

SC035428

Registered provider: Lancashire County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority home provides short-term care for one child who may have social and/or emotional difficulties.

The manager was appointed in September 2021 and has applied to become registered with Ofsted.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 December 2021

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 17 August 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection: Ofsted has taken enforcement action against this home since the last inspection on 17 August 2021. Compliance notices in relation to regulation 12 (the protection of children standard), regulation 13 (the leadership and management standard) and regulation 14 (the care planning standard) and a restriction of accommodation notice were issued. Monitoring visits were carried out on 19 October 2021 and 11 November 2021 to monitor the steps

the provider has taken in relation to the compliance notices. The provider has adhered to the restriction of accommodation notice and has taken sufficient action to meet the compliance notices.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
17/08/2021	Full	Inadequate
22/06/2021	Full	Inadequate
21/05/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good
18/09/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The home provides short-term care and emergency placements for children who are experiencing difficult periods in their lives. In most cases, children have experienced crisis situations or placement breakdowns and require a period of stability and assessment to identify and secure the most appropriate future placement. At the time of the inspection, one child was living at the home.

Children are made to feel welcome on arrival at the home. Staff are sensitive to the fact that children might be feeling frightened and anxious. Staff endeavour to help children to feel reassured and relaxed. One professional said, 'Despite being very anxious about going into care for the first time, the staff clearly made [name of child] feel welcome and his anxiety levels reduced considerably, very quickly.'

Children are cared for by a consistent staff team. Staff are skilled at quickly forming relationships with children. One child told the inspector, 'Staff are nice, the home is comfortable, I feel safe, and I have everything I need.'

Children are encouraged to personalise their bedrooms to suit their individual tastes and interests. For example, one child has chosen to change the curtains and bedding in his room. The child has also decorated his bedroom with Christmas decorations. This helps children to settle and gives them some choice and control over their environment.

Staff encourage children to take part in daily chores, such as doing their laundry and cleaning their bedrooms. However, one child's bedroom was untidy and there were dirty cups and litter from snacks on the bedside table. Staff should provide more assistance, where necessary, to help children to keep their rooms clean and tidy. A recommendation has been made to address this.

Children are supported to keep in regular contact with their families. For example, staff have arranged for one child to attend a boxing class with his dad. Maintaining contact is important to support children's emotional health and well-being. Furthermore, staff work in partnership with families to support the child's transition home where this move is assessed as appropriate.

The manager has introduced child-centred care planning documents. These are written in a style and language which make them more accessible for children to read. Children are encouraged to read these documents and share their thoughts about the care they receive. However, some care planning documents do not contain sufficient detail about the impact of children's additional needs and the individualised approaches staff should take to meet these needs. A recommendation has been made to improve practice in this area.

The manager has taken steps to improve the home environment and make the home's appearance look less institutional. Locks have been removed from some of the doors to the communal areas. A risk assessment is in place with regards to the lock on the kitchen door and its usage will be reviewed in line with the needs of the children placed at the home. However, on some occasions, staff have taken the decision to lock the kitchen door at night-time, which is not in line with the child's risk assessment. A requirement has been repeated to ensure that any restrictions are necessary and that children are allowed as much freedom as is safely possible.

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

Children say that they feel safe at the home and that they get on well with staff. There is evidence of good relationships with parents. Parents are positive about the care their children receive. One parent said, 'I know he is safe there and that they have his best interests at heart.'

Children receive a high level of supervision from staff. This has supported children to reduce their engagement in risk-taking behaviours, such as going missing from home and offending behaviour.

Children benefit from one-to-one work that focuses on their individual needs and vulnerabilities. These informal learning opportunities provide a forum for children to reflect on their behaviours and the consequences of the choices they make.

Room searches are undertaken when there are concerns for children's safety. These are proportionate, timely, and help to keep children safe.

Rewards are used effectively. There is an instant reward system in place which children have responded positively to. Physical interventions to manage children's behaviours are rarely used. This demonstrates that staff are using de-escalation techniques competently.

Risks for children living at the home are not consistently identified and understood. Risk assessments are updated regularly; however, the quality is variable, and clear plans on how to manage risks are not always in place. For example, the location risk assessment sets out a variety of risks in the locality. However, these risks have not always been considered in relation to individual children and their specific risks. While these shortfalls have not had an impact on the safeguarding of children, it means that staff are not always provided with the information they need to protect children. A requirement has been made to address this.

Missing-from-home risk assessments are in place, but these documents lack important details about locations to search and when police assistance should be sought. Furthermore, staff gave inconsistent responses in relation to what action they would take if a child goes missing. The absence of a clear plan could lead to staff confusion and inconsistent responses to safeguard children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes to the management team. An experienced manager from within the organisation has recently been appointed to manage the home. The manager is suitably qualified to undertake this role and she is well supported by her senior managers.

The manager has led improvements to the quality of care provided to children since the last inspection. The manager has a good understanding of the home's strengths and areas for development and an action plan is in place to support continuous improvement.

The organisation has reduced the number of children it is registered to provide care for to one child. This means that staff are better able to focus on the needs of the child in the placement.

Changes have also taken place within the staff team. Several staff have left and permanent staff from within the organisation have been moved to work at the home. Staff express confidence in the new management team. In addition, they speak positively about the support they receive both from their managers and their colleagues. One staff member said, 'The team have really gelled, and we are working together to make the home succeed.'

Staff benefit from regular team meetings and supervision sessions. The manager has ensured that all staff have repeated the organisation's induction programme. This ensures that there is a consistent knowledge base among the team. However, some staff have not received training in areas aligned to children's assessed needs. A recommendation has been made to address this.

The manager has made significant improvements to the management monitoring systems. However, these systems are not yet sufficiently robust as the manager has not identified the shortfalls in risk assessments identified during the inspection. A recommendation is made to secure further improvement.

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. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i))	14 January 2022
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))	14 January 2022

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children's care planning documents reflect their individual additional needs and detail how staff should best support them. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 14, paragraph 3.2)
- The registered person should ensure that staff receive training that is aligned to the needs of the children placed at the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11)
- The registered person should make best use of information from internal monitoring systems to ensure continuous improvements. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)
- The registered person should ensure that staff offer assistance, where necessary, to support children to keep their bedrooms clean and tidy. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.7)

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: SC035428

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: PO Box 78, County Hall, Fishergate, Preston PR1 8XJ

Responsible individual: Gwyneth Monk

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Sophie Thomson, Social Care Inspector

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