

SC025420

Registered provider: Quality Protects Children Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately run home is registered for up to six children who may experience social or emotional difficulties.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since June 2019.

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.

We last visited this setting on 15 September 2020 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 6 to 7 July 2021

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: 27 January 2020

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
27/01/2020	Full	Requires improvement to be good
02/12/2019	Full	Inadequate
26/02/2019	Interim	Improved effectiveness
02/05/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

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

Practice in the home has a focus on children's well-being. There are positive relationships between children and the staff team, particularly with their key workers. However, due to the restrictions as a result of COVID-19, some staff have not been trained in the bespoke model of care being used in the home. This affects the consistency of care practice across the staff team.

Children are well supported to take regular exercise and understand the benefits of a healthy diet. They can access a range of outdoor pursuits. For some children, this has had a positive affect on their physical health. Records show that the staff follow up when children's appointments have been cancelled. The staff have helped children to overcome barriers, such as a needle phobia, to access essential health procedures.

Children have access to a gym at the home, but only when a qualified member of staff is present, which some children find frustrating. They also say that they cannot access a second room if they want quieter time away from other children. This means that they cannot freely access areas of their home.

Children are helped to improve their emotional well-being through accessing activities such as yoga. The provider's clinical team supports children directly as well as advising on practice to help to improve children's emotional and mental health. The staff also complete reflective sessions with children after difficult events in their lives. They have noticed that one child has started to use cannabis more after an initial reduction and are encouraging him to access specialist support. However, the child's substance misuse is not reducing.

Some children have made positive progress in their education. For example, one child's reading age has improved significantly. Another child was able to access a work placement to support their career aspirations. The staff work closely with education providers, including the organisation's own school, to help children overcome barriers to regular attendance, particularly if they have missed a lot of school prior to moving to the home. However, some children's attendance is not sustained, and plans do not always highlight children's educational targets and achievements.

Children are encouraged to engage in a range of activities and to try new ones, such as fishing. This has helped them to build confidence and experience new opportunities. The staff support children to maintain connections with their families and work to engage with family members to reduce risks to children.

Children are encouraged to share their views about the home and the care that they receive. Their bedrooms are personalised to their taste and some children have pets,

which they look after well. However, one child had an unsuitable extension cable in his room, creating trip and fire hazards which conflict with the home's safety assessment. Another child had a damaged television in his room and his wardrobe door was not properly secured in place. These particular hazards were removed, but, in general, this does not promote a safe and homely environment for children.

In general, children's plans are personalised. However, they are not always updated to reflect changes in children's circumstances to help the staff meet newly emerging needs. The plans would benefit from including children's views in a better way and using language that is more helpful for children to understand.

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

Children say they feel safe living in the home and that there are staff they can talk to if they have concerns or worries. Some children's risks have reduced since living at the home.

Risk management plans are in place, but they would benefit from being more focused on current and emerging risks and how the staff are to respond to them. For example, risk assessments identify cannabis misuse and how the staff should support children, including helping them to access external specialist services. However, they do not identify that children have been smoking in their bedrooms, or how the staff should address this. Plans do not give staff clear direction about how to manage a child's access to money from external sources.

One child is subject to a court directed order and should always be supported by two members of staff. However, records show that the staff have not always followed these instructions. On one occasion, he went missing from the home because he was not supervised appropriately. On another, he was taken to local shops by only one member of staff. Although these are isolated incidents, inconsistencies in practice compromise children's safety. Managers have followed disciplinary procedures to ensure that staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities to safeguard children.

The staff follow protocols appropriately if children go missing from the home. They identify and report any concerns about associated risks for children when they are missing, such as child exploitation. Concerns regarding exploitation are reported to safeguarding agencies so that they can be investigated.

The staff complete reflective sessions with children, but these do not always follow up incidents consistently. This means that opportunities to help children understand and manage their behaviour differently are sometimes missed.

Sanctions are used in the home. For example, if a child does not attend school, they may lose access to having a television in their bedroom. Children can earn back these privileges sooner if they comply with what is asked of them. However, if attendance at school is not maintained, the sanction is used repeatedly without

reviewing its effectiveness. This means alternative strategies are not put in place to help children understand the importance of education.

A protocol is in place for a child who has a history of making allegations. The protocol was followed when a child made an allegation during the inspection visit and immediate action was taken.

The manager notifies external agencies about serious safeguarding concerns. However, a child made an allegation which was recorded by a less experienced member of staff but not shared with managers. Managers addressed the practice shortfall in supervision. The matter was identified in an audit and notified to the child's social worker but was not shared with Ofsted. Furthermore, other notifications to Ofsted have been delayed.

