

SC013743

Registered provider: Action for Children

Interim inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home offers long-term care for up to 16 children who have profound and multiple disabilities, including communication difficulties, sensory impairment, complex health needs and challenging behaviour. The home is made up of three separate houses which cater for particular groups of children.

There has been no registered manager since 1 July 2018.

Inspection date: 12 March 2019

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Date of last inspection: 7 August 2018

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 the interim inspection, Ofsted judges that it has improved effectiveness.

A manager was appointed to the home last year but left before making a registration application to Ofsted. The organisation has made changes to the management arrangements and have appointed three managers. Two of these managers are in post and preparing to send in registration applications to Ofsted.

Leaders, managers and staff, including those from the wider organisation, have effectively worked together to make significant improvements. The five requirements and two recommendations from the last inspection have been met.

The staff continue to be ambitious about the care that they provide and liaise well with

other agencies such as schools to promote the consistency of children's care. The changes to the kitchen in one part of the premises have enabled children with physical disabilities to be able to prepare and cook food when previously they could not. Parents remain very positive about the care provided and regularly send praise and thanks to staff.

Plans for children's admissions are good and support children to move in. Impact assessments have been improved and are completed before a child comes to live in the home. Some detail of the assessments is not recorded, for example the details of consultations with others. One assessment did not record whether any additional staff training was necessary to meet the child's needs. However, an assessment occurred and training was provided.

Leaders and managers continue to creatively find solutions to problems about having enough permanent staff. Their actions have:

- significantly increased the number of permanent night-time staff
- ensured that there is consistent use of a number of long-term agency staff to fill gaps
- made changes to staff teams so that newer staff can learn from more experienced team members.

Managers acknowledge that increasing the number of permanent staff is an ongoing challenge. They have instigated an open recruitment drive and changed how they recruit staff to achieve this aim.

The changes to the environment since the last full inspection have improved the premises. The three residential units that make up the children's home now appropriately meet children's needs and are homelier. The significant number of health and safety concerns identified at the last inspection have been addressed. However, fire evacuation records do not always include the detail of who was present during the evacuation. The fire records also do not always show how issues identified as part of the evacuation are dealt with.

The staff act on any safeguarding concerns appropriately. Nevertheless, the chronology of one safeguarding concern was sparse. A poor response from another agency to a safeguarding concern was not reflected on or used to consider how agencies may be challenged in the future. This is a missed opportunity to ensure that safeguarding practice is as good as possible and that other agencies take their responsibilities seriously.

The workforce development plan has been improved. The document now provides full detail of all members of staff's qualifications and training. Further work is needed to check that the staff are on track to complete their qualification within the specified timescales and records of how managers have decided that a member of staff's qualification is equivalent to that required for residential childcare.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
07/08/2018	Full	Requires improvement to be good
13/02/2018	Interim	Improved effectiveness
08/08/2017	Full	Requires improvement to be good
22/02/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- The registered person should only accept placements for children where they are satisfied that the home can respond effectively to the child's assessed needs as recorded in the child's relevant plans and where they have fully considered the impact that the placement will have on the existing group of children. The Statement of Purpose is an important document in the process of care planning as it sets out the needs of children the home is set up and equipped to care for. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 56, paragraph 11.4)
In particular, the registered person should ensure that impact assessments provide full detail of who they consulted during their assessment. The registered person should also ensure that the impact assessment provides detail of all actions they will adopt to mitigate risks and to meet children's needs.
- The registered person should oversee the welfare of the children in their care through observation and engagement with: each child; the home's staff; each child's family/carers where appropriate; and professionals involved in the care or protection of each child including their social worker, Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO), teachers, clinicians and other health professionals etc. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', pages 54 to 55, paragraph 10.23)
In particular, the registered person should ensure that each chronology of a safeguarding concern contains all relevant information. The registered person should also ensure complete reviews of any significant safeguarding concerns and record how learning from these incidents has been taken forward.
- The registered person should have a workforce plan which can fulfil the workforce related requirements of Regulation 16, schedule 1 (paragraphs 19 and 20). The plan should:
 - detail the necessary management and staffing structure, (including any staff commissioned to provide health and education), the experience and qualifications

of staff currently working within the staffing structure and any further training required for those staff, to enable the delivery of the home's Statement of Purpose;

- detail the processes and agreed timescales for staff to achieve induction, probation and any core training (such as safeguarding, health and safety and mandatory qualifications);
- detail the process for managing and improving poor performance;
- detail the process and timescales for supervision of practice (see Regulation 33 (4) (b)) and keep appropriate records for staff in the home.

The plan should be updated to include any new training and qualifications completed by staff while working at the home, and used to record the ongoing training and continuing professional development needs of staff – including the home's manager. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4 and page 53, paragraph 10.8)

In particular, the registered person should ensure that their workforce development plan clearly records how they have decided that a particular qualification is equivalent to those required for someone in a care role. The registered person should also ensure that the workforce development plan shows how each member of staff is managing to complete a relevant residential childcare qualification in an appropriate timescale.

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.

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.

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: SC013743

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Action for Children

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

Responsible individual: Kate Isham

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Ruth Coler, social care inspector
Liz Driver, social care inspector

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