

SC028868

Registered provider: Step-a-Side Company Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned by a private provider and is registered to provide care for up to four children.

At the time of the inspection, two children were living in the home having moved here in July 2021 and March 2023. A third child lived at the home between June 2021 and February 2023.

The manager has been in post since July 2023 and is not yet registered with Ofsted. However, they have submitted their application for registration.

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 August 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 6 December 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/12/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
03/08/2021	Full	Good
06/08/2019	Full	Good
23/04/2019	Full	Inadequate

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Children living at this home form trusting and positive relationships with staff. These relationships contribute to children making progress in some areas from sometimes difficult starting points.

However, children's overall experiences and progress are affected by the shortfalls identified in how well children are helped and protected.

Children are not yet attending college or school. However, managers and staff have worked to ensure that plans for children's education are in place in line with their specific needs. However, challenge to a local authority around one child's education, health and care plan being updated could have been more robust.

One child has previously found consistent school attendance challenging but has worked well with tutors at the home and recently obtained some qualifications.

Before living at the home, another child had not attended school for a significant period. Since living at the home, he has completed some sessions with a tutor. This child has a place at school and is due to start in September.

Children receive warm, nurturing care at this home from a committed and caring staff team. One child told the inspector that he enjoys living at the home and feels that staff help and support him.

Staff and managers at the home know children well and understand their individual interests. For example, one child expressed an interest in working in the building trade and has recently started a project at the home to build themselves a shed to work and relax in. Managers have agreed to pay for the materials and have arranged for a member of the maintenance team to set aside time to come and work with this child.

Staff support children to stay in contact with people who are important to them. Parents spoken to by the inspector were positive about the flexible and proactive support from staff in helping them to have quality time with their child.

The home environment is clean and tidy, and children can personalise and decorate their bedrooms. However, some areas of the home appear tired and in need of redecoration. The manager told the inspector that a plan is currently underway to redecorate the entire house. The inspector was able to see some rooms have recently been repainted and one child spoke to the inspector about the decorations they have chosen for a small gaming area downstairs. The drains in one bathroom need repair, which the maintenance team started to work on during the inspection.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

There are ongoing concerns for one child living at this home around the risk of exploitation. This child has positive relationships with staff, can speak openly about some of their experiences and multi-agency meetings take place regularly. However, these factors have not been effective in reducing the risks for this child and concerns have increased in recent months.

Managers have not always escalated concerns promptly and challenge to external professionals has not always been robust and timely. For example, a trigger plan for one child remained outstanding at the time of the inspection and actions not progressed by a local authority were not challenged by the home until very recently.

Parental controls are in place on the home's Wi-Fi. However, managers and staff have not taken strong enough action to ensure that appropriate controls and monitoring are in place to support children's safe mobile phone usage.

One child was sent sexually explicit material online. A safeguarding referral was made. However, a response was not received, and this was not reported to the police for nearly three weeks.

Incidents are generally managed appropriately by staff on duty. When children go missing, staff report them missing and look for them and restraint at the home is rare. Since the previous inspection, there have been four uses of restraint during one incident. This restraint was in line with the child's care and support plans.

However, during one recent incident, action taken by staff was not effective in preventing the incident escalating. This resulted in one child taking and driving the house car before being stopped by police and arrested.

Children's moves to the home are well planned. They are invited to visit the home and meet staff before they move in. However, the relationship between the two children currently living in the home can be difficult and there are concerns about the impact of this on one child. Several altercations have taken place and current safety planning measures have not been effective in preventing ongoing concerns in this area.

Professionals and parents spoken to were positive about the care and support children receive at this home. However, some staff and professionals raised concerns about the risks of exploitation for one child and the impact on one child of the dynamic between the children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager is child focused and has a good understanding of the needs and risks of the children living in the home.

In recent weeks, there has been a noted increase in challenge to external professionals and a more robust response to some safeguarding concerns. For example, managers have recently sourced specialist consultation services for advice around managing the risk of exploitation. Actions from this session have been progressed promptly and there is also a plan for members of the team to take part in additional specialist training.

Management oversight of incidents is good and clearly set out in written records.

Staff are supported to reflect on incidents individually in debriefs and supervision sessions and collectively during team meetings with lessons learned documented.

The home also makes good use of the specialist therapeutic support available with practitioners providing input into children's care plans and team meetings.

Staff told the inspector they value the support and guidance of both the current and previous managers and enjoy working in this home. The staff team is largely long term and established and staff are skilled at establishing positive relationships with the children in their care.

Parents and professionals spoken to were positive about the communication from the manager and staff.

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 protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; help each child to understand how to keep safe; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii))	27 September 2023
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	27 September 2023

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; help each child to develop socially aware behaviour; encourage each child to take responsibility for the child’s behaviour, in accordance with the child’s age and understanding; help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone; communicate to each child expectations about the child’s behaviour and ensure that the child understands those expectations in accordance with the child’s age and understanding; help each child to understand, in a way that is appropriate according to the child’s age and understanding, personal, sexual and social relationships, and how those relationships can be supportive or harmful; help each child to develop the understanding and skills to recognise or withdraw from a damaging, exploitative or harmful relationship; de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children; understand and communicate to children that bullying is unacceptable; and have the skills to recognise incidents or indications of bullying and how to deal with them. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(xi)(xii)(xiii))	
In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff—	27 September 2023

seek to involve each child's placing authority effectively in the child's care, in accordance with the child's relevant plans;

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; and

seek to develop and maintain effective professional relationships with such persons, bodies or organisations as the registered person considers appropriate having regard to the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the children's home is to provide care and accommodation. (Regulation 5 (a)(b)(c)(d))

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that they continue to monitor if children's needs are being met at the home and that patterns in incidents are noted and appropriate action is taken to address these. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)
- The registered person should ensure that they robustly consider the skills and experience of the staff team as well as children's needs and risks before any new child moves into the home. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 56, paragraph 11.4)
- The registered person should ensure that complaints made by children are formally recorded and responded to accordingly and that children are provided appropriate support around this process. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.13)

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 Company Limited, 29 Market Place,
Coleford, Gloucestershire GL16 8AA

Responsible individual: Rachel Carwardine

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Janet Jauregui, Social Care Inspector

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