

SC042147

Registered provider: Child First Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and operated by a private provider. According to the statement of purpose, the home uses a care model that provides love and care to up to six children between the ages of eight and 18 who may have experienced a chaotic early family life, which may have included abuse, emotional neglect and exploitation.

There are currently five children living in the home.

There has been no registered manager at the home since 1 July 2022.

Inspection dates: 1 and 2 August 2023

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: 18 January 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/01/2023	Full	Good
08/02/2022	Full	Outstanding
09/07/2019	Full	Good
05/06/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children refer to staff caring for them as 'adults' and, therefore, they are referred to as adults throughout this report.

Adults exhibit insightful and empathic approaches to children's needs. They provide comfort and reciprocated affection. One parent said that they are confident that the adults are professional and caring. The parent said, 'They are 'down with the kids' but know how to implement rules and talk things through.'

Adults demonstrate unconditional positive regard and emotional warmth towards children when there are displays of emotional or behavioural tension. Responses to children are non-punitive. Positive redirection and restorative approaches are used in place of consequences. Children are engaged in conversations about their behaviours and feelings, to strengthen their understanding of self.

Adults have regular communication with other professionals and advocate in children's best interests. They have forged relationships with external agencies to progress independence plans for children. One social worker said that the adults persevered and supported a child to be independent, with appropriate attention to safety and risk.

A plethora of activities are available for children, and joining community groups such as Scouts, cadets and dance groups is encouraged. This enrichment, together with the culture of acceptance in the home, allows children to celebrate and explore their individuality and diversity.

Adults encourage children to like themselves, and take time to understand what is meaningful to them. Adults help children to explore their feelings and interests and support them to achieve their ambitions and goals. Adults recently went to watch a child's dance performance. The child told the inspector that they were happy that the adults had come to watch them. Another child said that they loved living in the home as it felt like an extension of family. This helps children to have a sense of belonging and permanence.

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

Adults have a good understanding of what children need to be safe. One professional described the adults as diligent and able to recognise when action needed to be taken.

Adults are risk-aware, not risk-averse. In one example, children were excited to go overnight camping, using a fire pit and having a barbecue. This gives children the space that they need to learn and grow, while also being provided with support from loving adults.

Adults write child-focused care plans for children. These are written directly to children in a child-friendly way that immediately connects with them. This puts children at the centre of practice and helps them to understand their experiences in the home.

Internet safety and the use of internet-enabled devices are well managed by adults. When concerns arise, adults work collaboratively with social workers in revising and reducing risks for children. Adults are clear on their roles and responsibilities. Children are kept well informed and understand agreed plans around the safe use of the internet and age-restricted games and films.

Adults create good risk assessments that identify children's individual risks. Strategies used by adults to keep children safer are clear and reviewed regularly. Children's risks are well set out throughout their plans and adults proactively and sensitively talk to children about their risk-taking behaviours. This reflective practice allows children to explore their perception of danger and how they can better equip themselves in the future.

Leaders understand their responsibilities in relation to good safe recruitment practices. Consequently, children are more likely to be cared for by safe and appropriate adults.

Adults have specific training to meet the individual needs of children. Further training is provided in regular team meetings, meaning that all adults are well informed and provide consistent approaches to children.

Adults record in detail when children are held. They promote positive relationships and understand children's behaviour. However, on one occasion, a record did not include specific timings when more than one hold was used. The positions of the adults involved were also not recorded.

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

There has been no registered manager in the home since July 2022. The previous manager had submitted her application to Ofsted. However, there were a number of delays.

There was a serious medication error at the home in June 2023. The manager at the time and adults did not follow safeguarding and medication policies. This caused delays in the social worker, parents, health professionals and regulators being informed. This has been thoroughly investigated by leaders.

New interim management arrangements are now in place. The interim manager is the previous registered manager of this home. He is familiar to children and offers stable leadership at this difficult time. Leaders are in the process of recruiting a new manager to the home and understand the need for this individual to be registered.

Supervision is regular and of a good standard. Adults say that they trust their leaders to listen and respond appropriately. One adult said that support from the interim manager was creative and effective. An example of this is the reintroduction of reflective journals for adults, so that they can reflect on the impact of their own values and behaviours in practice.

The independent person visits the home regularly and always seeks the views of children. They give recommendations to strengthen practice and review these each month. However, the independent person does not state if children are effectively safeguarded and their welfare promoted. In the absence of a registered manager, the responsible individual has not provided enough oversight of the independent person's reports. This is especially significant as some repeated recommendations have been made and there has been an increase in complaints from children. The responsible individual recognised this and adapted the report template during the inspection to improve this.

The previous manager responded to children's complaints caringly. She completed fact-finding investigations with adults and took necessary steps to improve staff practice where needed. One child said that they were happy with how their complaint had been managed. However, records do not reflect children's satisfaction regarding the outcome of complaints. This is a missed opportunity to ensure that children feel heard and that no further action is required.

One parent raised concerns with their local authority about adults' working practices with their child. This information was shared by the child's social worker with the previous manager, who kept a chronology of action taken. However, the concerns raised have not formally been responded to in line with the home's complaints policy. Furthermore, the parent was not provided with information on how to make a formal complaint. This was a missed opportunity to demonstrate good leadership and oversight when there was potential to improve adults' practice.

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, The 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 leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(h)) In particular, the registered person should ensure that all physical interventions are clearly recorded, detailing the actions of adults and the different lengths of time adults hold children for. When there is no registered manager and recommendations are repeated, the responsible individual should provide their views and comments on the independent person's reports.	10 November 2023
The registered provider must appoint a person to manage the children's home if— there is no registered manager in respect of the home; and the registered provider— is an organisation or a partnership. (Regulation 27 (1)(a)(b)(i)) This is with specific reference to ensuring that the manager appointed becomes registered with Ofsted at the earliest opportunity.	10 November 2023

This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	
Subject to paragraph (6), the registered person must establish a procedure for considering complaints made by or on behalf of children. In particular, the procedure must provide that no person who is the subject of a complaint takes any part in its consideration or investigation, except at the informal resolution stage if the registered person considers it appropriate. The registered person must ensure that a record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of any investigation. The registered person must ensure that no child is subject to any reprisal for making a complaint or representation. The registered person must supply to HMCI, at HMCI's request, a statement containing a summary of any complaints made during the preceding twelve months and the action that was taken in response to each complaint. (Regulation 39 (1) (2) (3) (4) (5)) In particular, the registered person should ensure that children are spoken to following their complaints to ensure they are happy with any action and subsequent outcomes. The registered person should ensure that parents raising concerns are offered the opportunity to make a formal complaint and that complaints or concerns are managed in line with the home's policies.	10 November 2023
The independent person must produce a report about a visit ("the independent person's report") which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether— children are effectively safeguarded; and the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being. (Regulation 44 (4)(a)(b))	10 November 2023

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: SC042147

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Child First Limited

Registered provider address: 62 The Street, Rustington, West Sussex BN16 3RN

Responsible individual: Michelle Wright

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Kelly Monniot, Social Care Inspector
Tash Williams, Social Care Inspector

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