

1278806

Registered provider: Coventry City Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority home provides care for up to four children with social and emotional difficulties. There is a suitably qualified registered manager in post.

Inspection dates: 27 and 28 June 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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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: 23 November 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
23/11/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
15/03/2022	Full	Good
15/01/2020	Full	Good
12/02/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

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

At the time of this inspection, there were two children living at the home. Both children have lived at the home for over four years and have made progress from their starting points. Since the last inspection, one child has moved into the home. The child has recently moved out of the home, as staff were unable to keep them and the other children safe.

There has been a significant increase in incidents between staff and children since the assurance inspection in February 2023. This has resulted in fractured relationships and, on occasion, has resulted in children harming each other and staff. Incidents have also impacted on children's routines, including night-time and sleep routines, which has affected children's motivation to attend education, children's emotional well-being and their overall feeling of safety.

Prior to admitting one child into the home, managers failed to fully consider the child's risks and the impact on other children already living in the home. There was a lack of professional curiosity and consultation with the child's previous homes. As a result, managers did not have all the information they needed to establish if they could safely meet all the child's and other children's needs in a group living environment. In addition, staff were unable to effectively plan care, or establish routines, boundaries and strategies for the child. This lack of planning has contributed towards a period of instability in the home.

Children have caused considerable damage to the home. While managers do have a plan in place to repair the damage, some areas of the home are also looking tired and unkempt. For example, the rear patio and drive were untidy and in need of weeding, the front door was damaged and there was broken furniture in the front garden. This does not provide children with a welcoming and homely environment. Moreover, this does not help children to feel safe and secure in their home.

Despite difficulties, children's education outcomes are positive. Both children are in full-time education with good attendance. When children have difficulties attending school, staff work closely with education professionals to ensure that bespoke plans are put in place, so that children still have access to education. This supports the children to progress educationally.

Staff support children to attend their routine health appointments and will seek specialist support when required. This supports children to have good physical and mental health.

Staff ensure that children enjoy a range of activities, both in and outside the home. Children are encouraged to develop their own hobbies and interests. For example, one child is taking rap and music lessons. They also take part in weekly work

experience. Another child has had guitar lessons and has taken part in a concert at college. Because of this, children's confidence and self-esteem improve.

Staff support children to prepare for their transition to adulthood. One child takes part in a weekly housing project, where they learn independence skills. They have also taken part in a cooking course and now regularly cook their own meals.

Staff support children to spend time with their families and friends. This ensures that children continue to build relationships and attachments with those people who are significant to them.

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

Staff are not always able to de-escalate children's behaviours. Some high-risk behavioural incidents have occurred. As a result, children do not always feel safe living in the home. Staff have been injured during incidents, which has led to increased use of agency staff. As a result, consistency of care has been affected.

Managers and staff know the children well. They have a good understanding of children's risk, behaviours and the actions they need to take to keep children safe. However, staff do not consistently implement boundaries. For example, staff have not ensured that children have handed their devices in every night. This inconsistent approach does not support children to develop improved behaviour or contribute to children feeling safe. The manager and staff are aware of this, and they have taken action to reaffirm the boundaries with children.

Staff do not always ensure that medication is stored securely. On one occasion, staff stored controlled medication in the staff office fridge. While this did not impact on children at the time, it did have the potential to do so, as children do access the office. The manager has addressed this shortfall in practice with staff.

Staff respond quickly when children go missing from the home or are away from the home without authority. Staff follow missing-from-home procedures. They search for children and consult with the local police until children are found. When children return, staff warmly welcome them. However, managers have not ensured that an independent person completes return home interviews. This is a missed opportunity for children to have someone independent to talk to, particularly if they have any worries or concerns that are contributing to them being absent from the home.

Managers take prompt action when there are allegations or complaints. The manager ensures that information is shared swiftly with appropriate professionals to avoid delay and ensure that children are protected from harm. This helps children to be confident to raise any concerns, as they know staff will take them seriously.

