

SC044259

Registered provider: Child First Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a privately run children's home which can provide care for up to five children. The statement of purpose states that the home 'provides 24-hour residential accommodation and care across 52 weeks of the year to young people who have had difficulties with family relationships and dynamics, and have experienced significant trauma in their lives which they have not yet been able to process'.

There is no registered manager at the home. The post has been vacant since 26 November 2018.

Inspection dates: 18 to 19 June 2019

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: 2 May 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
02/05/2018	Full	Good
12/09/2017	Full	Good
10/02/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
27/09/2016	Full	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 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</p> <p>promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 13 (2)(c))</p> <p>This is with specific reference to ensuring that all staff are competent to work with children who may display self-harming behaviours.</p>	29/07/2019
<p>The registered person must ensure that a record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response and the outcome of any investigation. (Regulation 39 (3))</p>	29/07/2019

Recommendations

- The behaviour management strategy should be understood and applied at all times by staff, and must be kept under review and revised where appropriate. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.34)

This is with specific reference to ensuring that staff have a clear understanding of any behaviour management model that leaders and managers expect them to implement in practice.

- Whenever possible, staff in day-to-day contact with children should include staff from the different gender groups. Where the home's Statement of Purpose makes it explicit that the home uses staff of one sex only, clear guidance will need to be in place and followed as to how children are enabled to maintain relationships with people of a different gender. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.22)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

In most cases, the children and young people at this home develop strong, trusting relationships with the staff caring for them. There has been a renewed focus on creating a nurturing environment where children receive individualised care and feel valued. A child's social worker commented that the staff have the skills to recognise how the child is feeling 'just by observing his facial expressions'.

New initiatives, such as a pay it forward event, provide children and staff with the opportunity to celebrate their interests and skills and to share these with the whole group. These events promote a sense of cohesion and belonging, which helps children to feel valued and increases their self-confidence.

Despite this very good practice, there has been one occasion when a member of staff did not respond appropriately when there was a self-harm incident in the home. The negative impact of this was partly negated by the prompt action that staff took to address the situation. Leaders and managers have taken steps to ensure that this practice will not be repeated.

The health needs of children are appropriately met. There is a strong emphasis on promoting the mental health and emotional well-being of children. The manager takes a proactive approach to identifying, and referring to, therapeutic services which have the greatest chance of engaging the child. This practice is enhanced by the small, caring actions taken by staff on a day-to-day basis, particularly when a child is feeling distressed.

All of the children and young people have suitable education provision. Some are making exceptional progress considering the difficulties that they have experienced in the past. The staff engage positively with teaching staff and work in partnership to ensure that the children are well prepared for school activities. The support and encouragement provided by the staff help the children to manage the anxieties that they have regarding school.

The staff listen to the children and act upon any concerns that they may raise. However, the staff and managers do not always recognise that the issue being raised amounts to a complaint. This also happened on one occasion when a parent raised a concern. Consequently, the complaints process, which is designed to provide a clear audit trail of the concern, the actions taken and how the matter was resolved, is not being effectively utilised.

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

The staff have a clear understanding of each child's vulnerabilities and how these could result in the child coming to harm. Risk management processes are strong and provide

staff with clear guidance on the strategies that they must adopt to keep children safe. Any weaknesses in child protection practice are quickly identified by leaders and managers and prompt action is taken to address these.

The staff demonstrate a commitment to empowering children with the knowledge and skills that they need to keep themselves safe. Key-work sessions are planned to meet the individual needs of the child and these take the child's abilities into consideration. The creative use of resources enhances the prospect that children will understand the risks that they may become exposed to when accessing the internet or when they are out in their local community.

Generally, the approach to promoting positive behaviour is effective. One child told the inspector that since moving to the home, he has learned how to manage his anger better and to not always use abusive language. There is a strong focus on de-escalating conflict in order to minimise the use of physical interventions. Despite this good practice, the partial introduction of a specific behaviour management model led to two staff misunderstanding how they should respond to children in challenging situations.

Children rarely go missing from the home. This is a significant achievement for some of the children living at the home, as prior to admission they had an established history of going missing from care. Children's free time away from the home is carefully planned and introduced gradually. In the event that a child does go missing, staff have clear procedures to follow, and these are implemented in practice.

The relationships that staff form with the children are a strong protective factor. With one exception, all the children said that they would speak to staff about any worries that they may have. Their case records demonstrate that this is the case. One young person said that since her key worker recently left the home, she is unsure of who she could share any concerns with. Staff take swift and effective action when a child does express a concern. This includes liaising with all relevant agencies to bring about a resolution.

The staff effectively instigate the organisation's whistleblowing policy when they have concerns about the practice of a colleague. This has resulted in leaders and managers taking steps to ensure that practice improves and that the quality of care being provided to the children is not undermined.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The former registered manager resigned from her post in November 2018 to take up promotion within the organisation. The current manager came into post in November 2018 and the transition was effectively managed. The manager was awaiting the outcome of her recent Ofsted interview to become registered when this inspection took place. The new manager has focused on building a more nurturing culture at the home, and the current staff team see this as a positive step forward.

The systems for monitoring the quality of care being provided are strong and inclusive.

Leaders and managers have been highly effective at identifying when staff practice falls short of the standards expected. The monitoring of serious incidents has enhanced this process. Weak staff performance is challenged in supervision and through formal processes when needed.

Leaders and managers have high aspirations for the children in this home. They effectively challenge other agencies who are perceived not to be meeting their responsibilities for meeting children's needs. This approach has had positive results and has ensured that the children are provided with the most appropriate resources for meeting their educational needs.

The staff team members are motivated and feel well supported. There are always sufficient numbers of staff on duty to ensure that the children's needs are met and that they can be given additional support when they are at their most vulnerable. There is not always a mixed gender staff team on duty, and this has caused one young person some anxiety.

Since the last inspection in May 2018, there has been a focus on improving the admissions process. The assessments undertaken regarding the likely impact that a new admission will have on the existing group of children have greatly improved. The current group of children and young people are settled and, in most cases, making strong progress. This is partly attributable to the developmental work that has been undertaken on the admissions process.

Leaders and managers recognise the need to ensure that staff have the knowledge and skills required to care for vulnerable children and to keep them safe. The organisation provides a good formal training programme. In addition, training on emerging issues is delivered in team meetings. This ensures that any gaps in the knowledge and skills of the staff, particularly in relation to meeting the needs of children who have recently been admitted, are quickly addressed.

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: SC044259

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Child First Limited

Registered provider address: c/o 40 Oxford Road, Worthing, West Sussex BN11 1UT

Responsible individual: Terry Goble

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Stephen Collett: social care inspector

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