

1271380

Registered provider: Action for Children

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a short-break service for children, which is run by a national charity. All children have a learning disability and additional complex needs in relation to either their emotional or behavioural needs.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since 26 November 2020.

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 March 2023

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected inadequate

The effectiveness of leaders and managers inadequate

There are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded and/or the care and experiences of children and young people are poor and they are not making progress.

Date of last inspection: 8 February 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
08/02/2022	Full	Good
16/01/2020	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
26/06/2019	Full	Good
06/02/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

There are not enough staff available to safely care for the number of children the service is registered to take. On some occasions there are insufficient staff to support children in line with their risk assessments and care plans. This leaves children at risk. Furthermore, children's care plans lack detail and behaviour management strategies for two children are identical and therefore do not consider the children's individual needs.

Health care plans contain inconsistent information. This has led to medication not being administered effectively for one child.

Children have limited access to activities within the home. Although children can access some activities within the home, they are unable to access additional toys and art and crafts as these are locked away in cupboards. Furthermore, the kitchen is kept locked. This is not captured in children's care plans. Activity records for one child over a three-month period lacked detail and does not demonstrate high levels of aspiration for children.

Each child's bedroom has some items personal to them for example, duvet covers and some pictures. However, curtain poles were left without curtains, and wardrobes in children's bedrooms are locked, meaning children cannot access their clothes or toys.

Staff are not equipped with the necessary skills to ensure children can communicate and raise concerns. Staff have not had the necessary training in children's individual communication methods. Staff rely on children pointing or taking them to what children would like. During the inspection, no means of communication aids were observed being used with the children. This leaves children at risk of harm as they have not been provided with the necessary means to communicate.

Families appreciate the service provided by the home, and some children have made progress in some aspects of their lives. However, staffing insufficiency has impacted on the care and protection of children. The shortfalls in staffing levels means that children cannot access visits to the home and children's visits to the home have been cancelled.

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

The inspector was aware during this inspection that serious child protection allegations were being investigated by the appropriate authorities. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate allegations of this kind, actions taken by the setting in response to the allegations(s) were considered (where appropriate)

alongside other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform the inspectors' judgements.

Staff do not know how to safeguard children. Staff spoken to by the inspector during the inspection did not know how to report safeguarding concerns appropriately. There has been minimal action by managers and leaders to ensure that staff understand good safeguarding practice. Staff do not understand their safeguarding responsibilities, and this leaves children at risk of harm.

Senior managers while aware of concerns around staff practice have failed to take appropriate and timely action to review the safeguarding culture in the home to ensure that children accessing the service are not at risk of harm. The previous regulation 12 requirement raised at the last inspection in February 2022 has not been met.

Marks and injuries to children have not been recorded or reported appropriately. There is a lack of detail in recording and insufficient professional curiosity demonstrated by managers.

Staff record incidents of children's behaviours. However, records do not include enough detail. For example, staff do not record how children are directed, or guided by staff or the duration of the incident. Furthermore, children are not always given the opportunity to speak to an independent person who has not been involved in the incident. This is a missed opportunity to reflect on practice and reduce further incidents.

Safer recruitment checks for staff are not in place to ensure that children are protected from unsuitable people working in the home. For example, staff recruitment files do not clearly demonstrate that identification checks or gaps in employment have been explored.

Weekly checks of the home are completed and a maintenance team repair items within the home in a timely manner. However, the roof is damaged and leaders and managers could not demonstrate any actions taken to repair this in a timely way.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Leaders and managers have poor oversight of the home. This has resulted in poor practice and inadequate standards of care for the children who access the short breaks home. The manager has limited oversight of records and care practices. This means that there are gaps in reporting and recording safeguarding concerns, children's health needs, and behaviour management incidents. The manager has failed to detect or address the issues identified in the inspection.

Leaders and managers failed to notify Ofsted of an incident that involved a serious allegation. This was not reported to relevant external agencies. Senior leaders were unable to provide evidence that any action had been taken. Failure to report such concerns prevents external scrutiny and oversight to ensure that children are safe.

The registered manager has a development plan for the home which identifies actions to improve the quality of care provided to children. However, there hasn't been any progress in implementing the actions. Furthermore, the responsible individual completes monthly audits to help improve the oversight of the home. However, this additional layer of monitoring has failed to identify several gaps and errors in records and plans.

Staffing insufficiency has impacted on the care of children. For example, during the inspection, staffing shortages occurred due to sickness and this resulted in only agency staff being available to work in the home. Consequently, the decision was made to cancel the visits for the children who were due to attend.

