

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. The home uses a care model that provides love and care to up to six children between the ages of 8 and 18 who may have experienced a chaotic early family life, which may have included abuse, emotional neglect and exploitation.

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

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 January 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 8 February 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
08/02/2022	Full	Outstanding
09/07/2019	Full	Good
05/06/2018	Full	Good
07/12/2016	Full	Requires improvement

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The children benefit from living in a well-managed home which provides a warm, caring and welcoming environment. Over time, the children develop a sense of stability and security, and this can be attributed to the consistent high-quality care they receive from a skilled team of committed adults. The adults effectively implement a model of care known as 'lovin' care' which seeks to normalise the children's everyday experience of living in a children's home. There is a strong emphasis on making the children feel valued and removing institutional practices that would not be experienced in a family home.

The children develop confidence and trust in the adults' abilities to care for them. They benefit from the advice and guidance they receive on how to keep themselves safe, and they feel reassured that the adults will support them to overcome any difficulties they may be experiencing. For example, one child has benefited from having a consistent adult to support them overcome their anxieties around attending counselling. The children are encouraged and supported to develop their identities and are consistently treated with dignity and respect.

As a result of the care children receive, they are all making progress across several aspects of their lives. This is particularly the case in terms of their engagement with education. One child, who had previously been out of education for five years, now engages enthusiastically with the alternative education programme that has been put in place. The children also make progress in terms of their emotional well-being. One child now has a greater ability to express their feelings in relation to past experiences, and to reflect on the risks associated with unsafe behaviours. A child's social worker commented, '[Name of child] was previously emotionally shut down. I never thought we would get to where we are today.'

Overall, the adults demonstrate a commitment to ensuring that the children receive the specialist intervention they may require to overcome past trauma. They usually provide sensitive support and encouragement to children engaging in therapeutic counselling. However, on one isolated occasion, one of the recommendations specified in a child's therapy review meeting was not carried out in a timely way. Consequently, a measure that could have comforted the child during times of high anxiety was not immediately available to them.

The children engage well in house meetings and respond positively to the opportunities they have to express their views on how the home is managed on a day-to-day basis. The children are encouraged to express their views on a wide range of issues, including how effectively the adults are caring for them. There is also a strong commitment to ensuring that the children can access an advocate or an independent visitor if this would be beneficial.

There are many opportunities for the children to experience new activities and leisure pursuits. Engagement with community activities is encouraged. For example, one child has benefited from joining a local Scout group. Other children are enjoying swimming and singing lessons in their free time.

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

Practice in relation to the help and protection that children receive is generally of a high standard. However, there have recently been shortfalls relating to fire safety. The recommendations made in a fire risk assessment undertaken by an external consultant in October 2022 have not all been acted on in a timely way. At the end of this inspection, assurances were given that plans are in place to respond to all the recommendations made.

The children feel safe and secure at this home and those spoken to all confirmed that they would speak to the adults if they had any worries or concerns. The adults have the skills to communicate effectively with the children and put them at ease when discussing sensitive subjects. This results in the children having the confidence to express their worries and begin reflecting on past negative experiences.

There are effective risk management processes in place. The strategies that have been agreed for keeping the children safe are implemented in practice. The children learn about the risks they may be exposed to when going online or when out in the community. Complex issues, such as maintaining safe relationships and consent, have been discussed in children's group meetings and the adults have access to a good range of resources to initiate discussions with the children.

Effective partnership working has ensured that external safeguarding professionals are fully engaged in planning how children can be kept safe at the home. For example, one specialist practitioner regularly attends the adults' meetings to ensure they are fully informed about the potential risks associated with a child's behaviour. They receive guidance on how the child's needs can best be met, and this contributes towards reducing the level of risk.

There is a strong emphasis on promoting and rewarding positive behaviour. The children have enjoyed a range of outings and activities to acknowledge the progress they have made in maintaining their positive behaviour and working towards their goals. There has not been the need to resort to physical intervention to manage a child's behaviour since the last inspection in February 2022.

The adults are familiar with the actions they should take if they have any concerns for a child's welfare. Those spoken to during this inspection had a thorough understanding of the whistle-blowing procedures and how to escalate any unresolved concerns. Any concerns for a child's welfare are promptly shared with the relevant safeguarding professionals.

Care is taken to ensure that unsuitable adults are not employed at the home. There is a rigorous recruitment and selection process that prioritises the safety and well-being of the children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager left the home in July 2022. The former deputy manager was subsequently appointed to the post of manager. She is experienced in residential childcare and is working towards achieving a relevant qualification. The transition from one manager to the next was well managed and the impact on the children was minimal.

The new manager has applied to register with Ofsted, but there have been delays in processing the application. The manager has sought advice on how to resolve the issues relating to her application, but in some instances could have pursued this more promptly. Steps are now being taken to resolve the issues.

A strength of this home is the consistency in the team of adults caring for the children. No adult care workers have left the home since the last inspection. The adults feel well supported in their roles and the quality of the supervision they receive is very good. Supervision meetings provide opportunities for the adults to reflect on the quality of the relationships they have with the children. One adult described how she had reflected on her relationship with a particular child and had concluded that her approach to communicating with the child was not what the child needed. She has subsequently changed her approach, resulting in a greater bond with the child being established.

There are effective systems in place for monitoring the quality of care that the children receive. Children's support plans are regularly reviewed, and their 'keeping me safe' forms are updated promptly to reflect changing circumstances. There is a strong commitment to obtaining feedback from the children, parents and professionals in order to enhance the quality of care monitoring process. Detailed records are kept of the progress that the children are making. This ensures that the targets they are working towards are always relevant to their stage of development.

Overall, the managers and adults maintain effective communication with the children's social workers, despite there being the occasional miscommunication. Leaders and managers act swiftly to ensure that professional discussions take place when a child is experiencing difficulties, such as being bullied at school. Two social workers confirmed that the home has been highly effective at taking forward the placing authority's overall plan for the children.

Leaders and managers take care to ensure that they can meet the needs of any children referred to the home. They undertake highly effective impact assessments before a child moves to the home to establish whether there are likely to be any negative impacts, either for the children currently living at the home or the child moving in. This has helped ensure that the home remains a positive environment for all those living and working there.

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 the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(d)) This is with specific reference to ensuring that recommendations made in the fire risk assessment are acted on in a timely way.	20 February 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 appointed manager becomes registered with Ofsted at the earliest opportunity.	20 February 2023

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that, in line with individual health plans and the ethos of the home, children are offered advice, support and guidance on health and well-being. This is with specific reference to acting on the recommendations made by a child's therapeutic practitioners. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 35 paragraph 7.18)

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

Inspector

Stephen Collett, Social Care Inspector

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