

2502333

Registered provider: Brighter Futures for Children Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is run by a local authority and provides short breaks for up to six children at any one time. The home provides care to children with learning disabilities and/or physical disabilities and/or sensory impairment.

The home currently provides short breaks to 33 children. During this inspection, there were four children accessing the service across the two days.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since May 2022.

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 November 2023

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: 25 October 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25/10/2022	Full	Outstanding
20/07/2021	Full	Outstanding
12/03/2020	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
03/12/2019	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children enjoy new and exciting experiences during their stays. The staff ensure that children are supported to enjoy different activities in the home and out in the local community. Children have participated in litter picking and other fundraising activities. Children's families have been invited to special events, such as a recent 'Proud Award' event in which children were praised and their achievements celebrated. Opportunities such as this allow children to create fond memories that involve their families.

Staff are keen to ensure that children's needs are well met. They work in partnership with social care, health and education professionals. They have a good understanding of children's individual needs. This is gained from quality time spent with the children, from attending their review meetings and from regular communication with the children's parents. Staff are committed to supporting children's development. They review targets set by education staff and develop realistic goals in line with them. When goals are achieved by children, new goals are set by staff. This demonstrates a strong commitment from staff to support children's development and ongoing progress.

Children's parents and social care professionals were positive about the quality of care and support provided to the children by staff. Children were said to have made progress in different areas, such as their communication and independence skills, which has helped to better prepare some children for later life. A parent expressed that they value their child's stays at the home. This was said to be a 'lifeline' for their family. The parent has confidence in the staff's ability to care for their child well.

Children's individuality is recognised, and their rights are promoted. Staff encourage verbal communication from children and use communication aids to support children who are non-verbal to express themselves and make choices. Children's understanding of diversity is creatively promoted in different ways. Culture days take place in which children are introduced to foods from different cultures.

Long-standing, committed staff who have a good understanding of the children's needs and their different ways of communicating guide newer staff. This helps to ensure that children receive consistent care in line with their needs and encourages positive relationships between the children and newer staff.

Children benefit from enjoyable stays in a spacious home where different activities are offered. These include arts and crafts, playing on the keyboard, spending time in the sensory room or jumping on the trampoline in the side garden. Some areas, such as the sensory room, downstairs wet room and rear garden, remain in need of refurbishment since the home's last inspection. This has been an area of great focus for the registered manager, who has successfully secured funding for the refurbishments and developed clear plans to progress this work. In any case, the

registered manager and staff have ensured that the home conditions have not detracted from the children's positive experiences during their stays.

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

Staff are mindful of children's vulnerabilities and sensitively care for them. They seek to understand how children are feeling through their behaviours and use communication aids to support children who are non-verbal to express themselves and make choices. Children's plans and risk assessments reflect their needs well and clearly guide staff about how to provide children with good-quality, individualised care.

Staff ensure that children's health needs are met. There are effective processes in place to ensure the safe management of children's medication. As a result, medication errors rarely occur. Audio and video monitoring systems are used in line with children's health needs as indicated in their support plans, with consent from children's parents. The use of these monitoring systems is appropriately limited to the management of complex health needs.

Children's parents and social care professionals are confident that challenging situations involving children are well managed by staff. A social care professional reported that children's risk assessments are developed with input from parents and carers. This ensures that staff have a good understanding of potential triggers for children, the challenging behaviours they may present and de-escalation techniques that may prove successful. Staff also ensure that social care professionals receive timely updates when incidents occur. This ensures a collaborative approach, with prompt action being taken to ensure children's safety and well-being.

Children are cared for by a stable staff team, supplemented by agency workers. Employment checks for permanent staff are carried out to a good standard, and references are obtained for agency staff. However, for two workers, records do not contain evidence of some checks carried out by the recruitment agency. For example, records do not show that managers have seen proof of their identity. In addition, not all gaps in the employment history of one agency staff member have been explored. As a result, the manager does not have access to all the relevant information relating to agency staff's suitability to work with vulnerable children.

Regular health and safety checks are carried out in the home and help to ensure the safety of children and others.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager strives to ensure that children are supported to enjoy new experiences that create fond memories. She has been successful in achieving this aim through creative events and programmes that have been arranged in the home. This includes the home being transformed to create the effect of children travelling to different countries and experiencing food from different cultures. The manager also arranged for children to get involved in litter picking in the community as well as

other fundraising events. Consequently, children have had enriching experiences and have been able to safely enjoy the world around them as active members of the local community.

The manager's vision for the home is supported by the staff and a responsible individual appointed in April 2023. The responsible individual supports the manager well by holding regular supervision sessions and working alongside her in the home at times.

The manager ensures that there is regular discussion about the children's needs during team meetings. Staff can discuss any challenges that they have faced when caring for the children and share examples of good practice. Staff are consulted regarding new referrals. Their views inform decision-making about the groups of children that attend together, with consideration given to children's needs and known behaviours. This way of working helps to maintain a positive culture in the home, as staff know that their views are important.

Children are cared for by staff who feel well supported by their managers. A recent 'team away' day took place to encourage team bonding, reflect on practice and highlight areas for improvement. Staff are also supported through regular supervision sessions and are generally provided with a wide variety of training to enable them to meet the children's needs effectively. This includes training on autism, epilepsy awareness and medication administration. However, some refresher training was overdue for several staff, and the training log is not kept up to date. This hinders the manager's oversight in this area.

While recruiting to fill three staff vacancies, the manager has arranged for an agency member of staff to work in the home for a fixed period. This decision was made with the children in mind to provide them with greater consistency, while recruitment is in progress.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the recruitment of staff safeguards children and minimises potential risks to them. This includes ensuring that they have greater oversight of employment checks carried out by agencies for agency staff. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)
- The registered person should ensure that records demonstrate that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs and that the registered manager understands their key role in the training and development of staff in the home. Staff are to complete refresher training when due, and training records are to be kept updated. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11)

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: 2502333

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Brighter Futures for Children Limited

Registered provider address: Reading B C Civic Offices, Bridge Street, Reading, Berkshire RG1 2LU

Responsible individual: Wasiq Sumbal

Registered manager: Samantha Whitehouse

Inspectors

Sasha Reid, Social Care Inspector

Karen Flanagan de Martinez, Social Care Inspector

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