

SC035439

Registered provider: Lancashire County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is operated by a local authority and is registered for three children who may have emotional and social difficulties.

At the time of the inspection, three children were living at the home.

The manager registered with Ofsted in August 2023.

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 June 2024

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers	inadequate
---	------------

There are serious and widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded and the care and experiences of children and young people are poor and they are not making progress.

Date of last inspection: 6 June 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/06/2023	Full	Good
13/03/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
05/01/2022	Full	Good
05/03/2020	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

The conditions of the home are poor and not suitable for children. The home looks institutional and does not feel homely. Essential repairs and maintenance have not been prioritised. For example, a cupboard door is missing in the kitchen, which staff said had been missing for some time. One of the children's bedrooms has holes in the wall and a strong unpleasant smell. A fire door had been missing from the home but was replaced during the inspection.

There are locks on internal doors that lead to communal areas, and the kitchen is locked every night. Locking doors is used as a method to control children's behaviour.

Managers and staff do not ensure that children have routine and structure in the home. Children are not currently in formal education. Staff have put educational routines in place for children, but these have not been effective, and the children have not engaged with these plans.

Staff have tried to form positive relationships with the children. However, they have not been able to help children to develop strategies to manage difficult feelings. As a result, there has been an increase in behaviours that compromise the children's safety. This is having a negative effect on children's experiences of living in the home.

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

Safeguarding practice in this home is poor. Leaders and managers have failed to ensure effective safeguarding practice. This inspection found multiple failings where children have been at risk of harm.

Staff do not always follow children's missing-from-home risk management plans. One child was missing from the home for several hours before staff realised that they had left the building. Risks significantly increase if staff are unaware of children's whereabouts.

One child is at risk of child sexual exploitation. Staff have been unable to control the child's use of their phone and social media. This significantly increases the child's risks of being sexually exploited.

Staff have made decisions that have placed children and others at risk of potential harm. Specifically, children managed to take the car keys from staff and then drove the home's car on a public road.

One child takes controlled medication. Staff failed to ensure the safe administration of medication. This led to the child taking more medication than prescribed. A new routine was put in place with increased staff supervision to ensure that the child safely swallows the tablets. These plans were ineffective as the child was still able to hide medication, which has placed them at further risk.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Leaders and managers accepted the placement of a child with complex needs and vulnerabilities which are beyond the scope of this home. Despite knowing the child's needs and risks, leaders and managers have failed to ensure that staff have the right knowledge and skills to manage this child's known risks. This has failed to promote the welfare and safety of the child.

There are shortfalls in the manager's oversight of significant incidents. Some incidents are minimised and not reported or notified to the relevant partner agencies or the regulator. This lack of scrutiny means that inconsistencies go unchallenged.

Children have received inadequate care, which is partly due to the poor deployment of staff. This has led to children going missing from the home, causing property damage within the home and assaulting staff. This increases the risk of children being criminalised and being harmed themselves in such incidents.

The home is not sufficiently staffed to meet the complex needs of the children. Staff morale is low. They say that they are not operating as a team and that children receive inconsistent care. Children say that staff spend a lot of time in the office. Staff are unable to manage children's behaviour appropriately.

The manager is working hard to address the issues within the home, but leaders have not provided appropriate resources to help make the changes at the speed that they need to be made.

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 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— 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; 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)(c)(h)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that there are sufficient staff to manage the children's behaviour and promote daily routines. In addition, they must ensure that staff work together as a team and provide consistency of care for children. They must ensure that staff have the skills and experience to meet the children's needs, including promoting routine.	28 July 2024
*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—	28 July 2024

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; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child’s welfare; and are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home’s child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(v)(vi)(vii)) In particular, ensure that the children’s individual risk management plans provide staff with clear strategies to manage and reduce risk. This also relates to managers and staff following safeguarding procedures in response to children going missing from home and children at risk of sexual exploitation. The registered person must ensure that repairs to the home are completed quickly, particularly where the damage could compromise fire safety.	
The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— maintain regular contact with each child’s education and training provider, including engaging with the provider and the placing authority to support the child’s education and training and to maximise the child’s achievement;	28 July 2024

raise any need for further assessment or specialist provision in relation to a child with the child's education or training provider and the child's placing authority; help a child who is excluded from school, or who is of compulsory school age but not attending school, to access educational and training support throughout the period of exclusion or non-attendance and to return to school as soon as possible. (Regulation 8 (1) (2)(a)(vi)(vii)(viii))	
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)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that significant incidents are notified to Ofsted.	28 July 2024
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;	28 July 2024

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)) In particular, ensure that internal locks on the communal doors are removed.	
The registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received into the children's home. In particular the registered person must ensure that— medicine which is prescribed for a child is administered as prescribed to the child for whom it is prescribed and to no other child. a record is kept of the administration of medicine to each child. (Regulation 23 (1) (2)(b)(c)) In particular, ensure that medication is administered consistently and safely to prevent children from hiding and failing to take medication.	28 July 2024

*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

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: SC035439

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Lancashire County Council

Registered provider address: County Hall, Preston PR1 8XJ

Responsible individual: Dawn Bottomley

Registered manager: Richard Lawler

Inspectors

Cathy Wilkins, Social Care Inspector

Paulette Forbes, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: eepurl.com/iTrDn.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024