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

The manager knows the children well and has oversight of significant events in the children's lives. However, the manager does not review the staff's actions to identify areas for development. This results in the primary focus being on the children's actions instead of evaluating and reflecting on staff practice to help them improve or to recognise good practice.

There is evidence of managers challenging other agencies when practice is poor or when children are not receiving good support. The challenge, however, does not always make a difference to children's lives, because it lacks persistence from management.

Supervisions by managers are valued by the staff team but they are not always taking place in line with policy. Supervision focuses on staff welfare and discusses the children's needs. However, it lacks reflection and direction for staff members. This means a learning culture does not exist among managers and the staff team, to help them identify improvements for the children they care for.

The manager has not assessed her team's ability to meet a child's needs before they move into the home, as well as the impact on the other children living in the home. The manager has also not reviewed staff training to ensure that the staff have the skills to meet the child's needs. This has caused disruption for children when staff did not have the skills to meet their needs.

Staff complete an induction when they join the team. The induction process does not include training relating to the specific model of care that is being provided to the children. It also does not include protocols to follow if children go missing from home. This results in children receiving inconsistent care from their staff team.

The independent person visiting the home has not consistently requested feedback from children, family, professionals and the staff team. The lack of feedback from these important people reduces the opportunity for improving the care provided. A

further lack of feedback in the review of the quality of care and Ofsted surveys means that the manager is unable to identify areas of development and growth for the team.

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 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; help each child to understand how to keep safe; 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 are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies; 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; that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each	20 August 2021

child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(b)(d)) Specifically, risk assessments should comprehensively identify and focus on current and emerging risks and provide the staff with clear strategies on how to respond to risk. The registered person should ensure that the staff understand and work in accordance with safeguarding policies to keep children safe.	
The registered person must— ensure that each employee completes an appropriate induction. The registered person must operate a disciplinary procedure which, in particular— provides that the failure on the part of an employee to report an incident of abuse, or suspected abuse, whether past or present, in relation to a child to the appropriate person is a ground on which disciplinary proceedings may be instituted. The registered person must ensure that all employees— receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (1)(a) (2)(b) (4)(b)) Specifically, induction should include all necessary and mandatory training. Supervision should be reflective and include actions to improve practice. Any shortfall in practice that may lead to disciplinary action being taken should be clearly recorded.	20 August 2021
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended	20 August 2021

that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home's statement of purpose; that arrangements are in place to— manage and review the placement of each child in the home; plan for, and help, each child to prepare to leave the home or to move into adult care in a way that is consistent with arrangements agreed with the child's placing authority; that staff help each child to access and contribute to the records kept by the registered person in relation to the child. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(ii)(iii)(f)) In particular, pre-admission planning should robustly consider the risks and needs of children already living in the home in relation to any child being considered for admission, and how these will be managed to minimise the risk to any child. Children's progress at the home should be monitored and reviewed to identify whether any changes in the team's practice is needed to support children, and include how children are encouraged to contribute to their plans. Leaders and managers should ensure that a transition plan documents what action has been taken to support children leaving the home and how they have communicated with the placing authority to make arrangements so that the transition is a positive experience for children.	
The registered person must ensure that— children can access all appropriate areas of the children's home's premises; and any limitation placed on a child's privacy or access to any area of the home's premises— is intended to safeguard each child accommodated in the home; is necessary and proportionate; is kept under review and, if necessary, revised; and allows children as much freedom as is possible when balanced against the need to protect them and keep them safe. (Regulation 21(b)(c)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv))	20 August 2021

The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(e))	20 August 2021
When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the independent person— if they consent, to interview in private such of the children, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as the independent person requires. 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 (2)(a) (5))	20 August 2021

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that they evidence that they advocate for children and challenge and escalate concerns when professionals in the wider system are not providing the support that children need. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards' page 11, paragraph 2.4)
- The registered person should ensure that any incidents are fully evaluated so that the actions of staff are reviewed thoroughly to identify both good practice and areas for improvements. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards' page 55, paragraph 10.24)
- The registered person should ensure that staff have the knowledge and skills to understand each child's education and training targets and their next steps for learning. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 27, paragraph 5.11)
- The registered should ensure that the staff understand the importance of recording in a non-stigmatising way. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

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: SC025420

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Quality Protects Children Limited

Registered provider address: Hill House, Archway Road, Huyton, Liverpool L36 9XB

Responsible individual: Anthony Nolan

Registered manager: Mellissa Gittens

Inspectors

Karen Willson, Social Care Inspector
Carly Quinn, Social Care Inspector

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