

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 with the capacity to care for up to six children. 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.

Inspection dates: 27 and 28 July 2022

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 **Requires improvement to be good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 22 February 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: Good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
22/02/2022	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children receive good care that allows them to establish nurturing and trusting relationships with staff members. Staff take creative approaches to support children. This means that children make steady progress from their starting points. Children say that they are supported, happy and settled.

Generally, the manager makes sure that children have all essential care documents. However, one child does not have a local authority placement plan. There was no evidence of this being chased up. This could result in confusion for children and staff about the plans for their care.

Children gain important skills for independence through appropriate, targeted direct work. Records in relation to these sessions are addressed directly to the child, and highlight their positive progress. However, there is also a lot of unnecessary information held on each child's file, meaning that it is difficult to identify actions that staff have taken to secure good outcomes. Therefore, records are not easily accessible for children and do not represent a significant contribution to their life history.

Transitions for children are generally well planned. Children say that they are involved in the process of planning and understand the next steps for them. However, there are no contingency plans in place, for instance, when initial plans are not successful. Recently, this has meant that there has been a delay in a child moving in to the home. This is because another child had not moved out as expected. Therefore, children who are already experiencing significant life changes and trauma are not always being quickly provided with the stability they need.

When children are out of education, staff think creatively about ways to overcome the barriers that children are facing. Staff advocate well on behalf of the children in their care. This means that children receive the help and support they need to engage with education. One child has recently completed his exams, and staff celebrated his achievements with a party. The manager has acquired the children's educational documents, but information has not been pulled through to give a clear picture of the children's academic level. As a result, staff do not know children's reading levels or stages of learning. This does not ensure that staff can help children with their homework or in home tutoring.

The multi-disciplinary team ensures that children receive wraparound, expert care. This team is integrated into the daily life of the home and children. Children said that they can approach these experts with their specific problems. One child explained that he had not found therapy helpful in the past, but that having this support, in a more accessible, informal way, has enabled him to have more trust in the therapeutic

process. The staff team fully understands the children's emotional needs and promotes improvement in their emotional well-being.

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

Children's safety is improved when they move in to this home. This is because staff get to know the children in placement well. Staff can describe children's needs and vulnerabilities in a detailed and empathetic way. Staff can describe appropriate responses to a range of safeguarding scenarios and know how to keep children safe.

Generally, staff identify all known and emerging risks to children. However, the action that staff should take, if an incident was to occur, is brief. Therefore, there is no clear steps for staff to take. As a result, children may not experience consistency in how they are kept safe. Risk assessments are reviewed and updated regularly. However, staff frequently fail to review and sign risk assessments, care plans and behaviour management plans. This does not show that staff are aware of any changes, and it may impact on their approach with children. Further to this, the manager has not challenged staff or taken appropriate steps to make sure that there is a clear system of accountability.

Children have been reported missing from this home. Staff know and follow the agreed missing-from-home protocol. However, recently, a child left the home at bedtime, without staff's knowledge. The manager was on annual leave and the management team has not evaluated this incident. Therefore, staff do not know how the child left the building. This does not ensure that quick action is taken to identify and address shortfalls.

Children have caring and nurturing relationships with staff. Creative solutions are used by staff to support children to make progress. Therapeutic parenting approaches are used to validate the children's experiences and build their self-esteem and confidence. Consequently, children feel listened to and have trusted adults who they feel they can rely on.

The local area risk assessment outlines all relevant risks related to the home's location. The assessment contains valuable shared intelligence from the police and other local professionals. Some strategies for managing identified risks are described, but they are not used when considering new referrals to the home. The local authority local offer is not considered, meaning that resources for children with additional needs are not clearly identified.

Children are supported by a skilled multidisciplinary team. Police liaison, speech and language, and psychological specialists work with the staff team to ensure that the children are receiving holistic, targeted care and support.

