

SC474724

Steps 4 Life Care Limited

Monitoring visit

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home provides care and accommodation for up to four children with complex emotional and behavioural needs.

The registered manager resigned during the visit and therefore the home is now without a permanent manager.

Inspection date: 24 March 2021

This monitoring visit

This visit was undertaken because the registered manager had recently fostered a child who had previously lived at the home. The visit was completed to consider if there was any impact of this arrangement for the other children living in the home. Furthermore, the independent visitor had not undertaken a physical visit to the home in the last 12 months.

During the visit, the inspector identified discrepancies in the information shared by the registered manager with both his employer and the local authority with whom he is registered as a foster carer. This raises concerns about his honesty and integrity. The registered manager made the decision to resign from his position as registered manager during the course of the inspection.

The impact of the manager's resignation has yet to be seen. However, there is no indication that the manager's dual role of registered manager and foster carer has impacted upon the care that children have received.

Children say that they like living in the home. One child who recently moved in said that they were made to feel very welcome. The manager and staff form positive relationships with children. Staff know the children well and understand their needs. As a result, children feel safe and secure. One child said, 'I really like the staff, they are the best thing about the home.'

Staff help children to understand their complex needs. One child told inspectors that because they self-harm staff have to be with them all the time. This child is new to the home and understands that this is necessary. Staff are creative with their strategies to help this child manage their feelings safely. As a result, this child feels more confident and in control of their emotions.

Staff support children to understand changes in the home. Managers ensure that staff share information with children in a child-focused way. Staff spend time providing children with opportunities to express their wishes and feelings. Consequently, children feel that staff listen to them and that their opinions are important.

The registered manager advocates on behalf of the children. For example, when one child had been excluded from school, the registered manager was able to speak up on behalf of the child. As a result, the school are now considering alternative options, rather than exclusion.

Staff do not always take appropriate action to safeguard children. During one incident, staff discovered that a child had sabotaged the alarm on their bedroom door. Staff failed to take steps to overcome the damage to the door alarm. As a result, the child was able to leave their bedroom unnoticed. The child then left the home by climbing through a window in the bathroom. Staff were not aware of this until the police returned the child to the home. Staff's recording and the manager's oversight of this incident were poor.

During the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, the independent person has only undertaken remote visits. During this time the quality of reports has been variable with little consultation with children and professionals. There is a new independent visitor who has recently resumed on site visits to the home. However, the external scrutiny of the quality of care children receive remains untested.

Some aspects of the home, including one child's bedroom, looks dated and in need of modernisation.

The requirements and recommendations issued at the last full inspection in June 2019 were not considered as part of this full inspection and have therefore been reissued.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/06/2019	Full	Good
28/11/2018	Full	Good
08/01/2018	Full	Good
19/09/2016	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 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— assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(v)) This specifically relates to ensuring that managers and staff have the skills to recognise risk and implement appropriate safeguards to keep children safe.	8 May 2021
The registered person must ensure that all employees— receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(b)) This specifically refers to staff receiving regular supervision in line with the organisation's policy.	8 May 2021
An incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious;	8 May 2021

there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious.

A notification made under this regulation—

must include details of—

the matter;

the other persons, bodies or organisations (if any) who or which have been notified;

any actions taken by the registered person as a result of the matter; must be made or confirmed in writing.

(Regulation 40 (4)(b)(e) (5)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(b))

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that they maintain good employment practice in relation to agency staff. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)
- The registered person should ensure that children's lived experiences underpin the quality of care review. The views of children, staff and professionals should effectively inform the development of the service ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.2)
- The registered person should ensure that, as far as possible, the home environment is homely and nurturing rather than institutional. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that the independent visitor visits the home in person and consults with children and professionals in order to consider the quality of care provided to children. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.5)

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: SC474724

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Steps 4 Life Care Limited

Registered provider address: Arbor House, Broadway North, Walsall, West Midlands WS1 2AN

Responsible individual: Sharon Tott

Registered manager: Mitchell Yafai

Inspectors

Sarah Berry, Social Care Inspector

Lydia Isaac, Social Care Inspector

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