

SC004429

Registered provider: Action For Children

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home can provide short breaks for over 30 children who have severe learning and/or physical disabilities. The home is operated and managed by an independent provider in partnership with the local authority.

The registered manager has been in post a number of years. She holds the level 5 diploma in leadership and management.

Inspection dates: 12 to 13 November 2019

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 20 March 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
20/03/2019	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
01/05/2018	Full	Good
06/02/2018	Full	Requires improvement to be good
14/02/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness

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 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 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(2)(a)(3)(d))	27/12/2019

Recommendations

- Staff should continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. Their placement plan, agreed between the home and their placing authority, must include details of the steps the home will take to manage any assessed risks on a day-to-day basis. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)
- The registered person should undertake a review that focuses on the quality of the care provided by the home, the experiences of children living there and the impact the care is having on outcomes and improvements for the children. The review should enable the registered person to identify areas of strength and possible weakness in the home's care, which will be captured in the written report. The report should clearly identify any actions required for the next 6 months of delivery within the home and how those actions will be addressed. The whole review process and the resulting report should be used as a tool for continuous improvement in the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.4)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children make good progress in all areas of their development. Managers and staff know and understand children's needs well. They devise and implement bespoke care plans that incorporate children's often complex health needs, their educational needs and their developmental targets. This means that children benefit from consistent, well-planned and personalised care.

Staff make sure that each child's induction to the home reflects their individual needs. They work with children's families and the placing authority to plan afternoon and evening visits to the home with the aim of moving towards overnight stays. Managers continually review the pace of these inductions to ensure that children do not become anxious or apprehensive, and that their experience of the service remains positive.

Children are the focus of this short-break service. Staff work closely with children's families, their schools and their allocated health professionals. This means that children's time in the home is a seamless extension to their routine and their development.

Staff use a wide and varied range of verbal and non-verbal communication methods, including pictures, visual aids and sign languages, to seek children's views, opinions and wishes. This practice ensures that children are involved in decisions about their stay and their overall care and support.

Children's personalised short-break packages provide them with new and exciting experiences. Staff encourage children to participate in a range of leisure and educational activities that enhance their emotional, cognitive and social skills. These provide a mix of in-house and community pursuits that stimulate children's interests and enable them to spend quality time with their friends and peers. As a result, children grow in confidence and self-esteem.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Children are safe and protected from harm. Staff devise comprehensive and effective risk assessments that recognise that for some children, their challenging behaviours, such as self-harm, are symptomatic of their disabilities. Risk assessments guide staff on how to best support children when their anxieties increase. Consequently, staff intervene quickly to de-escalate behaviours that are detrimental to children's welfare.

There are occasions when children's families or external professionals involved in their day-to-day care, such as social workers, want to advise how children's risk should be managed. For example, this may involve the use of measures such as bedroom door alarms or 'safe-space' enclosures that impede children's free movement around the home. The registered manager continually looks to introduce alternative risk

management measures that remove any possible restrictions, such as the use of additional waking night staff. However, these alternatives are not yet in place for all children.

Since the last inspection, there have been no occasions when children have gone missing from the home. Nevertheless, managers and staff are acutely aware of children's significant vulnerability should they wander off from staff. To reduce these risks, managers ensure that there is a high staff ratio available to support children during external activities. This means that children can safely access the local community.

Managers have an excellent knowledge and understanding of child protection thresholds and referral processes. Staff understand their own responsibilities for protecting children. As some children do not communicate verbally, staff are especially alert to any changes in their behaviours or reactions that may indicate abuse or harm. This promotes children's safety.

The registered manager completes and verifies necessary checks to confirm the suitability of staff to work with children. There has been one occasion when the manager did not seek a full range of relevant previous employment references. Although this was rectified, this potentially compromised children's safety.

Children live in a well maintained and welcoming home. The environment reflects children's individual needs, abilities and choices, as well as their tolerance to sensory stimulation. This creates a comfortable and relaxing home for children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager has the qualifications, skills and experience necessary to effectively manage the service. She is a strong and enthusiastic leader with a focus on meeting children's individual needs, supporting their progress and providing them with an enjoyable experience.

Staff receive regular and good-quality supervision. Managers use these meetings to help staff to consider their own practice and learning needs. Training programmes reflect children's individual, and often complex, health and welfare needs. Consequently, staff have the specialist skills and knowledge they need to deliver good-quality care and support to children.

The registered manager uses internal audits to collect information about children's development. However, current monitoring systems do not allow her to fully identify connections between the quality of care provided by the service and the impact this has on positive outcomes for children. Monitoring systems centre around children's progress without taking account of how the actions of staff influence this progress. Furthermore, associated action plans are generic and do not detail how managers will address the areas for improvement.

Partnership working arrangements between the home and external agencies are

exceptionally positive. The registered manager is steadfast in her expectations of others. She confidently challenges other professionals and agencies when their actions fall short of acceptable standards. This means that children receive integrated care and that their short-break experiences are extremely positive.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: SC004429

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Action For Children

Registered provider address: 3 The Boulevard Ascot Road, Watford, Hertfordshire
WD18 8AG

Responsible individual: Lee Furniss

Registered manager: Louise Tumulty

Inspector

Jo Stephenson, social care inspector

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