

2626053

Registered provider: Warrington Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a local authority home which is registered to provide care for up to six children with social and emotional difficulties. Admissions are made on both a planned and emergency basis. Children coming to live at the home are aged between 12 and 17 years. The home uses the No Wrong Door model, as part of the Strengthening Families, Protecting Children programme (SFPC). Children are provided with short-term care while their needs are assessed, and plans are made for their future permanence.

The registered manager has been in post since June 2021. The registered manager is on long-term, planned leave and therefore an interim manager is currently in post. The interim manager is not yet registered with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 July 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 24 January 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/01/2024	Full	Good
27/07/2022	Full	Good
22/02/2022	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

At the time of the inspection, there were three children living in the home.

Children receive good care that enables them to build trusting and positive relationships with staff members. Staff know the children well. Some children are already known to staff through outreach work completed with families. Children told inspectors they are happy living in the home and feel supported by staff. This helps to ensure that they make progress from their starting points.

Managers assess each child's needs before they move into the home. The initial assessment considers the compatibility of the needs of children who will live in the home together. Managers and staff support children's moves into the home, and children are involved in the process. Managers and staff complete assessments to ensure that there is effective care planning for those children moving on from the home. Staff speak to children about their plans for the future. However, some children have experienced unplanned endings when it has not been safe for them to return to the home due to serious incidents.

Staff speak to children to gain their wishes and views. Children are able to influence their day-to-day care experiences. Staff spend time listening to children and provide opportunities to talk about their care, recreational activities and food choices.

Managers and staff understand the importance of education and promote children's engagement. Staff work with education staff to reduce the barriers to learning. Staff are creative in engaging children in educational activities.

Children are supported to engage in a range of new activities and to access activities in their local community. Children are offered choices about the activities they would like to do. These experiences allow children new opportunities and help to increase their self-confidence. The staff help children to have positive experiences and improved outcomes.

Staff support children's health needs. Staff make referrals to appropriate services, such as substance misuse agencies, to help children lead healthier lifestyles. The home offers children access to psychological support and speech and language support as part of their model of working. This helps children to access additional support in relation to their emotional well-being and communication when required.

Children are supported to see the important people in their lives. Staff also work closely with children's family members and ensure that there is effective communication. This close working relationship supports children's return back to family. One parent spoke to inspectors about their child's experiences when living at the home and said, '[Name of child] has some excellent relationships with staff, and

they are still working with [the child] on outreach, and [the child] was always kept safe.'

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

Staff have a good understanding of each child's vulnerabilities and any concerns about their safety. Staff are vigilant and recognise signs that indicate that a child may be at risk of abuse or exploitation. Staff work well with a wide range of professionals to share risk and ensure that children are safe.

Managers and staff continually assess the risks for each child and take every necessary step to make sure that children are protected. Written assessments and plans provide clear information and guidance for staff. Managers and staff amend documentation when there are changes to children's risks and needs. Staff sign the amended plans to ensure they are aware of the changes. This helps staff know how to keep children safe.

Staff help children to be aware of risks and to manage their safety. Staff spend time talking to the children about important aspects of their lives, including healthy friendships, exploitation, substance misuse and managing their emotional well-being. This work has helped children to make more positive choices about their safety and build resilience. For one child, the support of staff resulted in a reduction in their self-injurious behaviours.

Managers and staff take decisive action when they have concerns about children's welfare, such as them going missing from home or if they have worries about their safety in the community. They actively look for children and welcome them back to the home. If there are concerns that children are under the influence of substances, staff ensure that they access medical advice and intervention as required. Staff work effectively with the police and health professionals to follow safety plans that manage and reduce risks to children.

Staff make sure that each child has clear and appropriate boundaries and expectations for their standards of behaviour. Staff deal with negative behaviour constructively and reinforce each child's positive behaviour through praise and rewards. Staff find the least intrusive way possible to help children to manage their emotions and behaviour. When there have been incidents where holding a child has been required, there are clear records in place. Both the children and staff are provided with the opportunity for a debrief following an incident, and this includes agency staff. This helps staff and children to reflect on the incident and gain additional support if required.

