

# SC035339

Registered provider: Oldham Metropolitan 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 provides care for up to four children who may have social or emotional difficulties. At the time of this inspection, three children were living at the home.

The home does not currently have a registered manager in post.

### Inspection dates: 21 and 22 May 2024

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,** taking into account

**requires improvement to be good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected

requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

requires improvement to be good

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:** 3 May 2023

**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            |
|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| 03/05/2023      | Full            | Requires improvement to be good |
| 28/06/2022      | Full            | Good                            |
| 07/01/2020      | Full            | Inadequate                      |
| 17/07/2019      | Interim         | Declined in effectiveness       |

## Inspection judgements

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

Children benefit from positive relationships with staff who look after them effectively. However, their experiences are impacted by the absence of permanent leaders and managers, staff sickness and the temporary use of agency staff, which does not promote consistency and stability for children.

Staff support family time so that children sustain their close relationships with the people who are most important to them. A child's relative said, 'I can't praise staff enough. They are absolutely wonderful.'

Staff ensure that the health needs of children are reliably met. Children are registered with the health services that they need to be healthy, and staff encourage their attendance at their health appointments. Staff ensure that children's medication is stored and administered safely.

Staff support children to attend school or alternative education provision. One child is currently studying for their GCSEs, with support and encouragement from staff. Staff work closely with the providers of children's education to promote their educational achievements and progress with learning. A virtual school head said, 'Virtual school officers have strong working relationships with staff and have been working closely to support the educational challenges that some of our young people are experiencing.'

Staff are not consistent in providing children with structure and regularity in their lives. There are occasions when staff are not proactive in waking children up early in the morning. Consequently, children are not tired and sometimes become unsettled at bedtimes. This does not promote a positive culture and environment for children.

There are inconsistent opportunities for children to share their views and opinions constructively with staff. One-to-one sessions are infrequent, and this is a missed opportunity for staff to explore children's feelings and behaviours with them and to help children make change and improvement in their lives.

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

Staff prioritise the children's safety and have a good understanding of their needs and vulnerabilities. They are trained to manage behaviours that challenge and ensure that the use of restraint is only ever used to promote children's safety. Consequences used to address unwanted behaviours are kept to an absolute minimum.

The home has experienced a period of instability. When significant incidents have taken place, there is inconsistent management oversight of the actions staff take, which are not being evaluated to identify any future learning.

Senior leaders have arranged for staff to attend training on PACE (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy). This will help staff to reflect on their practice and develop their improved understanding of the impact of childhood trauma on children.

Risk management plans for children are not robust. Existing plans are not being reviewed and updated on a regular basis to include emerging vulnerabilities for children. For instance, plans do not incorporate recent intelligence gained from strategy meetings to help staff keep children safe from harm. Additionally, plans do not balance the need for children's privacy with the need for their safety when there are known risks associated with children having mobile phones.

Significant incidents are reported to the relevant authorities to keep children safe from harm. Staff maintain effective partnerships with the police and other safeguarding agencies to promote children's safety. However, some of the language used by staff when recording incidents is not always child-centred or helpful to children.

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

The registered manager's post has been vacant since January 2024. An experienced deputy manager has recently been recruited and the vacant manager's post is being advertised. In the interim, the head of service has based themselves at the home.

The absence of permanent leaders and managers and infrequent staff supervision have contributed to low staff morale. To address this, the head of service and registered managers from other homes have been tasked with providing staff with more frequent supervision.

Staffing levels do not consistently meet the needs of children. There are issues with staff sickness and agency staff being used. On occasion, due to the insufficient number of staff, they are not able to perform their duties effectively. This is particularly evident when reviewing missing-from-home episodes, when staff have not been able to search for children.

An independent person visits the home to review the quality of children's care and the arrangements to promote their safety and well-being. This helps leaders and managers to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the care provided for children. Feedback from these visits helps staff and senior leaders and managers to tackle identified shortfalls to secure improvement.

Staff employed are recruited and vetted carefully. However, the recruitment records for temporary agency staff do not include written references to validate their suitability. Proof of enhanced disclosures is in place.

## 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     |
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| <p>The children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who—</p> <p>develop positive relationships with them;</p> <p>engage with them; and</p> <p>take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>ensure that staff—</p> <p>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;</p> <p>help each child to express views, wishes and feelings;</p> <p>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;</p> <p>regularly consult children, and seek their feedback, about the quality of the home's care.<br/>(Regulation 7 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv))</p> <p>In particular, staff should complete focused work through one-to-one sessions with children on a regular basis and provide children with frequent opportunities to share their views about their care.</p> | 24 June 2024 |

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| <p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>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;</p> <p>help each child to understand how to keep safe;</p> <p>have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm;</p> <p>manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other;</p> <p>understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person;</p> <p>take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child’s welfare. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi))</p> <p>This relates to ensuring that staff understand how to manage children’s risk-taking behaviours and have clear strategies and robust safety plans to help them keep children safe from harm.</p> <p>Additionally, plans should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis to reflect current risks and information obtained from partner agencies. Plans should also include the arrangements for mobile phone safety, where there are known vulnerabilities.</p> | <p>24 June 2024</p> |
| <p>The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children’s home that—</p> <p>helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and</p> <p>promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <p>24 June 2024</p> |

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| <p>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;</p> <p>ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate;</p> <p>ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child;</p> <p>ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child;</p> <p>ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child;</p> <p>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;</p> <p>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)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(h))</p> <p>This relates to leaders' and managers' improved oversight and evaluation of children's records and staff's response to significant incidents. Additionally, the registered person must ensure that there are sufficient staff on duty to meet the needs of children.</p> |                      |
| <p>The registered provider must appoint a person to manage the children's home if—</p> <p>there is no registered manager in respect of the home; and</p> <p>the registered provider—</p> <p>is an organisation or a partnership;</p> <p>does not satisfy regulation 28; or</p> <p>is not, or does not intend to be, in day-to-day charge of the home.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <p>1 August 2024</p> |

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| <p>If the registered provider appoints a person to manage the home, the registered provider must, without delay, give HMCI notice of—</p> <p>the name of the person so appointed; and</p> <p>the date on which the appointment takes effect.<br/>(Regulation 27 (1)(a)(b)(i)(ii)(iii) (2)(a)(b))</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                     |
| <p>The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety.</p> <p>The registered person may only—</p> <p>employ an individual to work at the children's home; or</p> <p>if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home,</p> <p>if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3).</p> <p>The requirements are that—</p> <p>the individual is of integrity and good character;</p> <p>the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform;</p> <p>the individual is mentally and physically fit for the purposes of the work that the individual is to perform; and</p> <p>full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2.<br/>(Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3)(a)(b)(c)(d))</p> <p>This applies to all staff, including any agency staff.</p> | <p>24 June 2024</p> |
| <p>The registered person must ensure that all employees—</p> <p>undertake appropriate continuing professional development;</p> <p>receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience; and</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <p>24 June 2024</p> |

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| have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (4)(a)(b)) |  |
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## Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that staff record information in a non-judgemental and clear way that is helpful to children.

## 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:** SC035339

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council

**Registered provider address:** Oldham Council, Civic Centre, Oldham OL1 1UT

**Responsible individual:** Nicholas Whitbread

**Registered manager:** Post vacant

## Inspectors

Anthony Kyem, Social Care Inspector  
Carly Quinn, Social Care Inspector

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