

SC035428

Registered provider: Lancashire County Council

Assurance inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned by a local authority and provides care for one child who may experience social and emotional difficulties and/or have physical disabilities.

The manager registered with Ofsted in August 2025. He is also registered at another home owned by the local authority.

Inspection date: 11 February 2026

Date of last inspection: 29 April 2025

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Information about this inspection

At this inspection, the inspector evaluated:

- the care of children
- the safety of children
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers.

The inspector has looked closely at the experiences and progress of children, using the social care common inspection framework. This assurance 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'.

Findings from the inspection

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance inspection.

Two children have been living in the home since the last inspection. Both children are comfortable in their home surroundings and were observed to have positive, warm interactions with a range of staff. Both children spoke to the inspector about the things that they enjoy, including their favourite football team and activities they like to participate in, as well as foods they like to eat.

Both children's bedrooms are appropriately furnished and contain children's personal items. However, one child's bedroom had only been partially cleaned by staff following an incident that had previously taken place where the child had used food items to cause staining to decor. At the time of inspection, the remaining food was still in place on the ceiling above the child's bed. Additionally, while the home is generally clean and comfortable, unused household items in the garden have not been disposed of, and there are loose tiles in a shower cubicle. A requirement has been raised to this effect.

Since the last inspection, leaders and managers have sought to obtain children's feedback through various means. Children are happy to provide feedback, demonstrating they trust they will be listened to. One child has recently shared their negative experiences and feelings of living alongside their peer. This feedback helped staff understand the complexities of the relationship and how to best support those interactions; however, it has not always resulted in effective mediation between the children when conflicts have arisen. A recommendation has been raised in relation to this shortfall.

Staff are proactive at seeking the most appropriate health support for children who have needs relating to neurodiversity. They also understand the barriers that some children face in education and assist these children in re-engaging with their learning when their education plans are delayed. Additionally, leaders work alongside the virtual school to ensure that education plans for children are reviewed and updated to reflect their needs.

Key-work sessions and significant discussions take place with children on a regular basis. These discussions are thoughtful and empathetic, and they provide children with appropriate advice, support and guidance that they can use to make more informed decisions.

Since the last inspection, leaders and managers have updated and reviewed risk assessments, which now accurately reflect children's risks, needs and behaviours and provide staff with clear guidance on how to respond when serious incidents occur.

During a tour of the home, the inspector located three separate capsules containing e-cigarette liquid in one child's bedroom, which staff safely removed. Additionally, a staff member had placed their e-cigarette device in a communal area of the home, which could have been accessible to children. A requirement has been raised to this effect.

When children are vulnerable to criminal exploitation, collaborative working takes place between the home and several professionals, such as the complex safeguarding team and youth justice team. This enables professionals to share contextual safeguarding information so that safety plans can be implemented.

Children who experiment with alcohol receive support from staff to understand the consequences alcohol can have on their physical health and emotional wellbeing. Additionally, drug and alcohol support is in place from an external service that is part of multi-agency meetings.

When children go missing from home, staff follow the missing-from-home procedure to search for and locate the child, and, when required, report the child missing to the police as detailed in the child's plan. When children return home, staff take a nurturing approach to support. Children are provided with return home interviews to enable them to speak to someone independent from the home.

The manager is dual registered and manages another home operated by the local authority. The deputy manager of this home is helping the manager to make and sustain changes and address the requirements raised at the last inspection. Leaders and managers were present at this visit and demonstrated sound knowledge of the home, staff and children.

Internal monitoring of the home is shared between leaders and managers, and case records relating to children's care are up to date and represent their needs and behaviours. Leaders and managers have started to address where there are inconsistencies in report writing to ensure that consistent case records are maintained. This practice area was discussed at a recent team development day, along with several practice-related areas, providing staff with the opportunity to come together and reflect on recent challenges.

Leaders and managers have identified additional training for staff, including on topics such as knife crime and county lines, to ensure that they have the necessary knowledge and skills to understand the impact on children who are vulnerable to exploitation.

Staff supervision takes place frequently, as well as additional debriefs and regular team meetings. This enables staff to collectively discuss practice-related matters and consider alternative approaches and strategies from a child-focused perspective.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
29/04/2025	Full	Requires improvement to be good
25/06/2024	Full	Good
31/10/2023	Full	Outstanding
25/01/2023	Full	Good

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 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; 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; that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(v)(c)) Specifically, the registered person should ensure that staff take swift action to identify and remove substances such as e-cigarette liquids from children's bedrooms. Additionally, the registered person should ensure that staff working in the home lock away their personal belongings, such as e-cigarette devices, so that they are not accessible to children living in the home. This requirement has been restated.	13 March 2026

The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children’s home’s overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children’s needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— understand and apply the home’s statement of purpose; ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(c)(i)) Specifically, the registered person must ensure that unwanted household items are disposed of promptly and are not stored in communal areas, such as the garden. Additionally, when children’s bedrooms need to be thoroughly cleaned, staff should do so without delay to ensure that children can enjoy their personal space.	13 March 2026
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Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that children are helped to develop understanding and empathy towards each other. Positive behaviour and relationships should be reinforced, praised and encouraged; poor behaviour should be challenged and discussed through direct work and meaningful mediation. ('Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 39, paragraph 8.11)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC035428

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Lancashire County Council

Registered provider address: PO Box 100, Preston PR1 0LD

Responsible individual: Emma McCracken

Registered manager: Jonathan Sewell

Inspector

Michelle Greenhalgh, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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