Children's achievements are recognised and celebrated. Children are offered a choice of appropriate rewards for positive behaviour and successes. When they break the

rules, staff implement suitable consequences. Children understand expectations and are encouraged to make things right.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers:

The registered manager is suitably experienced and holds all relevant qualifications. They lead a management team consisting of two deputy managers and six 'portfolio leads', each taking responsibility for a different area of practice. The leadership team is passionate about the welfare and progress of the children they care for.

Children are supported by a stable staff team. There is sufficient staffing to ensure that their needs are met. This consistency allows the children to get to know the adults caring for them and form trusting bonds with them.

Management oversight and the evaluation of records are poor. Mistakes within children's files are being missed and opportunities for learning are not being acted on. There is no clear system for the management team to oversee incidents or documentation when the manager is on annual leave. Likewise, there is also no evidence of liaison with the local authority when documents, such as placement plans, are not provided within timescales. This could lead to confusion for children around their plans and inconsistency in the provision of care.

The home is visited by an independent person each month. When the report provides suggestions for improvement, the manager acts on these promptly. However, feedback does not highlight all relevant issues, such as concerns about record-keeping, lack of staff signatures and risk assessment. This is a missed opportunity for timely improvement of the quality of care provided.

The children's bedrooms are personalised and maintained to a high standard. Attempts have been made to develop a homely environment in most communal areas, but at the time of the inspection children could not enter a bathroom area, as it had been locked. Staff try hard to create a warm and welcoming environment, but this is limited by the layout of the buildings and the large number of staff work areas, which give the home an institutional feel.

The registered manager uses a comprehensive training matrix to track staff training and progress. Staff are supported to access regular, useful training courses. Training specific to the individual needs of the children living at the home is regularly undertaken. There is an emphasis on therapeutic training and the use of empathetic, systemic approaches to meeting the children's needs. This allows the children to feel emotionally safe and secure. One child said, 'This is the only family I've had who I feel like I can trust.'

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 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 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)(b)) Specifically, ensure that staff have clear information in children's risk assessments on the actions to take if an incident was to occur.	31 October 2022
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 the premises used for the purposes of the home are located so that children are effectively safeguarded. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(c)) Specifically, ensure that the home's location risk assessment identifies all risks in the local and surrounding area. Further to this, ensure that these risks are considered in the home's impact risk assessment.	31 October 2022
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 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)(b))	31 October 2022

Specifically, ensure that robust action is taken when children leave the home in the evening.	
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— 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. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(f)) Specifically, the leadership and management team must have good oversight of the home.	31 October 2022
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 each child's relevant plans are followed. (Regulation 14 (1)(a) (2)(c)) Specifically, ensure that the home has the children's local authority placement plan.	31 October 2022
The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month. When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the independent person— to inspect the premises of the home and such of the home's records (except for a child's case records, unless the child and the child's placing authority consent) as the independent person requires.	31 October 2022

The independent person must produce a report about a visit ("the independent person's report") which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether—

children are effectively safeguarded; and

the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being.

The independent person's report may recommend actions that the registered person may take in relation to the home and timescales within which the registered person must consider whether or not to take those actions.

(Regulation 44 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3) (4)(a)(b) (5))

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff have the knowledge to understand each child's education targets and academic level. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 27, paragraph 5.11)
- The registered person should ensure that managers and staff are aware of the local offer setting out the support available for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards' page 26, paragraph 5.4)
- The registered person should ensure that the home's records on each child represent a significant contribution to their life history. This is specifically in relation to ensuring that the steps taken by staff to secure good progress and outcomes are clearly recorded in the children's records. ('Guide to the children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.5)
- The registered person should ensure that staff sign essential documentation. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)
- The registered person should ensure that children's transition plans have a clear contingency plan. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 57, paragraph 11.9)
- The registered person should ensure that children can access all areas of the home. Specifically, ensure that toilets and bathrooms are not locked. ('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: 2626053

Provision sub-type: Children's home

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

Responsible individual: Sharon Cooper

Registered manager: Chantelle Williams

Inspectors

Nicola Shaw, Social Care Inspector
Pam Nuckley, Social Care Inspector

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