

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 children's home provides care for one child who may have social and emotional difficulties and/or physical disabilities.

The manager has not yet applied to become registered with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 April 2025

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: 25 June 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25/06/2024	Full	Good
31/10/2023	Full	Outstanding
25/01/2023	Full	Good
18/10/2022	Full	Inadequate

Inspection judgements

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

At the time of this inspection, one child was living in the home. The child has recently moved to the home, and they are starting to settle in. Since the last full inspection, two children have moved out of the home. Despite staff showing great commitment to securing permanence for these children, the children left the home in an unplanned way.

One child was making considerable progress at the home. They were very settled and had positive and trusting relationships with staff who cared for them. However, the admission of another child had an adverse impact on the child's experience of living at the home. They had to move from the home to temporary accommodation as the children could not live together safely. When making decisions about admitting children to the home, managers have not sufficiently balanced the needs of the child requiring the placement with the child who already lives there.

Children are cared for by a committed and resilient staff team. However, there has been a reliance on the use of agency staff to maintain high levels of supervision and support for children. This use of temporary staff limits children's ability to form lasting relationships.

Staff did not complete meaningful direct work with one child to help them to prepare for another child moving in. These children had previously lived together and there had been incidents of bullying. The child's feelings were not fully explored or considered, despite there being evidence that one child presented a risk to another.

Children have made progress with their education. Staff understand the importance of education to secure good outcomes for children. Staff have successfully supported one child to re-engage regularly in formal education following a long period of non-attendance.

Staff are child centred. They look for opportunities to make children feel loved and wanted. Staff give children lots of praise for positive behaviours and positive choices. This helps to build children's self-esteem and feelings of self-worth.

Staff are creative and playful. They ensure that restrictions to children's liberty are not a barrier to children having fun and trying new experiences. For example, children have enjoyed trips to the circus, trampoline parks and walks in the park. When it has not been possible for children to go out, staff create games for children to play. This enhances children's experiences of living at the home.

Some areas of the home look tired and unloved. Staff have started to redecorate communal areas, but this work has not been finished. In addition, the gardens require maintenance and the pots by the front door are full of dead plants and weeds. This does

not make it a welcoming or homely environment for children. A recommendation is made to improve this.

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

Risk management plans are in place and have been reviewed. However, they do not reflect all the known risks to children. For example, there is no risk management plan pertaining to a child having a watch when they had previously swallowed a watch battery. These shortfalls mean that staff are not informed about how to manage and reduce risks to children.

Records of significant incidents in the home are poor. Reports focus on children's behaviours, and they lack important details about the staff responses. The manager has not added oversight or analysis to these records. The quality of the recording hinders the manager's ability to evaluate whether staff are responding appropriately and effectively to children's behaviours.

Staff deal with challenging situations in a calm way. Children's plans detail the strategies staff should use to defuse incidents and manage children's behaviours safely. These plans are regularly reviewed and adapted. However, staff have found it difficult to manage one child's complex behaviours. De-escalation strategies were not always effective and support from the police has frequently been required to maintain everyone's safety.

There have been incidents when staff have held children to keep them safe. All staff have completed the necessary training to allow them to do this safely. Records of these incidents are kept, and they contain management oversight. However, managers do not always record the outcome when they have requested additional information about the event or questioned the necessity to hold the child. This makes it unclear as to whether managers have taken appropriate action to address any practice concerns.

Managers work collaboratively with other professionals to try to manage and minimise risks to children. They share information with emergency services to aid their understanding of children's behaviours. This supports a shared understanding and a more consistent response.

Bullying and discriminatory behaviour is challenged but this has had a limited impact on one child's behaviour. In addition, there is little evidence of restorative practices that help restore children's relationships or direct work to help children understand the impact of their behaviour on others.

Staff support children to try to learn new ways to manage their own emotions. Children are encouraged to identify strategies that may help them feel calmer when they are upset. This empowers children to have some choice and control about the way that they are cared for.

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

Due to an organisational restructure, the manager and responsible individual have recently changed. There is a new manager in post and he is supported by an experienced deputy manager. The new manager is registered to manage another home in the organisation. However, he has not yet applied to register with Ofsted for this home.

Managers have not robustly risk assessed one child moving into the home. This had an adverse impact on the child who was already living there. The decision to admit the child was not taken lightly, but managers did not sufficiently balance the needs and risks to the child already living in the home.

Managers' oversight of recording and reporting is not effective. Shortfalls in children's risk management plans and the inconsistent quality of record-keeping have not been identified. Furthermore, records are poorly organised, and managers struggled to locate important documents during the inspection. This impairs the managers' and the regulator's ability to evaluate the quality of care provided to children.

An independent person visits the home every month to make an impartial assessment of the home's arrangements for safeguarding children. However, children are not always consulted during these visits. This is a missed opportunity to ensure the voice of the child informs the independent person's assessment.

There have been delays in notifying Ofsted about significant incidents in the home. This impairs the regulator's ability to understand events in the home and the actions managers are taking to safeguard children.

Managers promote a child-centred culture. Managers know the children well and form positive, secure and lasting relationships with them. Staff share their commitment to securing the best outcomes for children.

Permanent members of staff receive regular supervision which supports them to reflect on their practice. However, managers are not providing agency staff with supervision. A recommendation was made at the last inspection to address this, which is repeated at this inspection.

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; help each child to understand how to keep safe; manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iv)) Specifically, risk management plans should be in place for all known risks to children.	27 June 2025
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. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b)) This specifically relates to ensuring that assessments of children's needs consider the needs of the child to be admitted against the children already in place.	27 June 2025

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— ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to 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; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(e)(f)(h)) This specifically relates to ensuring effective management oversight of the home.	27 June 2025
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. (Regulation 7 (1)(c)) This specifically relates to ensuring meaningful consultation takes place with children about matters that affect their day-to-day care.	27 June 2025
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious; there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious.	27 June 2025

(Regulation 40 (4)(b)(c)(e)) Specifically, notifications should be made to Ofsted without delay.	
When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the independent person— if they consent, to interview in private such of the children, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as the independent person requires. (Regulation 44 (2)(a)) This specifically relates to ensuring that the independent person consults with children during their visits to the home.	27 June 2025

Recommendations

- The registered person should have systems in place so that bank staff and agency staff receive supervision of their practice from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 61, paragraph 13.2) This recommendation was made at the last full inspection and is repeated.
- The registered person should ensure that the home provides a domestic, homely environment. In addition, redecoration and maintenance of the home should take place in a timely manner. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 15, paragraph 3.9)

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: Lancashire County Council

Registered provider address: County Hall, Preston PR1 8XJ

Responsible individual:

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Sophie Thomson, Social Care Inspector

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