

SC399586

Registered provider: First 4 Care Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home provides care for up to two children who may have learning disabilities and emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. There are currently two children living at the home. The home is run by a private company.

The home has been without a registered manager since May 2021. Managers have been appointed but have not proven suitable prior to registration. A new manager was appointed in December 2021 but has since left following an unsuccessful probation.

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 May 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	inadequate
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	inadequate
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	inadequate
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There are serious and widespread failures that mean children are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded and the care and experiences of children are poor and they are not making progress.

Date of last inspection: 10 August 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/08/2021	Full	Good
26/02/2020	Full	Good
14/08/2018	Full	Good
15/11/2017	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

On 23 May 2022, social care regulatory inspectors carried out an inspection of this home to gather additional evidence. The previous inspection on 4 and 5 May 2022 was declared incomplete because additional information received necessitated a review against the inspection outcome. The inspection on 23 May 2022 judged the home to be inadequate.

During the visit on the 23 May 2022, the inspectors found significant breaches in regulations relating to leadership and management, the employment of staff and the provider's ability to keep children safe.

Children's day-to-day experiences fluctuate due to changes in staff and in the use of agency staff. Staff do not always know children's care plans and daily routines well. This means that individualised care regarding, for example, bedtimes, feeding and personal care is inconsistent. This does not promote children's health and well-being.

Inspectors found that children have mixed experiences, with some staff committed to the children in their care and others lacking the skills to meet their complex needs. As a result, children are not provided with consistency of care.

Communication boards, social stories and the use of Picture Exchange Communication System symbols help the children to express themselves. Staff use these communication methods in their day-to-day care of the children and to ascertain their wishes and feelings. However, staff do not use these methods effectively and their responses have been unpredictable. This means that, at times, children are confused and become frustrated.

Staff promote meaningful and safe family contact. They work with parents to ensure that children have enjoyable family time. This means that the children are able to maintain positive attachments with family members and a sense of identity and cultural familiarity.

There is an emphasis on providing children with routine activities such as going to the shop, to restaurants or to the local park. However, the lack of available transport and staff shortages make it difficult to go further afield. This limits the children from having more enjoyable and varied experiences.

The environment is homely, but some areas require redecoration and refurbishment. For example, the sensory room needs to be completed so that children have a place to go to relax when feeling anxious or heightened.

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

During the inspection visit, serious and widespread shortfalls were identified. Inspectors found significant breaches in regulations relating to the safety and protection of children.

The inspectors found that there were significant concerns relating to staff practice on 15 January 2022 that resulted in a child being harmed. The provider failed to follow procedures and take action to ensure the immediate safety and well-being of the child. Information pertaining to this incident was deleted and concealed, and no investigation in accordance with child protection procedures took place.

Leaders and managers have failed to ensure that staff know and understand the importance of accurate recording. There is no incident report or other record that details the nature of the incident that took place on the 15 January 2022. The observation book gives a false account and states that the child was spoken to using 'therapeutic language'. This does not provide any reassurance that other incidents are reported and investigated thoroughly. This places children at risk of actual harm.

Leaders and managers have failed to ensure that staff know and follow safeguarding procedures. Not all staff feel confident to raise safeguarding concerns. In addition, despite an allegation being made on the 15 January 2022, the alleged perpetrator remained in the home for over an hour as the sole carer for children. This is unsafe practice and exposes children to risk of harm.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

There continue to be identified shortfalls in the leadership and management of the home since the last inspection. This has impacted on the retention of staff and the increased use of agency staff. New staff have been appointed but do not always turn out to be suitable and/or capable to work with children with significant learning needs.

There are concerns in respect of the integrity and honesty of leaders and managers. There has been a failure to ensure that correct information is recorded and, on more than one occasion, records have been falsified that include records pertaining to the administration of medication. This increases the risk of harm to children.

Leaders and managers have failed to ensure that children have had the appropriate level of staff supervision in line with their care plans. This does not ensure that children receive the care and support they require.

There has been a period due to management changes where staff have not been afforded strong leadership on a consistent basis. Managers have not had the skills and experience to manage a home. This has impacted on the level of care given to the children and led to a lack of appropriate supervision.

Parents spoken to during the inspection felt that their child was well cared for, but communication with the manager and staff could be improved. Feedback from the social worker was mixed, citing that the lack of a suitable manager was not helpful in providing strong leadership and consistency of care.

Staffing pressures have prevented children from having access to some experiences and activities. This limits children's experiences. Furthermore, this means that the home is not operating in accordance with the home's statement of purpose.

Supervisions, induction of new staff and probationary reviews have been a bit 'hit and miss', and some staff have experienced gaps. Staff have also requested Makaton and Advanced Autism training. This training has now been arranged but is yet to be delivered.

The manager is currently absent from work, and it is unclear when she will return. This leaves the home vulnerable and does not provide children with the support they need to achieve.

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— lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child; and understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(c)(d)(e)(f))	11 Jul 2022
Subject to paragraph (6), the registered person must ensure that the home is at all times conducted in a manner which is consistent with its statement of purpose. (Regulation 16 (5))	11 Jul 2022
The enjoyment and achievement standard is that children take part in and benefit from a variety of activities that meet their needs and develop and reflect their creative, cultural, intellectual, physical and social interests and skills.	11 Jul 2022

In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff help each child to— develop the child’s interests and hobbies; participate in activities that the child enjoys and which meet and expand the child’s interests and preferences; and make a positive contribution to the home and the wider community. that each child has access to a range of activities that enable the child to pursue the child’s interests and hobbies. (Regulation 9 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(b))	
* 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— 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. that the home’s day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. that the effectiveness of the home’s child protection policies is monitored regularly. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(v)(vi)(vii)(b)(e))	11 Jul 2022
* An organisation may only carry on a home if— each director of the organisation, except for a director who is the responsible individual, who is involved in the carrying on	11 Jul 2022

of a home by that organisation satisfies the requirements in paragraph (6). The requirements are that— the individual is of integrity and good character; satisfy the requirements in paragraph (5)(a); and have the capacity, experience and skills to supervise the management of the home, or the homes, in respect of which the responsible individual is nominated. (Regulation 26 (1) (2) (3) (4)(i)(ii) (5)(a)(b)(c)(d) (6)(a)(b) (7)(a)(b))	
* The registered person must— ensure that each employee completes an appropriate induction; ensure that each permanent appointment of an employee is subject to the satisfactory completion of a period of probation; and provide each employee with a job description outlining the employee's responsibilities. The registered person must operate a disciplinary procedure which, in particular— provides for the suspension from work of an employee if necessary in the interests of the safety or welfare of children; and provides that the failure on the part of an employee to report an incident of abuse, or suspected abuse, whether past or present, in relation to a child to the appropriate person is a ground on which disciplinary proceedings may be instituted. For the purposes of this regulation, "the appropriate person" is the registered person, an officer of HMCI, an officer of the local authority in whose area the home is located or a police officer. The registered person must ensure that all employees— undertake appropriate continuing professional development;	11 Jul 2022

receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience; and have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (4)(a)(b))	
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* These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs and should understand the key role they play in the training and development of staff in the home. Makaton and Advanced Autism training needs to be facilitated for all staff to assist in their communication with the children. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', pages 53 and 39, paragraphs 10.11 and 8.15)

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: SC399586

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: First 4 Care Ltd

Registered provider address: 16 St. Wilfrids Road, Bessacarr, Doncaster DN4 6AA

Responsible individual: Carolann Dodds

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Cath Sikakana, Social Care Inspector
Steve Guirey, Social Care Inspector
Debbie Foster, Social Care Inspector

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