

SC028868

Registered provider: Step-a-Side Company Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is operated by a private organisation and provides care for up to four children, aged up to 18 years, with social and/or emotional difficulties. The registered manager has been registered with Ofsted since July 2020.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

We last visited this setting on 16 to 17 December 2020 to carry out an assurance visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 3 to 4 August 2021

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 **requires improvement to be good**

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

Date of last inspection: 6 August 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/08/2019	Full	Good
23/04/2019	Full	Inadequate
04/06/2018	Full	Requires improvement to be good
04/07/2017	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Since the last inspection, two children have left the home and two children have recently moved in. Children shared with the inspector that they met the manager before moving into the home and also visited for tea and barbecues. Children are given a warm welcome and newly decorated bedrooms that they can personalise as they wish.

The manager and staff have created a video guide about the home, the staff team and what activities the area can offer. This helps children to feel reassured about where they will be living before they move in. However, the children's guide does not include contact details of the Children's Commissioner.

Children's care plans and behaviour management plans contain lots of information about children's needs, risks and past experiences. However, staff knowledge and guidance to assist them in caring for children is not consistently clear. For example, some plans do not include actions about how staff will help children to reduce smoking, or how they will work with parents and social workers to improve children's health. Consequently, staff are not helping children as needed. This means that children's health and development are affected if this is not managed properly.

The manager has regular communication with professionals and works closely with them to share updates about children's progress. A social worker told the inspector: 'Staff have communicated well with me. Their weekly records are very detailed and focus on the small and the big things.' Another social worker shared: 'Staff went above and beyond for him. He developed warm, caring relationships with the staff and when I visited, it felt very homely.'

The provider has chosen to locate the home in an area that enables children to enjoy beautiful countryside with an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and animals such as sheep, wild deer and boar. Children benefit from a range of activities and hobbies, including walking, mountain biking, caring for horses, visiting the beach, going to the gym, water sports, fishing and cooking. This helps children to stay healthy and explore new opportunities. Children like the food at this home and shared with the inspector that they regularly enjoy steak.

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

Since the last assurance visit inspection, there have not been any allegations or complaints made against staff. During this visit, children shared with the inspector that they have no worries about the care they receive and feel safe. There have been no incidents of physical restraint during this period, and the registered manager has introduced a new form that meets the requirements for recording behaviour management, under regulation 35.

Staff are persistent in searching for children when they go missing from the home. They look for them in known places, encourage them home and provide a warm welcome when they return. Return home interviews are conducted within timescales, and the manager works with the police, missing-from-home coordinators and social workers, to try to keep children safe and reduce future incidents. The manager has also completed a detailed and evaluative review of missing-from-home incidents, to consider practice and actions for future learning.

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

Since the registered manager has been in post, she has made several improvements to the home environment and culture within the home. Staff speak overwhelmingly positively about the leadership and dedication of the manager. One staff member told the inspector: 'She is excellent, she really is the best manager I have ever had. She cares so much about the children here.'

Staff receive regular and meaningful supervision that they view as helpful in assisting them to provide the best care to children. The manager has a spreadsheet of staff training that she uses to ensure that staff have the necessary skills and training to care for children. All staff are up to date with the required mandatory training. However, the registered manager has not ensured that the experience and qualifications of staff are included within the statement of purpose, as required by The Children's Home (England) Regulations (2015).

The registered manager ensures that staff qualifications, identification documents and Disclosure and Barring Service checks are available, and gaps in employment are verified. Nonetheless, the manager does not ensure that safer recruitment processes are consistently strong. For example, reasons for leaving previous employment are not verified. A check for a worker who had worked abroad had not been obtained. Children could be at risk of harm if safer recruitment checks are not carried out.

Team meetings are an important part of how the registered manager and staff team work together. They are used as a forum to discuss practice, to look at better ways of working and to consider how well the staff are caring for children. This helps improve the quality of care provided to children.

The manager and staff encourage and help children to spend time with those who matter to them, including family members, carers and friends. Children's friends also visit the home. However, during some children's time with friends, staff wait outside in the car. Other situations need further consideration, such as children not having their pocket money to spend independently and the lack of some boundaries when they are with family members. The manager has not shared her concerns effectively with the local authority, to advocate in the best interests of children and provide consistency.

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)) This relates to the registered manager raising her concerns with the placing authority about any aspects of a child's care, health or supervision that she considers is not in the best interests of the child.	13 August 2021
The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— mutual respect and trust; an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— meet each child's behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i))	13 August 2021

This relates to the registered manager ensuring that children's care plans include details about how staff will support children to stop smoking and what actions are needed to help children understand about improving their health and well-being.	
The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ("the statement of purpose") which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1. (Regulation 16(1)) The registered manager must include the details of the experience and qualifications of staff within the statement of purpose.	13 August 2021
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; or if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the 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 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3)(d)) This relates to the registered manager ensuring that appropriate checks are made for staff who have worked abroad and that the reason for staff leaving previous employment is verified.	13 August 2021

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the children's guide helps children to understand how to contact the Office of the Children's Commissioner. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 24, paragraph 4.22)

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: SC028868

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Step-a-Side Company Limited

Registered provider address: Step-a-Side, 29 Market Place, Coleford,
Gloucestershire GL16 8AA

Responsible individual: Rachel Carwardine

Registered manager: Tracy Bedford

Inspector

Anna Gravelle, Her Majesty's Inspector

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