

1226969

Registered provider: Action for Children

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This registered, charity-operated children's home provides care and accommodation for up to four young people who have learning disabilities and/or physical disabilities. The manager has been in post since 8 January 2018 but is not yet registered with Ofsted. The home has been without a registered manager since 5 February 2018.

Inspection dates: 31 July to 1 August 2018

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **requires improvement to be good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **requires improvement to be good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **requires improvement to be good**

The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 7 February 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
07/02/2018	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
11/05/2017	Full	Good
16/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
25/04/2016	Full	Requires improvement

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
<p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>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; and</p> <p>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. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(i)(b))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that all staff working at the home are aware of and adhere to risk assessments.</p>	07/09/2018
<p>The registered person must ensure that the employment of any person on a temporary basis at the children's home does not prevent children from receiving such continuity of care as is reasonable to meet their needs. (Regulation 31 (1))</p>	07/09/2018
<p>The registered person must ensure that all employees— receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience; and</p> <p>have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (4)(b)(c))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that all staff receive supervision and annual appraisals at the frequency set out in the home's supervision and appraisal policy.</p>	07/09/2018
<p>The registered person must keep the behaviour management policy under review and, where appropriate revise it.</p> <p>The registered person must ensure that— within 5 days of the use of the measure of control, discipline or restraint, the registered person or the authorised person adds to</p>	07/09/2018

the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (2)(3)(c))	
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Recommendations

- The home's statement of purpose should be child focused, indicating how the home provides individualised care to meet the Quality Standards for the children in their care. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 14, paragraph 3.5)

This relates to the statement of purpose stating the experience and qualifications of the staff.

- For children's homes to be nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of their children, they will, in most cases, be homely, domestic environments. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

This relates to wear and tear to the exterior of the home, including window frames and fascia boards.

- Children's homes should work closely with the placing authority to understand the child's relationship history and the impact that the child's arrival may have on the group living at the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 38, paragraph 8.3)
- Staff should make available in the home, information in an appropriate form which enables children to contact their placing authority to call for a review of their care plan if they have concerns about their safety or welfare. Homes should encourage children to understand they can speak to an independent advocate, Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs), Ofsted inspectors or other relevant persons if they have concerns about their safety. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 43, paragraph 9.11)
- 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. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11)

In particular, provide staff with training specific to the needs of the children who live at the home, such as managing self-injurious behaviour.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Staff work hard to create good relationships with the young people, their families and professionals involved in their care. The overall experiences and progress of the young people are mixed. One young person's transition into an adult service was ended at short notice by the adult placement. Another young person's education provision was ended prematurely by the school. This was despite the best efforts of staff, who worked hard with professionals to prevent these unplanned endings.

The use of temporary and agency staff at the home has increased. This reduces the consistency of approach and continuity of care for young people. A social worker for a young person who was recently admitted to the home was concerned that an agency member of staff was working with the young person. The social worker said that the expectation was that a dedicated team of permanent staff would work with the young person. Inconsistent staffing undermines the young people's ability to make strong and trusting relationships with the adults who care for them.

The young people have communication difficulties. The staff gain their views and the family's views through key-working sessions, consultation and feedback forms. This happens in a variety of creative ways, such as using social stories, pictures and symbols. This inclusive approach means that the young people are involved in the planning of their care. Both young people have an advocate, although it is not clear if they know how to make a complaint. Complaints procedures are not freely available and are not contained in the young people's guide to the home. This limits their options, should they wish to make a complaint.

The young people have regular contact with their families and other significant people. The home arranges and facilitates this. One young person's stepmother said, 'They [the staff] arrange and provide contact with all of her family members. They are brilliant. I can't fault them.'

The young people enjoy a range of activities with the staff. These include swimming, local walks and eating out. High staffing ratios mean that the activities reflect the young people's interests. Both of the young people are members of a local church choir. This enables them to enhance their social peer groups and develop their skills.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

The home's managers regularly review and update behaviour management strategies and risk assessments. One young person's risk assessment for travelling in the home's vehicle had been updated to mitigate identified risks. However, two members of staff took the young person out in the vehicle without reviewing the updated risk assessment and were then involved in a road traffic accident. In this situation, failure to comply with

risk assessments could have led to a serious accident.

One young person had a well-planned move into the home recently. This young person can display challenging and aggressive behaviours. Staff attempt to de-escalate these behaviours, although there has been an increase in physical interventions since the last inspection. Physical interventions are proportionate, used appropriately and are well recorded. Management oversight of these records is lacking. Failure to monitor the effectiveness of physical interventions places young people and staff at risk.

The staff are trained in effective safeguarding practice. They are clear about their roles and responsibilities to safeguard the young people. However, specialist training for young people who have specific needs, such as self-injurious behaviour, is not provided. This can leave staff short of knowledge, which may prevent them from responding appropriately to such behaviours.

Challenging behaviour displayed by the young people has resulted in damage to the home. Despite this, staff work hard to create a nurturing and homely feel. The interior of the home is well decorated throughout and the rear garden has a trampoline and swing. The outside of the building is worn in places, such as the window frames and fascia boards. This detracts from what is otherwise a well-maintained property.

Since the last inspection, there have been a number of changes to the staff team. Recruitment processes are thorough. This mitigates the risk of unsafe staff being employed to work with young people. High staffing ratios mean that there are no incidents of young people going missing.

The staff create positive relationships with the families and professionals. A psychiatrist who works with both of the young people said, 'They [the staff] take on board advice and are focused on the young people. They understand that an inclusive, multi-agency approach is the only way to meet the needs of the young people.'

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The manager is experienced and working towards the necessary level 5 qualification. However, she has been in post since 8 January 2018 yet is not registered with Ofsted.

Staff who do not already have the relevant level 3 qualification are working towards it within the timescales.

Staff do not always receive practice-led supervision or appraisal in line with the organisation's policy. Annual appraisals are overdue, and one member of staff had not received supervision for four months. This lack of formal support limits staff's ability to reflect on their practice and development in a planned way.

The young people's files are detailed and updated regularly. Young people who move in or leave the home do so in a planned, structured way. The impact risk assessments detail individual risks and behaviours. However, they do not adequately consider these

against the young people who already live at the home. This could result in a difficult transition and have a negative impact on existing residents.

The staff update records regularly. The home's statement of purpose was last updated in February 2018. There is a list of the staff who work at the home but no record of their qualifications and experience. Failure to provide this information does not provide a clear list of the staff's skills.

Staff feel well supported by the home's management. The young people are discussed at monthly team meetings and are the primary focus at the home. The manager consults with families and stakeholders, which contributes to a comprehensive report on the quality of care that the home provides. Monthly external monitoring reports are of a good standard, and offer appropriate challenge and actions for the manager to address.

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: 1226969

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Action for Children

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

Responsible individual: Stephen Sipple

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Ricky D'Arcy: social care inspector

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