

SC464762

Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

Monitoring visit

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority short-breaks service provides short periods of residential care for up to six young people with physical and/or learning disabilities.

The manager was registered with Ofsted in April 2013 and is suitably qualified and experienced.

Inspection date: 3 March 2021

This monitoring visit

This monitoring visit was carried out as the home has not been inspected since October 2018. This is due to the suspension of regular inspection activity in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. The visit was conducted remotely due to current restrictions in relation to COVID-19. The inspector reviewed documents that were sent by email, spoke with the registered manager and staff, and gained feedback from parents, carers and social workers.

The impact of COVID-19 has meant that the home has been closed for most of 2020. As a result, families have not benefited from their regular short-break support. Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, knowing this service would be reopening when it was safe to do so, provided carers with a lifeline. One carer said: '...but no matter how low I felt or often I had a cry, or how angry or miserable [child's name] got, the thing that kept me going was I'd look at the suitcases waiting for the day we'd have our beloved [name of service] back.' Aside from the impact of COVID-19, since the last inspection, the organisation has changed the provision of the short-break service and reduced the number of nights it is open. This has been commented on by parents and professionals as having reduced children's access to support.

Children thoroughly enjoy their short breaks, and staff know children exceptionally well. Parents told the inspector about children happily packing and travelling to the

home when they were able to return. Parents consider the home 'a life saver' and children have the opportunity to develop genuine friendships that parents and carers hope will 'last a lifetime'. The positive impact of this for children and families cannot be underestimated. This results in parents having every confidence in staff who care for their children

The registered manager has kept the impact of the closure of his service on children and families at the forefront of his mind over the last year. He has worked tirelessly to ensure that clear guidance related to COVID-19 was in place for staff and parents when the home reopened. This has involved frequent liaison with public health experts and has helped parents return their children to the home with confidence.

Staff make sure that the groups of children who attend the home do not have competing needs. This is well risk assessed and is supplemented by staff's extensive knowledge of the children. This means that children have the best time they can when they come for their short break.

Children's wishes and views are central to the work of the home. Staff use different methods to gain these, and work hard to ensure that children are supported in their independence to the best of their ability. Staff make sure these are recorded using diary sheets and pictures. These help parents to see the progress their children are making. Staff also record detailed observations of children. This means that all staff are aware of important information about children and they can provide good, consistent support.

The registered manager is visible and available to parents and professionals. He responds to queries and infrequent complaints from parents sensitively, taking into account the position parents have been in during the COVID-19 restrictions. This results in a very positive view of the registered manager and staff from all parents and professionals.

Managers are working hard to provide regular supervision to staff, but this has been challenging at times due to the advice to minimise contact between them. Supervision records do not always make actions and timescales clear. These make it hard to hold staff to account. Despite this shortfall, staff feel supported and valued by managers, and staff morale is high.

Training records are not well maintained, and some staff are out of timescale for mandatory training. At the last inspection, training in self-harm and autistic spectrum disorder were noted as lacking and these have still not been completed. In addition, there continues to be a lack of development opportunities for experienced staff in areas, such as communication techniques, learning disabilities and safeguarding children with disabilities. This means that staff are not afforded the chance to improve their skills, and they do not have the most up-to-date information about current relevant safeguarding practice. Despite this lack of up-to-date training, staff safeguard children well.

The registered manager has identified that he needs to reinvigorate how he gains feedback from parents and professionals as the home has now reopened. In addition, the independent visitor does not routinely gain feedback from parents or professionals, nor do they make their opinion about the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements clear in their reports. The registered manager and senior leaders are aware of this shortfall, but have not yet taken sufficient action to address this. As a result of the lack of challenge by the independent visitor, coupled with the remote nature of the visits, the home is not challenged to further develop.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
08/10/2018	Full	Good
20/11/2017	Full	Good
23/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
28/11/2016	Full	Good

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. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)) In particular, staff must complete mandatory training within timescale and managers should ensure staff have access to all relevant training to care for children who have short-break support.	15 April 2021
The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month. When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the independent person— if they consent, to interview in private such of the children, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as the independent person requires; and to inspect the premises of the home and such of the home's records (except for a child's case records, unless the child and the child's placing authority consent) as the independent person requires.	15 April 2021

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.

(Regulation 44 (1) (2)(a)(b) (4)(a))

Recommendations

- The registered person should have systems in place so that all staff, including the manager, receive supervision of their practice from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional, which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2)
- The registered person should keep a record of supervision for staff, including the manager. The record should provide evidence that supervision is being delivered in line with regulation 33(4)(b). ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.3)

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this visit was to monitor the action taken and the progress made by the children's home since its last Ofsted inspection.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC464762

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

Registered provider address: Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council, Civic Centre, Darwall Street, Walsall WS1 1TP

Responsible individual: Jivan Sembi

Registered manager: Glen Jones

Inspector

Karol Keenan, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
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Manchester
M1 2WD

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