

SC007290

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a privately run children's home that provides care for up to four children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and mild mental health needs. There was one child living at the home at the time of the inspection.

The home was registered with Ofsted in October 1998. The manager registered in 2007.

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 March 2024

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: 27 June 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
27/06/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
11/01/2022	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
28/09/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good
20/06/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

There is only one child living at the home presently. The inspection considered the experiences of the child currently living at the home and children who have lived at the home and left since the last inspection.

Children who have lived in this home make progress from their respective starting points. Staff are advocates for children and proactively work with professionals to support them to return to education. Some children who had been absent from school before moving to the home re-engaged with education providers. Staff worked with professionals to prepare children for the routine of a school setting.

Currently, staff support the child in the home to access education and learning activities. Staff complete educational materials alongside the child, rewarding their successes and building confidence. Educational activities outside the home are less frequently accessed.

Staff encourage children to take responsibility for their own healthcare and to lead healthy lives. They have had sensitive and informative sessions with children, targeting issues specific to individual children. Children have been supported and encouraged to access primary healthcare and specialist services, including sexual health clinics and counselling.

Overall, the home provides a nurturing environment where the children who have left say that they would want to return. Staff helped children who left to settle in new environments and maintain contact when appropriate. Children say that staff are kind and that they have no concerns about their time living in the home.

The communal areas of the home are clean, tidy and decorated as needed. Children have been helped to tidy and arrange their rooms or move rooms if they wish to. Locks on a linen cupboard door, closing the kitchen at night, posters about hygiene and poorly maintained flooring in some rooms detract from the homely environment.

Staff treat children with dignity and respect. Although some children have only sporadically engaged with the home's activities and programmes, staff understand the trauma children have experienced and recognise the importance of earning children's confidence. Staff have persistently demonstrated a high level of effort with children who are reluctant to trust them, and they continue their efforts in building the relationship with the child currently living at the home. Staff seek the child's views and encourage them to help plan their care and day-to-day life in the home. The child is supported to develop skills for independence, including meal preparation.

Throughout the year, managers have accepted children placed in an emergency for short periods of time. However, managers have stopped doing so after recognising that short stays limit the support staff can provide and can be unsettling to children.

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

Professionals are positive about the safeguarding culture within the home. While the frequency of children going missing from the home was very high, this is in the context of children who persistently went missing before living in this home. Records of action taken by staff when children have been missing from the home are clear and well maintained. Staff worked in close partnership with other professionals to promote children's safe return home and manage their safety in the long term.

There is progress with the child currently living in the home, in respect of missing-from-home episodes. Staff have been able to encourage the child to return each night, and they maintain regular contact with the child while they are missing. Recorded discussions demonstrate that staff seek to understand the child's experiences and work to reduce risks.

Children have benefited from recorded discussions and key-worker sessions targeted to their individual safety and development needs. These include detailed and sensitive exploration of sexual health, healthy relationships, how they personally use social media and keeping safe online.

Impact and risk assessments have been completed for children coming to the home. They contain all relevant information and consider the impact on children in the home. How staff can mitigate risks is not always clearly documented, and the frequency of emergency placements has resulted in some limited assessments.

Safer recruitment practices for staff are thorough. There have been no allegations made by children against staff. Staff have access to child protection policies and procedures, and they undertake safeguarding training. Training is targeted to support staff to meet the specific needs of children, such as exploitation training. There are high staffing levels with consistently employed staff. Incidents are well managed by staff, with the appropriate management overview.

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

The registered manager is one of the company's owners. External supervision and appraisal for the registered manager is helping to promote an open culture. There are management oversight and monitoring of children's records. However, the registered manager frequently covering shifts has had a negative impact on the effectiveness of leadership in maintaining a clear purpose and direction for the home. Their capacity to provide strategic leadership and implement plans to restructure has been reduced.

Leaders and managers make good use of the independent visitor and fully take on board recommendations and observations. They seek feedback from others and are ambitious for continuous improvement; however, plans lack actions or timescales to translate these ambitions into practice.

The effectiveness of impact assessments was highlighted as an area for development at the last inspection. The home offering multiple emergency placements has hampered progress in this area.

Managers regularly provide social work students with work experience placements, which provides children with additional opportunities for activities and discussions.

Staff are exceptionally positive about the management team and culture in the home. They receive regular supervision and feel able to approach managers outside of formal supervision for support, advice or to make suggestions. Staff retention is a strength. A clinical therapist attends monthly team meetings and provides an opportunity for staff to reflect on the child's needs and their own practice.

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 education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— promote opportunities for each child to learn informally; help a child who is excluded from school, or who is of compulsory school age but not attending school, to access educational and training support throughout the period of exclusion or non-attendance and to return to school as soon as possible. (Regulation 8 (1) (2)(a)(v)(viii)) This refers specifically to staff providing structure for learning opportunities during the school day when formal attendance is not occurring.	15 May 2024
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;	15 May 2024

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;

use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(f)(h))

This is with particular reference to the leadership team having the capacity to progress strategic plans for the home, evaluate the impact that offering predominantly short-term emergency placements has on stability for children, and the extent to which the home can deliver the outcomes set out in the statement of purpose for children placed in an emergency.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the home is a nurturing and supportive environment that meet the needs of the child, It should be a homely, domestic environment and maintain a domestic rather than an 'institutional' impression. This specifically relates to regular maintenance, decoration and replacing damaged and worn flooring in children's bedrooms, removal of padlocks from linen cupboards and not locking the kitchen at night without sufficient justification. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards.' page 15, paragraph 3.9).
- The registered person should ensure that staff work closely with the placing authority to understand children's relationship histories and the impact that their arrival may have on the group living in the home. This specifically relates to improving the quality of impact and risk assessments, including updating them as more information is known about children who are placed in an emergency. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards.' page 38, paragraph 8.3).

Information about this inspection

The inspector has 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: SC007290

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Responsible individual: Careen Smith

Registered manager: Deborah Pacquette

Inspector

Claire Beckingham, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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