Incidents of bullying in the home are low. When incidents have occurred, managers and staff have taken action to address the issue. However, further direct work with a child who displayed bullying behaviour would have supported their understanding of the damaging consequences of this behaviour.

Door alarms are used on each exit door of the home and also on all children's bedrooms. Managers and staff are not assessing each child's individual needs and risks to consider whether a door alarm is necessary. This lack of assessment and review of the use of door alarms impacts children's privacy unnecessarily.

Safer recruitment practice is in place to ensure that only suitable people work in the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The interim manager provides clear and effective leadership. She is ambitious for children to live in a safe and supportive home where they can achieve better outcomes and lead happy and fulfilling lives. The staff share these high expectations and work hard to provide each child with the support and guidance that they need. One staff member commented, 'She [the manager] is absolutely committed and has the full backing of our fabulous team.'

The interim manager provides each member of staff with good support, guidance and encouragement. The management and staffing arrangements make sure that children build safe and stable relationships with the staff looking after them. There are currently several staff vacancies, and staff recruitment is currently taking place. Agency staff are used in the home, and the manager ensures that they understand how to support each child. The manager completes supervisions with agency staff, and they attend handovers, which helps to ensure that children receive continuity of care. Any concerns raised about staff practice have been dealt with effectively.

Staff receive regular supervision and also regular team meetings. This offers an opportunity for staff to critically reflect on their work with children. Children's needs and how to improve practice and the quality of care provided to children are at the heart of discussions.

Staff receive training to develop their knowledge and understanding of helping children. However, there are gaps in staff training to develop their understanding of the specific needs of children living in the home, such as substance misuse. The home has provided care to children with diagnosed conditions such as autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and learning needs. Further staff training is required to ensure that all staff understand how to support children with these specific needs. Furthermore, staff need to be enrolled onto appropriate qualifications in order to meet the timescales in line with the regulations.

The interim manager continually reviews the quality of care and has effective oversight. When shortfalls are identified, these are appropriately addressed. The interim manager supports staff's understanding, development and reflection to ensure that children receive a good quality of care and are supported and encouraged to make progress.

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, The 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 leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— 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 staff work as a team where appropriate; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(b) (2)(a)(b)(c)(e)(h)) In particular, leaders and managers should ensure that staff receive training specific to children's individual needs. Furthermore, leaders and managers should ensure that staff are enrolled on appropriate qualifications in order to meet the timescales in line with the regulations.	6 September 2024
The registered person may only use devices for the monitoring or surveillance of children if—	6 September 2024

the monitoring or surveillance is for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child concerned, or other children; the child's placing authority consents in writing to the monitoring or surveillance; so far as reasonably practicable in the light of the child's age and understanding, the child is informed in advance of the intention to do the monitoring or surveillance; and the monitoring or surveillance is no more intrusive than necessary, having regard to the child's need for privacy. Regulation 24 (1)(a)(b)(c)(d)) In particular, leaders and managers should ensure that each child's needs and risks are assessed and reviewed in relation to the use of door alarms.	
The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— mutual respect and trust; an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone; understand and communicate to children that bullying is unacceptable; and that each child is encouraged to build and maintain positive relationships with others. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(iv)(xxi)(b)) In particular, leaders and managers must ensure they respond to incidents of bullying in the home, including supporting children to understand the consequences of their behaviour.	6 September 2024

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: 2626053

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Warrington Borough Council

Registered provider address: Council Offices, 1 Time Square, Warrington WA1 2NT

Responsible individual: Sharon Cooper

Registered manager: Chantelle Williams

Inspectors

Suzanne Birchall, Social Care Inspector
Judith Birchall, Social Care Inspector

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