Managers seek feedback from parents and professionals on the quality of care provided at the home. Following a review for one child, communication between the home, family, and school was implemented through weekly e-mails, however, the home has failed to provide weekly feedback.

Staff told the inspector they feel supported and receive regular supervision. However, the quality of supervision is insufficient, staff do not receive a good induction, and review meetings during their probationary period are not consistently held and do not provide opportunities for staff to develop.

The manager has failed to send the homes statement of purpose to Ofsted each time it has been updated. This prevents the regulator from having the most up to date information about the home.

On 16 March 2023 Ofsted issued a notice to suspend the children's home.

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—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>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;</p> <p>help each child to understand how to keep safe;</p> <p>have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm;</p> <p>manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other;</p> <p>understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person;</p> <p>take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and</p> <p>are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies.</p> <p>that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health; and</p> <p>that the effectiveness of the home's child protection policies is monitored regularly.</p> <p>(Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(d)(e))</p>	<p>30 April 2023</p>

<p>In particular, ensure that staff understand and implement safeguarding procedures. Ensure that staff understand how to safeguard children.</p> <p>In particular, ensure that any repairs to the home are completed in a timely way.</p>	
<p>The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that—</p> <p>helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose;</p> <p>ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child;</p> <p>ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child;</p> <p>ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child;</p> <p>understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home;</p> <p>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13(1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(h))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that there is enough staff to care for children, that provides continuity of care.</p> <p>In particular, ensure that monitoring and review systems are effective in improving the quality of care in the home.</p>	<p>30 April 2023</p>
<p>The registered person must ensure that—</p>	<p>30 April 2023</p>

<p>children can access all appropriate areas of the children's home's premises; and</p> <p>any limitation placed on a child's privacy or access to any area of the home's premises—</p> <p>is necessary and proportionate;</p> <p>allows children as much freedom as is possible when balanced against the need to protect them and keep them safe. (Regulation 21(b)(c)(ii)(iv))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that children are able to access activities safely in the home. Risk assessments should identify if areas of the home need to be restricted.</p>	
<p>The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ("the statement of purpose") which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1.</p> <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(1)(3)(a)(b))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that the statement of purpose is sent to Ofsted each time it is updated.</p>	30 April 2023
<p>The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on—</p> <p>mutual respect and trust;</p> <p>an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>meet each child's behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child's relevant plans;</p>	30 April 2023

<p>encourage each child to take responsibility for the child's behaviour, in accordance with the child's age and understanding. (Regulation 11(1)(a)(c)(2)(a)(i)(iii))</p> <p>In particular, ensure children's plans are individual to their needs.</p>	
<p>The children's views, wishes and feelings standard The children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who— develop positive relationships with them; engage with them; and 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— ensure that staff— ascertain and consider each child's views, wishes and feelings, and balance these against what they judge to be in the child's best interests when making decisions about the child's care and welfare; help each child to express views, wishes and feelings; help each child to understand how the child's views, wishes and feelings have been taken into account and give the child reasons for decisions in relation to the child; regularly consult children, and seek their feedback, about the quality of the home's care; help each child to understand how the child's privacy will be respected and the circumstances when it may have to be limited; help each child to prepare for any review of the child's relevant plans and to make the child's views, wishes and feelings known for the purposes of that review; and ensure that each child— is enabled to provide feedback to, and raise issues with, a relevant person about the support and services that the child receives; (Regulation 7(1)(a)(b)(c)(2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(b)(i))</p> <p>In particular, ensure children have the communication aids to regularly consult children.</p>	<p>30 April 2023</p>
<p>The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The requirements are that— full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32(1)(3)(d))</p>	<p>30 April 2023</p>

<p>In particular, a satisfactory explanation of any gaps in employment, in writing.</p>	
<p>The registered person must —</p> <p>ensure that each employee completes an appropriate induction;</p> <p>ensure that each permanent appointment of an employee is subject to the satisfactory completion of a period of probation; and</p> <p>The registered person must ensure that all employees—</p> <p>undertake appropriate continuing professional development;</p> <p>receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33(1)(a)(b)(4)(a)(b)</p> <p>In particular, ensure that staff have an appropriate induction, supervision and professional development.</p>	<p>30 April 2023</p>

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, 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: 1271380

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: Samantha Oliver

Registered manager: Stuart Plimsaul

Inspector

Hannah Cox, Social Care Inspector

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