

2788637

Registered provider: Cheshire East Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority children's home was registered in May 2024.

The home is registered to care for up to three children who may have social and/or emotional difficulties.

Two children were living in the home at the time of the inspection.

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 November 2024

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: not previously inspected

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

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

Children's experiences of living in the home and the progress they have made have been variable.

One child moved into the home just after it was registered. The child made significant progress in all areas of their life, and there was a significant reduction in risk-taking behaviours. Another child was placed several months later as part of a planned transition and after consideration of the compatibility of the children's needs. This child also made some progress from their starting point. However, the change in the living arrangements led to an escalation in incidents for both children. One child has been adversely influenced by another child. Staff have not been effective in managing the relationship between the children.

There have been physical and verbal incidents between the children living in the home. Children have also made allegations against one another. Although key-work sessions have been completed following the incidents, no formal work in relation to building skills to resolve conflicts positively has been completed. This work would support children's understanding of how to build positive relationships.

Although staff promote healthy routines, these efforts are not consistently effective. Staff are not always able to maintain children's engagement with the home's routines, activities, expectations, and boundaries.

The home provides a nice, comfortable space for children and is well maintained. One child requires further support to ensure that their bedroom is clean and provides a nurturing space.

There have been delays in identifying an appropriate educational provision for both children. Staff are not successful in encouraging children to attend education. The staff have supplemented one child's limited online tuition with activities and trips, but this does not fully meet the child's educational needs. The delay in attending appropriate education has impacted on children's academic progress. Managers have escalated this, and educational provisions have recently been identified for both children.

Staff share positive relationships with children and know them well. New staff are building relationships with the children. Staff encourage the children to take part in various activities outside of the home. This helps children to develop their self-esteem and social skills.

The children are supported by staff to develop independence skills, including baking, cooking, and cleaning. This helps to ensure that children build the necessary skills in preparation for later in life and when preparing to move out of the home.

Children's health needs are met. Staff work closely with health professionals to ensure that children's physical and emotional health are promoted and supported.

Key-work sessions are effective in supporting children's understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Staff also use this opportunity to gain and record children's wishes and views.

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

Children feel safe living in the home. One child said that they like living in the home but raised concerns about the altercations and allegations with the peer who they live with. There have been times when one child has not felt happy in the home due to the incidents. Both children have experienced hostility with each other. The staff have provided support and reassurance, although this has impacted negatively on children's experiences of living in the home.

Risk management plans have recently been updated onto new documentation; however, not all information has been transferred. This means that written plans do not contain all known risks to children. Additionally, strategies to reduce risks to children are not always clear. For example, one child's plan contains information to keep them safe when using online games. However, the strategy for staff to follow to reduce risks associated with talking to others online is not clear. Therefore, staff have not been completing checks when the child is using online games.

Risks to children and incidents are managed well. However, there was a significant delay in a strategy meeting being convened for a child who was at high risk of exploitation. Although the home's managers escalated the issue, the delay prevented multi-agency professionals meeting in a timely manner to discuss how best to respond to and manage the risk.

When children make allegations or disclosures, the staff act promptly to ensure that children are safe. Managers ensure that enquiries and investigations are transparent and that appropriate agencies are involved.

Staff are aware of their responsibilities in the event of any safeguarding issues concerning the children. They understand what they need to do if a child goes missing from home. The manager has developed relationships with other professionals, such as the missing-from-home coordinator and the contextual safeguarding team, to promote collaborative working to keep children safe.

The staff use de-escalation and distraction skills to manage behaviours. The use of holding a child or restrictive practices by staff are proportionate and necessary. Although incidents of holding children are low, not all incidents are recorded in line with regulation. Additionally, children are not always given the opportunity to speak to

someone who is independent from the staff team. This does not always provide an opportunity for children to raise any concerns.

Consequences are used to manage children's behaviour, and there is oversight by the manager to consider whether the measure was appropriate. However, there is no review as to whether the consequence has been effective in managing the behaviour.

Potential staff members are appropriately vetted and checked before commencing work in the home. This ensures that only suitable people work with children.

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

The home is managed by a suitably experienced and qualified registered manager. The manager and responsible individual are committed to improving the outcomes for the children in their care, and both demonstrate a child-centred approach. They know the children well and share positive relationships.

There have been some recent changes to the staff working in the home. Managers have recruited more experienced staff members as they recognise that children need consistency around routines and boundaries to ensure that they experience continuity of care.

Staff feel supported by managers. New staff are positive about the induction, training and support they have received. Staff are either qualified or are currently working towards an appropriate qualification. Staff complete mandatory training and additional training in line with children's needs. This helps them to understand their role in safeguarding and promoting the children's welfare.

Supervision is completed with staff regularly. During times when the home environment has been unsettled due to high numbers of incidents, supervisions have often been single-subject based, which allow staff an opportunity to reflect on the incident and on their practice. Although this is good practice, it has left managers and staff with less time to complete full supervisions that fully consider all aspects of children's care and progress, staff well-being, and further training and development.

The recording and reporting systems in the home are not clear as staff use different recording systems. Not all records are dated or contain the author. Additionally, some records were not clearly recorded in order to fully understand the actions taken by staff to keep children safe.

The manager uses various monitoring and review tools. The responsible individual also completes audits in the home. However, their monitoring and oversight has not identified the shortfalls found during the inspection. This means that action has not always been taken to improve the quality of care.

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 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; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other; 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 and; that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished, and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iv)(iii)(v)(vi)(d)) In particular, the registered person should ensure that written plans contain all known risks to children and have clear strategies for staff to follow to keep children safe. Furthermore, the registered person should ensure that staff effectively manage relationships between children who live together.	3 January 2025

Additionally, the registered person should ensure that staff help children to maintain their bedroom to provide a safe and nurturing environment.	
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 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; and use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(e)(h)) In particular, the registered person should ensure that staff working in the home have the necessary skills and experience to meet the needs of the children and provide continuity of care. Additionally, the registered person should have effective monitoring and review systems in place to ensure that shortfalls in the quality of care are identified and addressed.	3 January 2025
The registered person must ensure that— within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline, or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes— the name of the child; details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure; the date, time, and location of the use of the measure; a description of the measure and its duration;	3 January 2025

details of any methods used, or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure; the name of the person who used the measure ("the user"), and of any other person present when the measure was used; the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and a description of any injury to the child or any other person, and any medical treatment administered, as a result of the measure; within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(viii)(b)(i)(ii)(c)) In particular, the registered person should ensure that records of physically holding a child contain all the required information as per the regulations. Additionally, each child should be provided with an opportunity for a debrief with a person who was not involved in the hold. Additionally, the registered person should ensure that consequences include a review of the effectiveness of the measure.	
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which— include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child; are kept up to date. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b))	3 January 2025

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone. They should encourage each child to take responsibility for the child's behaviour, in accordance with the child's age and understanding, and help each child to build and maintain positive relationships with others. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 38, paragraph 8.6)

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: 2788637

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Cheshire East Council, Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

Responsible individual: Samantha Walker

Registered manager: Sherbanu Spencer

Inspector

Suzanne Birchall, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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