

SC003792

Registered provider: Lifeworks Charity Limited

Assurance 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/or physical disabilities. This includes up to four residential and six short-break places. Currently, two children live in the home, and 12 children visit for short breaks.

A new manager was appointed in March 2023. They have not yet applied to register with Ofsted.

Inspection date: 29 June 2023

Date of last inspection: 3 May 2023

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Information about this inspection

At this inspection, the inspectors evaluated:

- the care of children
- the safety of children
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers.

Inspectors have 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 identified the following serious concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance inspection:

- Leaders and managers have failed to oversee the quality of children's care and the quality of staff practice effectively. There are concerns that children may have suffered preventable harm.
- One child did not receive good enough care. There was a lack of management oversight relating to the child's care to ensure that their wider needs were met after they had a series of seizures.
- Leaders and managers have failed to implement systems to ensure that the quality of care is monitored effectively.
- The quality of the environment is poor. Leaders and managers have failed to implement actions to improve and maintain the home environment for children.

The care of children

Children who live in the home and attend the home for short breaks have complex needs. Their care and support plans are informed by professionals involved in their lives and provide helpful information about the child. However, children's care experiences are mixed because staff do not always have a good understanding of children's needs as outlined in their plans.

During this inspection, inspectors observed staff supporting some children well. However, one child who was unwell did not receive the care they required to meet their needs. Care for the child after they experienced seizures was unclear due to poor record keeping and sharing of information. For instance, the manager could not confirm whether medical advice had been sought, and a member of staff assigned to care for the child lacked knowledge about their needs, including how to communicate with them effectively.

Leaders and managers have not taken action to improve the home environment and outside areas that were identified at the previous inspection as requiring improvement. While some areas of the home are suitably decorated and furnished, many other areas are not welcoming for children. The manager told the inspectors about plans to redecorate the home, replace furnishings and improve the outside areas, but this has not yet been progressed.

The safety of children

Leaders and managers fail to effectively oversee the quality of the care that children receive and the quality of staff practice. As a consequence of this risk, concerns have arisen about the safety of children, including allegations against both agency and permanent staff about standards of care and safeguarding.

Leaders and managers have taken action to safeguard children when allegations relating to children being harmed have been made against agency and permanent staff members. However, a preventative approach is not in place to reduce the risk of harm to children before incidents occur.

Leaders and managers identified significant concerns about the care provided by agency staff to one child. However, they failed to take sufficient action to ensure that care arrangements in the home were safe. Subsequently, an allegation was made that an agency staff member had physically harmed the child. The agency staff member informed the manager that they had been requested to leave the home. The manager is not aware of the agency's investigation outcome and the child has since moved on from the home.

Children's records do not consistently demonstrate that children are cared for safely. Several records viewed by the inspectors failed to include information to determine whether staff intervened to assure that children are cared for safely, specifically when children display behaviours that challenge staff or cause injury to themselves or others.

In response to the requirement made at the previous inspection relating to fire safety, the manager stated that the necessary fire drills have been completed. A recommendation made by the fire and rescue authority to reduce the risk of fire spreading through the home from the kitchen has not yet been completed.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

There are significant shortfalls in the leadership and management of the home. Both management oversight of staff practice and the quality of children's care are weak. This reduces the ability of leaders and managers to identify any concerns about practice before the quality-of-care dips or harm to children occurs. When the manager has considered care to be inadequate, challenge to improve care has not always been effective.

Leaders and managers have failed to implement systems to ensure that the quality of care is monitored effectively. At times, incidents when children may have been at risk of, or suffered, upset or harm, are not reviewed by managers promptly, particularly when team leaders are absent from the home. This is because there is not a robust system in place for managers to review records during these times.

Insufficient staffing arrangements have had a negative impact on children attending the home for short breaks and on the continuity of care provided to children. A recruitment drive is currently underway. Leaders and managers told the inspectors that they do not intend to increase the number of children attending the home until

permanent staff are recruited and improvements to the home environment are made.

The home has not had a registered manager for over a year. A manager was appointed in March 2023. They have not applied to register with Ofsted promptly. The manager described working on shift in conjunction with managing the home to try and mitigate staff shortages.

Following this inspection, the responsible individual has implemented an action plan to address the shortfalls. A compliance notice has been issued by Ofsted relating to the quality and purpose of care provided to children and the home environment. Ofsted will monitor the home's progress closely and carry out a further monitoring visit.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
03/05/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
21/06/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
16/06/2021	Full	Good
03/12/2019	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, The 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; and 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))	2 August 2023
*The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— understand and apply the home's statement of purpose; ensure that staff— understand and apply the home's statement of purpose; protect and promote each child's welfare; provide personalised care that meets each child's needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking account of the child's background;	2 August 2023

provide to children living in the home the physical necessities they need in order to live there comfortably; and make decisions about the day-to-day arrangements for each child, in accordance with the child's relevant plans, which give the child an appropriate degree of freedom and choice; 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)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(i)(ii)(iv)(vii)(ix)(c)(i))	
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— ensure that staff— help each child to express views, wishes and feelings. (Regulation 7 (1)(c) (2)(a)(ii))	2 August 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 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;	2 August 2023

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: review the effectiveness of risk assessments and review the 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 light of this; ensure that staff receive regular supervision; and continue to review and refine medication procedures.	
The care planning standard is that children— 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; and evaluate and review which children take part in experiences and activities, how often, the type of experiences and activities, and the benefit to them.	2 August 2023

*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

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)

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

Inspectors

Louise Bacon, Social Care Inspector
Polly Soper, Regulatory Inspection Manager

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