deputy manager has covered the manager post, while maintaining regular hands-on support to children, who respond well to her exceptionally skilled care, and calm and effective guidance to staff. During this period, there have been times when deputy, team leader and residential staff posts have been vacant, which has had an impact on capacity.

The staffing situation remains fragile. Managers have adjusted the recruitment process to assist new staff in having a greater understanding of the role, but more analysis of staff turnover is needed to improve staff retention.

When incidents happen, management oversight and review of risk assessments and plans are not always evident. When this does happen, it is done well but, due to this inconsistent monitoring, the learning and potential for reducing these incidents are minimised. Alongside this, supervision of staff, particularly new staff, is not as frequent as it should be to ensure that staff are supported and skilled to carry out their roles effectively. When supervision does take place, it is comprehensive.

Staff support children through a multi-disciplinary team around the child approach. However, greater persistence is needed by the manager to ensure that children receive the responses and services they need, for example to avoid delays in children accessing education or occupational therapy support.

The home is bright and well equipped. Children's bedrooms are personalised with a variety of play and electronic equipment for them to use. Some areas of the building and garden need attention and extra fire signage makes the building look less homely. The chief executive officer and responsible individual are considering the need for renovation and reorganisation of space so that children's needs can be met more effectively.

Team meetings are held regularly and well recorded and attended. A range of issues are discussed to support staff and promote individualised and safe care of children. Staff reported that they receive comprehensive training that has made a difference to how they work. Staff spoke positively of the home and are proud of children's achievements. They feel well supported by their colleagues and managers.

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
In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child's needs; if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 5 (b)(c))	12 June 2023
The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 6 (1) (2)(c)(i))	10 July 2023
The children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who— take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— help each child to express views, wishes and feelings. (Regulation 7 (1)(c) (2)(a)(ii))	12 June 2023
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	10 July 2023

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; ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; ensure that the home’s workforce provides continuity of care to 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— 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)(c)(d)(e)(f)(g)(ii)(h)) In particular, managers should: - ensure that staff receive timely training on physical intervention in accordance with the home’s statement of purpose - review the effectiveness of risk assessments and behaviour management plans - review recording procedures and the clarity of records - ensure that learning is routinely considered when incidents happen, and that children’s care and plans are reviewed in the light of this - ensure that staff receive regular supervision - continue to review and refine medication procedures.	
The care planning standard is that children—	10 July 2023

receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)) In particular, managers should: - review how decisions are made about children who visit and live together - evaluate and review which children take part in experiences and activities, how often, the type of experiences and activities, and the benefit to children.	
After consultation with the fire and rescue authority, the registered person must— ensure, by means of fire drills and practices at suitable intervals, that persons working at the home and, so far as reasonably practicable, children are aware of the procedure to be followed in case of fire. (Regulation 25 (1)(d))	5 June 2023

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that children's life-story records are collated in a way that is meaningful for children and are kept up to date. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 16, paragraph 3.14)

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: SC003792

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Lifeworks Charity Limited

Registered provider address: Blacklers Park Road, Dartington Hall Estate,
Totnes, Devon TQ9 6EQ

Responsible individual: Sarah Gontsi

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Sarah Canto, Social Care Inspector

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