

SC013743

Registered provider: Action For Children

Interim inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is run by a charitable organisation and is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to 19 children who have a sensory impairment and/or a learning disability and/or a physical disability.

Inspection date: 13 February 2018

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Date of last inspection: 8 August 2017

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.

Young people make good progress and build strong relationships with the staff. Young people develop new skills, communicate more effectively and discuss age-relevant issues that help them learn about the physical and emotional changes which they are experiencing.

Improvements to the planning, monitoring and recording systems show that the staff are helping young people to express their opinions more effectively. One-to-one sessions, for example, provide a detailed picture of how sensitive issues are successfully discussed and explore what the young person thinks about the discussion. Symbols that young people regularly use are now evident around the home, increasing both the young people and staff's awareness and associations to promote effective communication.

Clearer links with young people's education providers are making a difference to young people's learning. For example, a young person's education plan now informs staff about the learning needs that the school is addressing. More regular discussions with education providers about young people's progress are being established, such as the staff attending parents' evenings.

Clearer monitoring of young people's independence skills is now happening. Care plans consider this, and managers are introducing more rigorous assessments of young people's self-help skills so that these can be monitored more effectively.

Plans to assist young people to move on are established effectively. An individual plan is put into action well in advance of a young person moving, and plans cover a good array of issues. This has enabled young people to settle well in their new home.

The managers have a significant say about when it is the best time for young people to move on to more specialist services. This ensures that decisions are in young people's best interests.

Safeguarding concerns are referred appropriately. Records of safeguarding referrals are not sufficiently detailed and do not provide an accurate description of the incident or of the actions that are taken when a concern arises.

Positive behaviour is promoted using different strategies, and there is minimal use of restraint. Clear records of restraints provide a good picture of what occurred. This detail is not used to reflect if any changes to practice would reduce the likelihood that restraint could be avoided or managed differently in the future.

Leaders and managers have improved the care and support that young people receive. Changes to practice are planned well and implemented successfully. The managers establish an understanding of their goals with young people, parents, the staff and external professionals. They monitor how well new developments are working and address issues of concern. The managers acknowledge that more work is needed to fully embed their vision for this service. They demonstrate the drive to achieve this.

Supervision and support for staff continues to improve. The staff now regularly receive supervision, and the quality of supervision sessions is being monitored. Additionally, supervision training for all supervisors is being provided in the next few weeks. Staff's views are sought and respected, and used to improve the home's practices. For example, discussions about working patterns led to a change as requested by staff.

Recruiting permanent staff continues to be an area of focus. Managers have increased stability within the staff team. Only two members of staff have left since the last inspection. Poor staff practice is investigated appropriately. However, clear plans of how an investigation will be undertaken are not quickly established. This lack of clarity means that there may be delay in resolving issues of concern: it creates uncertainty for those staff under investigation.

Service monitoring and reviewing has increased and has a positive impact on care. For example, a clear workforce development plan is in place. As yet, the information in the workforce plan is not used as effectively as possible. For example, it has not been used to develop a training plan for all of the staff.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
08/08/2017	Full	Requires improvement to be good
22/02/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
14/09/2016	Full	Requires improvement
08/03/2016	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 prepare and implement a policy which— (a) is intended to safeguard children accommodated in the children's home from abuse or neglect; and (b) sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect. (2) The procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect must, in particular— (d) provide for records to be kept of an allegation of abuse or neglect, and the action taken in response. Regulation 34(2)((d))	31/03/2018

Recommendations

- Records of restraint must be kept and should enable the registered person and staff to review the use of control, discipline and restraint to identify effective practice and respond promptly where any issues or trends of concern emerge. The review should provide the opportunity for amending practice to ensure that it meets the needs of each child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.59).

- 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.
 - 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 52, paragraph 10.8)

In particular, the registered person should ensure that the training plan is monitored effectively so that it is always renewed within suitable timescales. The registered person should also ensure that a detailed plan of how they will quickly investigate and conclude an investigation if a staff performance concern arises is implemented.

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: Shelagh Frankcom

Registered manager: Jennifer Frogley

Inspectors

Ruth Coler, social care inspector
Janet Fraser, Senior HMI social care

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