

SC035428

Registered provider: Lancashire County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is one of several operated by a local authority. The home provides care and accommodation for up to two children who may have social and/or emotional difficulties.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since October 2018.

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 9 September 2020 to carry out an assurance visit. The report is published on our website.

Inspection dates: 22 to 23 June 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	inadequate
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	inadequate
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	inadequate
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There are serious and widespread failures that mean children are not protected or their welfare is not promoted, and the care and experiences of children and young people are poor, and they are not making progress.

Date of last inspection: 21 May 2019

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
21/05/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good
18/09/2018	Full	Good
29/05/2018	Interim	Not judged
26/03/2018	Interim	Not judged

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

This home provides short stay and emergency placements for children who are experiencing difficult periods in their lives. In many cases, children have complex needs and have experienced multiple placement breakdowns prior to coming to the home. There is one child currently living at the home. This child was missing from the home during the inspection.

Children who have lived at this home have experienced varied outcomes. One child who was at high risk of sexual exploitation engaged well and developed positive relationships with staff. As a result, risks to the safety of the child reduced, and she was discharged to an alternative placement with less intensive support. However, another child has not had a positive experience of moving on from the home, as a serious incident pre-empted their departure. Unplanned moves leave children cautious about investing in future placements.

For some children, outcomes have been poor, and there have been increasing concerns regarding aspects of their high-risk behaviours. There has been a recent escalation in these behaviours for a child living at the home. The child is spending a considerable amount of time missing from the home, including overnight. Staff are working proactively with relevant professionals. However, they have been unable to work effectively with the child to reduce their engagement in behaviours that place them at risk. In addition, the location of the home places the child at increased risk of potential harm. This is due to the home's proximity to people who may present a risk to the child's safety.

Children do not consistently receive effective planning for their care. For example, one child has been living at the home for over two months and no suitable alternative placement has been sourced. This is not in line with the home's statement of purpose.

During the inspection, the home was found to contain avoidable hazards to the well-being of a child living there. This child is assessed as being at high risk of self-harm, and long, loose wires were present in their bedroom. This child is known to have previously used ligatures to attempt to harm themselves. Furthermore, the decoration in some areas of the home is not completed to a good standard, and the flooring in a child's bedroom was heavily marked. The registered manager took immediate action to improve the décor of the property.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: inadequate

Staff have been unable to keep all children safe and protected from harm. One child's safety and well-being are significantly compromised by engaging in behaviour that increases their risk. Staff are working proactively with relevant professionals to support this child to stay safe, however, this has not been effective enough to ensure that risks are reduced for them. In addition, the child has brought weapons into the home, and it has been necessary for staff to call the police on several occasions to support them to manage this child's behaviour.

Children are sometimes admitted to the home in emergency situations. The manager conducts impact risk assessments to support her decision-making about these admissions. However, the manager has admitted a child to the home in the knowledge that this could put the welfare of another child living at the home at risk. Control measures to mitigate the impact of this admission were not followed. As a result, staff were not able to safely manage the relationship between these two children, and a child was harmed.

The registered manager has failed to adequately assess significant risks to the safety and well-being of children. For example, one child is assessed as being at high risk of criminal exploitation. He has access to a basic mobile phone, but no risk assessment has been conducted in relation to his usage of this phone. This means that staff are not always provided with clear guidance on how to keep this child safe.

Different formats of risk assessment are in use and stored in multiple files, making them difficult to be located. The different risk assessments are not cross referenced, and a number of important risk assessments are not held in children's files. This means that staff do not have access to important information about how best to keep children safe. Furthermore, the wording on some of the risk assessments is not clear and contains potentially confusing instructions to staff.

The registered manager has not always ensured that there are sufficient staff available at night-time so that children are safe and protected from harm. For example, despite identifying that waking night staff may be necessary to support two children who were at risk of going missing, the registered manager did not arrange for this support to be in place. The children did go missing together in the early hours of the morning, thereby being at risk of harm.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The registered manager is suitably qualified and experienced to undertake the role. Staff report that they feel supported and can approach the manager for advice and guidance.

However, shortfalls were identified in the leadership and management of the home. The manager has failed to properly consider the range of needs and compatibility of children admitted to the home. She has admitted children to the home that are not well matched, and this has compromised the safety and welfare of a child. Furthermore, the manager has not always ensured that there were sufficient staff available at night to meet the children's assessed needs and ensure that their safety was maintained.

The manager has failed to notify Ofsted and other relevant professionals of an allegation made by a child at the home. This prevents the local authority from ensuring that the correct action is taken and concerns relating to staff practice are centrally recorded and acted upon. Similarly, it hinders Ofsted's ability to review the information in notifications to ensure that the provider has taken the necessary remedial steps in relation to concerns. A requirement was made regarding this at the last inspection and it is repeated at this inspection for the manager to address.

Staff have not received sufficient training to meet the assessed needs of children placed at the home. For example, only two staff currently employed at the home have had training in relation to gangs and knife crime. There has been no training provided in relation to the criminal exploitation of children. This means that staff are not being equipped with the specialist knowledge they require to support the children they care for.

Shortfalls were identified in the quality of risk assessments and the quality of record-keeping. Some documents contained incorrect dates; records of staff rosters were not always legible, and information pertaining to a different child was found on a child's records. A requirement has been made to improve this.

Six requirements have been made to address the shortfalls identified during the inspection. Three requirements are subject to compliance, and progress will be closely monitored by Ofsted.

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; 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; that the premises used for the purposes of the home are located so that children are effectively safeguarded; 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)(iv)(c)(d))	15/08/2021
* 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—	15/08/2021

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; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; 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. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(c)(d)(f))	
* 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 that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home's statement of purpose; that each child's relevant plans are followed. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(c))	15/08/2021
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which— are kept up to date; and are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36 (b)(c))	15/08/2021
Schedule 4 sets out the other information that the registered person must keep in relation to a children's home. The registered person must—	15/08/2021

maintain in the home the records in Schedule 4; ensure that the records are kept up to date. (Regulation 37 (1) (2)(a)(b)). This relates to the records of staff rosters.	
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation; an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious; there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; a child protection enquiry involving a child — is instigated; or concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry); or there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(a)(b)(c)(d)(i)(ii)(e))	15/08/2021

* These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that, just as in a family home, children should be able to access all shared areas of their home unless there are specific reasons why this would not meet a child's needs. Limits on privacy and access may only be put in place to safeguard each child in the home (regulation 21(c)(i)). Any decisions to limit a child's access to any area of the home and any modifications to the environment of the home, must only be made where this is intended to safeguard the child's welfare. All decisions should be informed by a rigorous assessment of that individual child's needs, be properly recorded and be kept under regular review. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.10)

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: Hena Begum

Inspector

Sophie Thomson, Social Care Inspector

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