

SC032496

Registered provider: Trafford Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and managed by a local authority. It is registered to provide care for up to six children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

There were three children living in the home at the time of this inspection. All three children spoke with the inspector.

The manager registered with Ofsted in April 2017.

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 April 2025

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: 30 April 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
30/04/2024	Full	Good
20/09/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
12/09/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
08/06/2022	Full	Inadequate

Inspection judgements

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

Children's experiences in this home are not consistently positive. Two children have lived there for a number of years, but in recent months one child has become more unsettled and relationships with staff more strained. Another child has moved in recently and has become more vulnerable to known risks since moving in.

Children live in a large home where they have plenty of space to relax individually or together. They have two house pets, which they enjoy. Children are offered the opportunity to personalise their bedrooms, although not all children have chosen to do so. The downstairs of the house is very clean and well kept, but one child's bedroom had ash and smoking paraphernalia over most of the surfaces in their bedroom.

All children in the home use vapes and two of the children smoke cannabis regularly, as well as experimenting with other substances. Children say that staff talk to them about this. However, only five direct work sessions have been recorded around substance misuse in total for the two children over the last year. One child said that they 'get a lot more leeway' in this home than in other places they have lived. The child's mother said that their substance misuse has increased significantly since moving to this home.

Children are not in full-time education. However, there is some evidence of challenge to education providers to ensure that children's needs are better met in the school environment. Children have education plans in the home to offer staff guidance on what work should be completed with children outside their formal education.

Staff offer children activities and encourage them to try different things. When children want to try something, staff take children out with their friends to encourage their relationships with their peers and help them to make enjoyable memories.

Children can bring their friends to their home and are supported to spend time with people who are important to them. Family members are kept well informed about their children's progress. Staff work closely with children's social workers to ensure that children have support from the professionals they need.

Children's general health needs are met and they are supported to attend appointments. As children get older, they are encouraged to start making appointments themselves to develop their confidence and skills in this area. Children and staff have access to a mental health practitioner who spends time in the home each week to support children's mental health. While most children do not interact directly with the practitioner, staff are able to access this resource to inform their practice with children.

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

Staff who work in the home have been there for a long time and have developed positive relationships with children who have lived there for a while. However, staff are not always able to de-escalate stressful situations effectively. Additionally, there have been times when staff have further escalated incidents, such as refusing to give a child a lift to a nearby place because the child swore earlier in the day. Paperwork that should provide staff with clear strategies to follow when incidents arise is not useful and does not offer staff any strategies.

Professionals who work with children report good communication and good joined-up working to help keep children safe. When children go missing, staff contact the police and other professionals quickly to work together to return the child home safely. Staff search for children in the daytime. However, when children are missing overnight, staff do not consistently search for them throughout the night. This does not ensure that vulnerable children remain safe.

Physical interventions are not regularly used in the home. When children are held, they are spoken to by a manager to support them to share their views. However, when the manager is involved in these incidents, children are not spoken to by someone independent.

While children are not held often, there have been four incidents in the last month which have resulted in the police being called and children charged with assault. This could lead to lifelong consequences for children when it is possible that some of these charges could have been avoided if staff intervened instead to stop the assault. Following these incidents, children's views are not recorded, even when their account of the situation differs from the staff account that is recorded. Children's relationships with staff are becoming strained because of these charges, which makes it more likely that children will become further involved with the people who want to exploit them.

All children in this home choose to spend a significant amount of time in their bedrooms, on their devices. There is little evidence of any work with children around keeping themselves safe online and no evidence of staff checking what children are doing online.

Children in this home are at high risk of exploitation, yet staff have not received meaningful training in online safety, child exploitation or safeguarding in the last year. Staff are primarily required to complete online modules to satisfy their training requirements. Consequently, there is no evidence that children have been spoken to about the risks of criminal exploitation and county lines.

Children say that they feel safe living in their home and can identify staff whom they would speak to if they had worries or wanted something to change. When children have raised concerns about adults who work with them, managers have investigated and responded appropriately to these concerns.

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

The registered manager regularly monitors various aspects of the service and reviews incidents and episodes of children going missing from home. However, when evaluating incidents, the manager summarises children's behaviour rather than evaluating the practice of staff. This does not enable staff to learn from practice and continue to improve.

There have been vacancies in the staff team throughout the last year. However, the staff team in place is stable and all staff hold the required qualifications. Staff are required to complete regular online training, but managers do not provide additional training specific to the changing needs of children. This does not ensure that staff have the skills to best meet children's needs.

The registered manager has the experience and skills required to lead this home. Staff feel valued and well supported by the management team. Staff say that managers prioritise their well-being and provide emotional support following difficult periods.

Staff are provided with regular supervision and team meetings. Staff say that these are useful spaces where they can speak about their own well-being, as well as the needs of children. Managers incorporate additional learning sessions into team meetings to help staff to develop their knowledge.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person 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 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; 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. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(v)(vi)) Specifically, the registered person must ensure that procedures in place to keep children safe are clear, effective and personalised for each child. Safeguarding strategies must be reviewed regularly to ensure that they are meeting children's needs. The registered person must provide staff with training specific to children's risks and vulnerabilities and ensure that staff talk to children regularly about their risks and how to keep themselves safe from these.	28 June 2025

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 socially aware behaviour; encourage each child to take responsibility for the child's behaviour, in accordance with the child's age and understanding; help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone; communicate to each child expectations about the child's behaviour and ensure that the child understands those expectations in accordance with the child's age and understanding; help each child to understand, in a way that is appropriate according to the child's age and understanding, personal, sexual and social relationships, and how those relationships can be supportive or harmful; help each child to develop the understanding and skills to recognise or withdraw from a damaging, exploitative or harmful relationship; that each child is encouraged to build and maintain positive relationships with others. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(b)) Specifically, the registered person must ensure that each child is provided with proactive key-work sessions that are planned based on children's presenting needs and feelings. The registered person must ensure that children are not unnecessarily criminalised and that staff have the skills and the	28 June 2025
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trusting relationships with children to de-escalate situations effectively.	
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; demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— research and developments in relation to the ways in which the needs of children are best met; 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)(g)(i)(h)) Specifically, the registered person must ensure that incidents are evaluated to establish patterns and trends and identify areas of learning for staff to make continuous improvements.	28 June 2025
The registered person must prepare and implement a policy ("the behaviour management policy") which sets out— how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the children's home; and the measures of control, discipline and restraint which may be used in relation to children in the home. The registered person must ensure that— 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	28 June 2025

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 (1)(a)(b) (3)(b)(i)(ii)(c)) Specifically, the registered person must ensure that children are spoken to following a physical intervention, and that holds are evaluated by someone who was not involved in the intervention. The registered person must ensure that physical interventions are only used when necessary, but that they are used if required to keep people safe.	
The children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who— take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff— ascertain and consider each child's views, wishes and feelings, and balance these against what they judge to be in the child's best interests when making decisions about the child's care and welfare; help each child to express views, wishes and feelings; help each child to understand how the child's views, wishes and feelings have been taken into account and give the child reasons for decisions in relation to the child; regularly consult children, and seek their feedback, about the quality of the home's care. (Regulation 7 (1)(c) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)) Specifically, the registered person must ensure that children's perspectives are recorded about incidents involving them, especially when children's views differ from those of the staff who have recorded the incident.	28 June 2025

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: SC032496

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Trafford Borough Council

Registered provider address: Town Hall, Talbot Road, Stretford, Manchester M32 0TH

Responsible individual: Sally Rimmer

Registered manager: Alicia Cooper

Inspector

Aislinn Cooper, Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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