

2496288

Registered provider: Wolverhampton City Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and managed by a local authority. The home provides care and accommodation for up to four children with complex needs. Three children have left the home since the last inspection and there is currently one child living in the home.

The manager has been appointed permanently and has submitted their application to be registered.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

We last visited this setting on 23 June 2021 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 2 to 3 August 2021

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	inadequate
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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: 21 April 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection:

Compliance notices under regulations 12 and 13 were issued following the full inspection in April 2021. These were considered to be met at a monitoring visit on 23 June 2021.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/04/2021	Full	Inadequate

Inspection judgements

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

Staff know children who live in the home well and respect them as individuals. Children's wishes, feelings and interests are well considered and responded to by staff. For example, one child wanted to attend army cadets and staff quickly put this provision in place. This results in children feeling that they are listened to in their home.

Staff have improved the environment over time. There are some rooms that are now inviting, homely and child friendly. In contrast, some areas remain echoey and out of date, and so appear institutionalised. The design of children's bedroom doors means that they have a gap around them, and people can see into bedrooms from the corridors. Consequently, this compromises children's privacy in their bedrooms.

Staff have good relationships with other professionals, but these are not always effective. Staff are keen to advocate for children, but this does not always gain the response children and staff need. This means that there are delays in decisions regarding different aspects of children's care.

Children move on from the home in a planned and thoughtful way. Staff put in place personalised transition plans to help with this. Staff ensure that there is time for children to reflect and celebrate their achievements. This thoughtful approach means that children experience positive endings when they leave the home.

Staff talk to children about their interests and put in place positive activities to develop these. Staff support children to have 'firsts'. For example, staff take children to restaurants and to new activities. Children appreciate the efforts that staff go to for them. Staff do this because they know this helps children to make memories they can hold for their lifetime.

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

Since the last full inspection, managers have put in place clear protocols for staff to follow when children are missing from the home. However, staff did not follow this when a child went missing, leading to a delay in them returning to the home. In addition, there are some key documents relating to children going missing that are not kept up to date. This has the potential to leave children at risk of harm.

Staff and managers share safeguarding concerns with children's social workers. However, they do not persist when they do not get an adequate response regarding these. For example, the deputy manager shared a concern about bruising on a child but did not pursue this when they did not get a response. This was not escalated until the manager returned from leave nine days later. Despite this escalation, it still

took a further 12 days to get a response. This lack of persistence means children are not kept safe in the context of their lives outside the home.

The home manager completes comprehensive risk assessments that guide staff in their work with children. While the home manager was on leave, senior managers decided to admit a child to the home at short notice. Managers and leaders did not provide all the necessary information to staff prior to the child arriving. They also did not provide a full risk assessment. This meant that staff did not have all the essential information to care for the child during his first days in the home and potentially compromised others' safety from risks relating to COVID-19.

Senior managers take swift and appropriate action to safeguard children when concerns are raised about staff. They work closely with relevant professionals and make considered decisions. As a result, managers protect children from staff whose practice may be unacceptable.

Managers and senior team members have used creative approaches to develop staff's safeguarding knowledge. This has included using scenario-based discussions, quizzes and written exercises. A small number of staff have not been able to integrate this into their work and this has led to shortfalls in children's care.

Managers ensure that they have all relevant information about staff before they start working in the home. In addition, all staff have now completed an appropriate qualification to work with children. This means that the home now has a qualified and suitable workforce.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Leaders and managers do not put adequate management arrangements in place when the home's manager is on leave. This failing has meant that an injury to a child was not followed up with their social worker in a timely manner. Managers, including the home's manager, have also not taken action with staff who did not adhere to a child's missing-from-care protocol. This is a failing of leaders and managers to ensure that all staff know the requirements of their role.

Monitoring in the home is not sufficient. Managers have now embedded a system to oversee daily and weekly tasks. However, when the manager is not in the home, oversight of incident records and safeguarding concerns is not effective. Managers have not maintained progress against recent improvements and so practice remains variable. This results in children not receiving the best care they can, particularly at the times when they really need it.

Staff receive supervision regularly as well as having one-off meetings when there are concerns. However, supervisors do not always robustly challenge poor practice and set clear actions and timescales for improvement. This means that staff are not held to account in a timely way and their practice does not improve at the pace needed.

Staff show considerable resolve to gain information they need about children. Staff also attempt to hold other professionals to account when they do not make decisions quickly enough that affect children's day-to-day lives. While this is admirable, managers do not escalate concerns effectively when they do not get a response. Recently, this has led to children not being able to maintain contact with friends. This has also led to restrictions on their activities and freedoms.

Staff do not work cohesively as a team. They report that there is a lack of consistency across shift teams that is unhelpful for children. Managers use team meetings to discuss different approaches to work with children. However, the shift team structure means that staff do not routinely experience each other's practice. As a result, this limits the opportunity for staff to learn from each other. This also leads to increased opportunity for children to experience inconsistent care.

Managers have failed to address requirements issued at the previous inspection. This includes not ensuring that all relevant person's views are included in reviews of the quality of care and clear actions are devised that drive improvements to the quality of care that children receive. As a result, managers are not consistently delivering an improving service.

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
In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 5 (c)) In particular, staff and managers should escalate concerns about a lack of response to issues of children's safety and concerns about not receiving essential information and decisions from social workers in a timely manner.	7 September 2021
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— have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(iii)(v)(vi)) In particular, staff must be able to recognise safeguarding concerns about children and act accordingly to take effective action, following children's plans and protocols as required.	7 September 2021

This action must be taken to mitigate risk to children in a timely way.	
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. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)) In particular, there must be management arrangements in place to support the home at all times. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	7 September 2021
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— ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)) In particular, managers must ensure that there is consistency of practice across shift teams.	7 September 2021
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	7 September 2021

promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(h)) In particular, managers must have clear monitoring and review systems in place to identify poor practice and improve this.	
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that arrangements are in place to— manage and review the placement of each child in the home; and that each child's relevant plans are followed. (Regulation 14 (1)(a) (2)(b)(ii)(c)) In particular, managers must ensure that all relevant information is gained before a child moves into the home and that this information is shared with staff before they begin to care for that child. In addition, when children's placements are longer than planned, the manager must request a review of these plans.	7 September 2021
The registered person must ensure that— the privacy of children is appropriately protected. (Regulation 21(a)) In particular, the provider must ensure that children's bedroom doors close appropriately so that they have privacy in their bedrooms.	7 September 2021
The registered person must ensure that all employees— receive practice-related supervision by a person with	7 September 2021

appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(b)) In particular, supervision should be used to raise any concerns with staff and clear actions put in place that are reviewed at an appropriate interval to ensure that practice improves.	
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality of care review") at least once every 6 months. In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating— the quality of care provided for children; the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. The system referred to in paragraph (2) must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff. (Regulation 45 (1) (2)(a)(b)(c) (5)) In particular, managers must ensure that all relevant person's views are included in reviews of the quality of care and clear actions are devised that drive improvements to the quality of care that children receive. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	7 September 2021

Recommendation

- The registered person should seek to develop the physical environment of the home so that there is a homely rather than an 'institutional' environment. ('Guide to children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

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: 2496288

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Wolverhampton City Council

Registered provider address: Civic Centre, St Peters Square, Wolverhampton, West Midlands WV1 1SH

Responsible individual: Rachel King

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Karol Keenan, Social Care Inspector

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