

SC013402

Registered provider: Action for Children

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is run by a registered charity in partnership with a local authority. Care and accommodation are provided in two separate and distinct houses. One looks after children who are only staying in the short term, and the other children who live long term in the home. The provider's statement of purpose states that it will provide care and accommodation for children who have a learning disability and/or physical disabilities and children who have autism spectrum disorder.

The registered manager has been registered for just over a year.

Inspection dates: 16 to 17 July 2018

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: 20 February 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
20/02/2018	Interim	Improved effectiveness
06/09/2017	Full	Requires improvement to be good
15/02/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
01/11/2016	Full	Good

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- The home should ensure that the required recording made of restraint incidents includes sufficient detail to identify effective practice. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.59)

This particularly relates to ensuring that the duration of any physical intervention is detailed.

- The home should ensure that the long stay unit presents as a homely, domestic environment. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

- The home should ensure that the use of agency staff is carefully monitored and reviewed to ensure that children receive continuity of the standard of care. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.16)

This particularly relates to ensuring that the care that the daytime agency staff offer is evaluated.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Young people receive a high quality of individualised care in this home. As a social worker said, 'They get her (the young person's) little signals, and understand her very well.' These strong relationships apply across the short-term and long-stay houses that make up this home.

There is a concerted focus on young people both having experiences that they enjoy and making progress in their independence and social skills. Young people's progress is carefully detailed in written care plans using outcome arrows which break down each task into achievable steps. Establishing this system has been a whole-team activity, and it represents a clear example of excellent practice.

In this nurturing environment which values the individual, young people's emotional well-being is enhanced. Some young people show their delight as their carer plays their favourite games with them, while others are supported to enjoy their favourite sensory activity. All young people are making progress with their individual targets, and this will help them to live in the least restrictive environment possible in adulthood.

Young people particularly benefit from the good range of outdoor equipment on this secure site. They also have regular music sessions and most recently enjoyed a bespoke exercise class.

Young people's preferences are respected, wherever possible, and, for example, they are given choices about colours when rooms are redecorated. This particularly applies to young people's bedrooms in the longer-stay unit, which are all very different to meet each young person's individual needs.

Many young people have complex health needs, and staff have appropriate input from health professionals to give them the skills to manage these safely. Generally, medication is managed well with robust systems in place. Recent medication errors were appropriately dealt with and highlighted where a system improvement could be made. Senior staff responded promptly and appropriately to this situation.

Young people's transitions in and out of the home are very well managed. When young people move on, staff work closely with the new placement to ensure that the young person's needs and wishes are well understood. This includes spending time at the new placement alongside staff so that they are fully aware of how the young person likes their care to be delivered.

Photographs of staff and the home environment are used effectively to prepare young people to join the home, while photographs of the incoming young person are used to prepare the existing young people. As a social worker said, 'I have had a very positive experience working with the home around X's transition. They (staff) attended visits at

her previous placement, school and a multi-agency meeting to understand her needs and wishes.' This careful attention means that young people are much more likely to settle in with ease.

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

Young people in the home are particularly vulnerable to harm, in that many of them have limited communication and mobility skills. As such, each young person has extensive risk assessments, which are routinely reviewed. Appropriate staffing and a secure campus mean that young people do not go missing from the home.

Staff are very aware of the vulnerabilities of their particular young people and have strong systems in place for checking whether they might have come to harm while being cared for outside the home. Staff manage behaviour well and use their good knowledge of each young person to distract and redirect young people's negative behaviours.

Restraint is rarely used, but when used it is appropriate and at the minimum level necessary. However, the recording of restraint incidents still lacks all the necessary detail to ensure thorough management scrutiny. As such, the recommendation from the last inspection is repeated.

Staff have a good understanding of safeguarding considerations, and this reflects their regular training in this area. They are appropriately aware of the particular issues that might affect disabled young people. This helps to inform their work with young people.

Allegations of harm to young people are dealt with well. There are effective links to local authorities and designated officers. Staff are recruited appropriately, and satisfactory checks are made on their suitability to care for young people.

Young people benefit strongly from their safe and secure environment. There is a good balance of outside and inside space. Ensuring that these areas remain safe and secure is a high priority in the home. Appropriate premises checks and fire evacuations are promptly and thoroughly undertaken

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

There is a highly effective registered manager in post, who has just successfully completed her level 5 qualification. She is rightly ambitious for excellence for the young people in her care, and has successfully led her staff group to routinely offering a high standard of quality care, with some examples of outstanding practice.

Staffing vacancies are now at a manageable level and do not adversely impact on the care of young people. Agency staff are still regularly used, and the agency night staff receive appropriate scrutiny and support through meetings and appraisals. Despite this, agency staff who work only during the daytime do not routinely receive this level of support. Moreover there is no system for ensuring that they deliver care of the required level of quality.

External monitoring of the service is soundly and regularly delivered. The registered manager monitors all key documents and decisions, and has constant discussions with staff about young people. She enjoys direct interaction with young people, and knows their needs and preferences.

Care planning is a further strength of the home. Each young person has a three-part care plan which presents a comprehensive, highly detailed and individual picture of them. Generally, recording practice has improved and is now clear, up to date and linked to the quality standards.

There are good links with local authority colleagues, and the two spoken with are very pleased with the level of verbal and written communications between them and the home. However, the registered manager will, if necessary, advocate on young people's behalf. For example, she successfully altered a planned immediate placement ending to a gradual transition to a new placement.

Although improvements have clearly been made to young people's environment, notably the increased use of photographs and pictures, the long-stay unit still looks tired and battered. It has not yet had enough refurbishment.

Supervision and appraisal practice is now well organised and effective. Staff say that they feel supported and that their morale is high. This helps them to continue to deliver high-quality care.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: SC013402

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Action for Children

Registered provider address: Action for Children, 3 The Boulevard, Ascot Road, Watford WD18 8AG

Responsible individual: Shelagh Frankcom

Registered manager: Jhenni Izquierdo

Inspector

Bridget Goddard, social care inspector

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