Physical intervention is used as a last resort. There is management oversight on all incidents. Following the use of physical restraint, managers ensure that children and staff are spoken to. This ensures that intervention, when used, is necessary and

proportionate. However, the inspector found one record to have contradictory information. The managers' review did not identify this.

Staff talk to children about important topics, such as internet safety, bullying and allegations. This supports children to be informed and helps them to keep themselves safe.

Managers follow safer recruitment practices. As a result, they have confidence that the staff working in the home are safe.

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

The registered manager has been absent from the home since October 2022. The deputy manager has covered the management of the home in her absence. This has helped to maintain consistency and positive staff morale. The deputy manager is extremely caring and committed. She wants the home and children to do well. She encourages the staff team to share this ethos. However, gaps in the deputy manager's knowledge and experience have contributed to the management shortfalls identified during this inspection.

The managers' monitoring systems for the home are not always effective. While the deputy manager has a good working knowledge of the home and the children, their monitoring does not consistently identify shortfalls and errors in the children's records. Managers also lack professional curiosity, particularly when considering admitting new children into the home. This has contributed to some poor decision-making, which has impacted on children's experiences. However, leaders and managers are reflective. They do have a good understanding of the strengths and are realistic about the development needs of the home. They have started to address some of the shortfalls, and are planning to do a full review of recent events to prevent reoccurrence and improve the quality of care children receive.

The statement of purpose clearly demonstrates the aims and objectives of the home. This helps parents or placing authorities to have a clear understanding of the service's aims. However, this has not been sent to Ofsted, nor does it include the current names of staff who work in the home and their qualifications.

Most staff are positive about the support they receive from managers. Staff receive regular supervision and an annual appraisal. There are also regular reflective team meetings. These help staff to develop their practice and understand the way that the staff team works together.

The manager ensures that staff have training to meet the children's individual needs. Staff have a variety of skills, experience and qualifications. This ensures that all staff have the skills and training necessary to work with the children.

The manager has built positive relationships with professionals. This ensures effective communication and means that children receive the care that they need.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards'. The registered person must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff— provide to children living in the home the physical necessities they need in order to live there comfortably; ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(vii)(c)(i)) This specifically relates to the managers ensuring that the environment is improved and meets the needs of the children living in the home.	18 August 2023
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)) In particular, the manager must ensure that they complete due diligence and only accept placements where they are satisfied that the home can respond effectively to the child's assessed needs and where they have fully considered the impact that the child will have on the existing children.	18 August 2023

The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. 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; manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child’s welfare; and 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)(iv)(vi)(b)) In particular, managers must ensure that when children are impacting on other children’s safety, well-being and causing them harm, managers must take prompt and effective action to reduce this risk and keep children safe. Staff must also ensure that children receive consistent care, with clear and consistent boundaries. In addition, staff should encourage children to develop positive relationships with each other to support group living.	18 August 2023
The registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received into the children’s home. In particular the registered person must ensure that— medicines kept in the home are stored in a secure place so as to prevent any child from having unsupervised access to them. (Regulation 23 (1) (2)(a))	18 August 2023
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. The registered person must—	18 August 2023

keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and 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)) In particular, managers must ensure that the statement of purpose is updated when there are changes in staffing and forwarded to Ofsted.	
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— 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; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child; 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; 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)(e)(f)(h)) This relates to ensuring that suitable systems are in place to monitor how the home is being run and the care provided. This also relates to ensuring that the use of agency staff does not impact on the consistency and the continuity of care provided to children.	18 August 2023

Recommendation

- The registered provider should ensure that when a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority must provide an opportunity for the child to have an independent return home interview. Homes should take account of information provided by such interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect each child. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)

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: 1278806

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Coventry City Council

Registered provider address: Coventry City Council, Council House, Earl Street, Coventry CV1 5RR

Responsible individual: Angela Whitrick

Registered manager: Denise Flude

Inspector

Sonia Sullivan, Social Care Inspector

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