

2547847

Registered provider: Cheshire West And Chester Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is run by a local authority. It is registered for two younger children who may experience social or emotional difficulties. The provider is working with an external service to provide children with therapeutic care.

The home was registered in May 2020. The current manager was registered with Ofsted in April 2021.

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.

Inspection dates: 26 to 27 July 2021

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: Not applicable

Overall judgement at last inspection: Not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: Not applicable

Recent inspection history

Not previously inspected

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The staff team delivers warm and nurturing care to the children as part of a wraparound therapeutic approach. They work in partnership with an external provider, who delivers an emotional health and well-being service to children. The service also provides practice guidance to the staff team to ensure a consistent therapeutic approach that helps children to thrive.

Care plans are comprehensive and are detailed. Pre-admission planning is robust. The needs of a child already living at the home are carefully considered. Where possible, there is a clear transition plan to prepare children for moving to the home. This helps to allay any fears children may have.

Children's physical and emotional well-being is promoted well. The staff use guidance from the external provider to understand and to respond to children's emotional needs sensitively. Children's health plans clearly document their individual needs, their attendance at appointments and their progress. Children are up to date with their immunisations. However, their health plans do not include these records. The staff seek advice from external health professionals, including the specialist nurse for children looked after, to help children to improve their diet. Children are growing their own vegetables in the garden to encourage them to eat their own produce.

The staff work well with schools to support children to achieve. One child was helped to transition to a new school and to increase attendance from short periods to full time. Staff support children within the school environment, if necessary. The staff recognise the importance of school being a constant for children. As a result, plans continue for a child to attend a high school further away to remain with her friends.

Children are supported to see their friends and their family members, where possible. The staff reassure children when they are unable to see important people in their lives. They work with other agencies to promote communication with family members so that it is safe for children.

Children's views are always considered carefully by the staff and are discussed in staff team meetings. The manager writes to children to let them know what decisions have been made. For example, a child who said that the children's guide did not include pictures of the garden is now helping to update it, to include everything that the children think is important. There are pet rabbits at the home, as requested by the children.

Children have independent advocates to ensure that their views are considered and to help children understand the decisions made about their lives. A child who expected to stay at the home for a short time, now says that if they cannot return to

the care of their family, then they want to stay at the home. This demonstrates how children are helped to understand their circumstances so that they feel settled and invest in where they live.

The children's presence is clearly seen in the home. Their art is displayed proudly, and they have helped to create an activity planner for the summer holidays. There are plentiful books, toys and games to encourage reading and play. Children help to write out the shopping list so that their favourite foods and treats are included. They are clearly at the centre of the staff team's practice.

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

Children say they feel safe and that they can speak to the staff about any worries that they have. The staff have introduced a 'worry monster', and a child said this was helpful when it was hard to put worries into words. Children write a note to the staff to ask for help, which they put into the mouth of 'worry monster' and then leave it by the office door. Children say this means that the staff will speak with them and find ways to help them talk about their feelings. Children were observed seeking out reassurance and support from staff during the inspection.

The staff understand children's risks and vulnerabilities well. They understand their roles and responsibilities in keeping children safe. The staff team consistently follows strategies that are clearly documented in children's individualised risk and behaviour management plans. They help children to understand the boundaries that are in place and why these are there, to keep them safe.

Children are praised regularly and rewarded for making positive choices and achieving their targets. They have star charts to help them to see their progress and to choose their own rewards to work towards, such as games and toys. The staff have also introduced 'well done' books, to document children's achievements. These help children to build their confidence and their self-esteem.

Effective strategies mean that the use of physical intervention and sanctions is minimal. When necessary, action that is taken to manage behaviours is well documented, with appropriate management oversight. Debriefs take place with the staff involved after a physical intervention, to review practice. Direct work is completed to help children understand why the staff need to restrain them to keep safe or why a sanction is used.

The review of the premises and the home's location is updated regularly to include new information that may impact on children's safety. Children live in a safe environment. One child can undo the restrictor to a bedroom window. Although this does not present as an immediate safety concern, it was reported to the maintenance team for repair straightaway.

There have been no complaints made about the home. Children know how to complain if they need to. However, the home's statement of purpose does not include the full details of who to complain to outside of the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager has developed and has empowered a small team of enthusiastic, committed staff, who are clearly very child focused in their practice. The members of the staff team working during the inspection competently supported the visit in the manager's absence.

The staff welcome the guidance from the external practitioner to inform their practice. The staff's focus on providing high-quality care is evident in how they speak about the children and their genuine pride in children's achievements, however, small. They use staff team meetings effectively to discuss the small details which make a difference to children's experiences.

The staff say that they feel well supported by leaders and managers. One noted how the responsible individual had been in contact after an incident and how this made her feel valued. The staff receive reflective and good-quality supervision. They are given actions to help develop their professional practice, for example, in how to improve their recording. Some records contain language that is not helpful for children.

External professionals, including social workers, speak highly of the home. They say that children are cared for well and that there is good communication between the manager and the other agencies. One said, 'I can't fault [the staff team]; they've been amazing, even prior to [the child] moving in.'

The manager has established robust internal monitoring systems to review children's progress. She understands children's needs extremely well. She ensures that the staff deliver consistent care in line with their plans, in conjunction with the external therapeutic service. This promotes children's progress and positive experiences of living in the home.

The manager meets with other registered managers to discuss and to share good practice. She welcomes peer auditing to identify improvement. She is clearly aspirational for children and is constantly seeking ways to improve practice so that children receive high-quality care.

An independent person had not been commissioned to provide external monitoring of the home when it first opened. As a result, there was a delay in independent monitoring of practice to support understanding of any areas for development. Reports from visits have not always been sent promptly to the manager or to external agencies, including Ofsted.

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
The registered provider must appoint, at the registered provider's expense, a person ("the independent person") to visit and report on the children's home carried on by the registered provider. (Regulation 43 (1)) Specifically, this should be established at the time of registration.	10 September 2021
The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month. The independent person must provide a copy of the independent person's report to— HMCI; upon request, the local authority for the area in which the home is located; the placing authorities of children; the registered provider and, if applicable, the registered manager; and the responsible individual (if one is nominated). (Regulation 44 (1) (7) (a)(b)(c)(d)(e)). In particular, the report should be sent promptly to support the registered provider's understanding of the quality of care provided and identify actions to support continuous improvement. The report should also be sent to external agencies promptly.	10 September 2021

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children's records should be kept up to date in accordance with the regulations and Schedule Three, including details of children's immunisations. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)
- The registered person should ensure that information about the child is recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)
- The registered person should ensure that the statement of purpose includes the full details of who to contact if a person has a complaint. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 14, paragraph 3.5)
- The registered person should ensure that safety features, including window restrictors, are maintained. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.10)

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: 2547847

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Cheshire West & Chester Council, Council Offices, 4 Civic Way, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire CH65 0BE

Responsible individual: Judith Griffith

Registered manager: Laura Wright

Inspector

Karen Willson, Social Care Inspector

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