

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. The home may provide care and accommodation for no more than four children under short-break arrangements and two to live permanently in one house, and no more than five children to live permanently in the other long-stay house. Children may have learning disabilities and/or a physical disability. The long-stay residential house specialises in working with children who have autistic spectrum disorder.

Inspection dates: 7 to 8 January 2020

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 19 March 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
19/03/2019	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
16/07/2018	Full	Good
20/02/2018	Interim	Improved effectiveness
06/09/2017	Full	Requires improvement to be 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
<p>The children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from—</p> <p>staff who—</p> <p>develop positive relationships with them;</p> <p>engage with them; and</p> <p>take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>ensure that an explanation is given to each child as soon as reasonably practicable after the child's arrival about—</p> <p>the children's guide;</p> <p>how to make a complaint or representations in relation to the home or the care the child receives and how any such complaint or representations will be dealt with; and</p> <p>what advocacy support or services are available to the child, how the child may access that support or those services and any entitlement the child may have to independent advocacy provision; and</p> <p>ensure that the views of each relevant person are taken into account, so far as reasonably practicable, before making a decision about the care or welfare of a child. (Regulation 7(1)(c)(d)(i)(ii)(iii))</p>	09/03/2020
<p>The registered person must—</p> <p>keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and</p> <p>notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16(3)(a)(b))</p>	09/03/2020

Recommendations

- 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.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

All young people receive high-quality care and support. Their experiences are positive, and young people have made progress in line with their individual abilities and plans. This is as a result of the consistent, nurturing care provided by the staff team.

Most of the young people have lived in the home for a number of years. A social worker said, 'I am pleased with the high level of care and the stability provided for the young person.' The majority of young people are non-verbal. However, their attachment to the home and the staff team is demonstrated through their ability to move freely about the building, their smiles, holding hands with staff and gesturing to staff to sit with them.

The staff team provides highly personalised care to young people and demonstrates sensitivity, humour and appropriate affection to them. Staff know and understand the young people well and are skilful in interpreting their sounds, gestures and individual words. This helps staff to take appropriate actions to meet the needs of young people.

Young people enjoy a range of positive experiences and learn new skills. These range from sharing a meal together, making friendships, helping with their own personal care and requesting when they need to use the toilet.

Education progress is prioritised. All young people are engaged in education. The staff team works closely with schools to ensure that young people make progress and provide support to minimise school exclusion.

Young people's care plans are individualised and detailed. Young people's health, communication and emotional needs are identified along with their cultural and dietary needs. This enables the staff team to be confident in their understanding of each young person's support needs.

The home makes good use of local and wider leisure activities. Activities are varied and planned in advance to ensure that young people have the best possible experiences.

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

The home has a calm and peaceful atmosphere. Staff strive to create a sense of community, where young people's needs and safety are paramount. The staff ethos is one of giving young people encouragement and praise.

Young people have limited communication and mobility skills, which makes them particularly vulnerable to harm. Risk assessments and behaviour support plans are extremely detailed. The staff displayed an excellent understanding of the vulnerabilities of young people living in the home.

Young people's behaviour is generally good in the home. Young people respond well to encouragement and praise offered to them by staff. Staff encourage young people to use their individual communication methods to express their feelings appropriately.

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.

The staff are good advocates for young people. The staff are particularly astute at recognising changes in the mood or demeanour of young people who are unable to communicate their concerns verbally. However, the children's guide does not contain information on the home's complaints procedures, access to the children's commissioner or independent advocacy.

Young people benefit from living in a safe and secure environment. There is a good balance of outdoor 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

The registered manager has recently resigned from the service. Good interim management arrangements are in place to ensure stability in the staff team and continuity of care for young people.

Staff said that they feel well supported by the management team. The staff spoke with enthusiasm about their commitment to the young people. A staff member said, 'I am proud to work in a team where we all share the same philosophy, which is that young people come first.'

The recruitment of permanent staff has meant that there is now less reliance on agency staff in the home. Staff morale is good. Staff spoken with said that they felt valued, listened to and appreciated. They receive regular supervision, which enables them to continually reflect on their practice. Staff also receive ongoing training to equip them for their roles.

Admissions to the home are handled well. Managers have in place an in-depth pre-impact risk assessment and an induction package prior to young people being admitted. This ensures that young people are well matched, which promotes their well-being and progress.

Internal and external monitoring of the service is good. However, the home's statement of purpose is not reviewed in a timely manner. As a result, the information contained in the document is currently out of date.

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 differences 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: 3 The Boulevard Ascot Road, Watford, Hertfordshire
WD18 8AG

Responsible individual: Kate Isham

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Juanita Mayers, social care inspector

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