

SC064027

Registered provider: Delam Care Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and managed by a private company. It is registered to provide care for up to six children who have complex learning disabilities. Four children were living in the home at the time of this inspection.

The manager registered with Ofsted in September 2021.

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 March 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: 2 September 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
02/09/2021	Full	Good
04/03/2020	Full	Outstanding
15/01/2019	Full	Outstanding
20/03/2018	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children are happy in the home. They have lived here for a long time and are very comfortable. They have strong, trusting relationships with a small core team of staff, who they know very well. A number of staff have recently left the home. This has created vacancies at all levels, including team leader posts. Although the manager attempts to use consistent agency staff to cover these staff shortfalls, this means that children are not always supported by a consistent staff team.

Children make progress in the home. Staff develop plans that underpin the care that they provide to children. Plans are regularly reviewed to ensure that children are working towards meaningful targets. Staff also prepare individualised plans that help children to prepare for life as young adults. The up-to-date statutory care plans for some children are not available, despite the manager's efforts to acquire these. Consequently, managers are unable to ensure that children's internal care plans consistently reflect the aims and objectives of the placing authority.

Staff strive to communicate effectively with children. They use their positive relationships with children to learn about what matters to them most. This has a positive impact on staff's ability to talk to and understand children's wishes and feelings. However, training on children's specific forms of communication, such as Makaton, has not yet taken place for most staff.

Children's health needs are met. When children are anxious about attending health appointments, staff are creative in how they respond. This leads to children receiving any treatment or guidance that they need.

Children attend school regularly and mostly enjoy their learning. Staff raise concerns with teachers and education staff when problems occur or when children face barriers to their learning. This means that the impact of any disruption to children's education is minimised. This is important for children's day-to-day routines, as well as their overall development.

Children enjoy a range of activities in the home and in the local community. These are enjoyable and help to develop the children's social interaction skills. Children are also supported to spend time with their families, both in the home and in the community. This helps children to maintain and further develop these important relationships.

Children know how to make a complaint, and staff encourage them to use this process. The manager ensures that children's concerns are taken seriously, and she quickly responds in writing to any issues raised, offering a solution. Nevertheless, with regards to a complaint made about the internet three months ago, the children are still waiting for the new equipment that was promised. This is an unnecessary delay.

Some areas of the home have recently been redecorated, although some other areas, including the kitchen and upstairs bathroom, are in need of more-substantial refurbishment. These areas currently detract from the welcoming atmosphere of the home.

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

Staff use their relationships with children to promote positive behaviour. Specific, good-quality and individualised plans contain strategies that are effective for each child. Staff follow these plans closely. Children learn that staff respond to them consistently. This helps them to feel secure.

Staff try to use their de-escalation skills to avoid the need for physical restraint. When this measure of control is necessary to prevent children from harming themselves or others, staff ensure that they follow statutory guidance and children's personalised plans. Significant weight is given to the review of all physical restraints, and the manager's review of these events is meticulous. Staff encourage children to express their views about how they feel, verbally or by using signs and pictures, and incorporate these into written records. The learning taken from these events contributes to the review of children's plans and risk assessments. This continual learning cycle helps staff to protect children from harm.

Risk assessments are effective and specific to each child. They identify potential issues and provide strategies that focus on children's needs, abilities and vulnerabilities. For example, children do not go missing from this home because staff provide a high level of supervision. Staff also help children to learn their own strategies to keep themselves safe. This means that when it is safe to do so, children can start to learn to be more independent in the community. This is vital for children as they begin to develop some autonomy as they grow up.

Managers and staff have a good knowledge and understanding of safeguarding procedures and their responsibilities for reporting and recording events of concern. Nevertheless, there have been two recent occasions when Ofsted has not been notified of significant events. Children were not at risk of harm, as other agencies and relevant professionals were informed. Nevertheless, this hinders the regulator's oversight of safeguarding practice.

Since the last inspection, the manager has taken sufficient steps to ensure that safer recruitment procedures are followed. All staff are now subject to full background employment and suitability checks before they work with children. This helps to ensure that children are supported by staff who are deemed suitable to do so.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is led by a skilled and dedicated manager. She knows the children very well and is committed to ensuring that they make progress and are safe. A deputy manager supports the manager, and together they have a clear vision for the home.

They recognise the improvements for children that have occurred under their leadership and are motivated for this to continue. There is a current focus on recruiting for the many staff vacancies to provide good-quality and consistent care for children.

The manager has high expectations of staff. She is a strong presence in the home and leads by example. She responds effectively to any capability issues. This means that shortfalls in practice are dealt with quickly and there is limited impact on children.

Staff value the clear direction they receive from managers. They benefit from regular reflective supervision sessions and team meetings. While the manager has continued to focus on ensuring that staff complete mandatory training, more-specific courses that reflect children's individual needs have not taken place. This potentially impacts on children's progress.

The manager's oversight of the home is very good. She prioritises the issues that affect children most, for example her evaluation of risk assessments and one-to-one work. The manager reviews all incidents that take place. She identifies lessons learned and required changes in practice following such events. This contributes to children's welfare and well-being.

The manager responds well to external scrutiny of the home. The independent person visits regularly, and the manager responds quickly to any recommendations made about the quality of care that children receive. Nevertheless, the majority of these visits occur when children are not home. This means that the independent person rarely interacts with the children or observes the staff's practice. The manager has expressed her concerns about the timing of these visits. Given the vulnerabilities of children with disabilities, this is a missed opportunity for the independent person to determine if the children are safeguarded effectively.

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 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— ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; and ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(d))	31 May 2023
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which— include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that children's up-to-date statutory care plans are available in the home.	31 May 2023
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation; an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious; there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there;	31 May 2023

a child protection enquiry involving a child— is instigated; or concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry); or there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (a)(b)(c)(d)(i)(ii)(e))	
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Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the children's home is a nurturing and supportive environment that meets the needs of the children. It should have a homely, domestic environment. In particular, ensure that necessary refurbishments are carried out to provide a well-presented and comfortable home for children. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that children are encouraged to share any concerns about their care or other matters as soon as they arise. In particular, children should not be kept waiting for the outcome of their concerns. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.13)
- The registered person should ensure that any individual appointed to carry out visits to the home as an independent person makes a rigorous and impartial assessment of the home's arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children in the home's care. In particular, ensure that this assessment takes account of children's views and/or observations of staff practice. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.5)

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: SC064027

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Delam Care Limited

Registered provider address: Metropolitan House, 5th Floor, 3 Darkes Lane,
Potters Bar, Hertfordshire EN6 1AG

Responsible individual: Shelley Whiting

Registered manager: Sarah Fiedorowicz

Inspector

Jo Stephenson, Regulatory Inspection Manager

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