

SC035439

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 up to three children. According to the home's statement of purpose, the staff team has a nurturing ethos and strives to empower the children by promoting their right to be supported in their development, health and education.

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 March 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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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: 5 January 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/01/2022	Full	Good
05/03/2020	Interim	Improved effectiveness
24/04/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good
07/08/2018	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

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

Children's care is planned to reflect their individual needs. Placement targets are identified, and some work has taken place to help the children meet their targets. However, because of periods of disruption in the home, some children's engagement with staff has declined. This means that their progress is limited.

Children are not suitably matched to the home. On one occasion, senior managers instructed the manager to accommodate a child. This resulted in the child being taken on holiday by staff until a more suitable placement could be found. Senior managers must ensure that all placements made to the home are made in accordance with the home's matching and risk assessment procedures.

There are extensive delays in the local authority securing a suitable school for one child. This means that the child is not provided with an opportunity to be educated in a school or to form positive friendships with peers.

Two children are provided with in-house tuition. Visiting tutors encourage children to complete small educational assignments at home. However, due to the aggression exhibited by one child, engagement in these sessions is minimal. In contrast, one child has successfully completed their GCSE examinations and is undertaking a college diploma in animal studies. Staff are supporting him with university applications to undertake further study in the care of animals.

Children are supported to gain work experience in subjects in which they are interested. One child is undertaking construction experience, and another is working in local kennels. This experience enables the children to gain valuable knowledge and skills in their chosen field of work.

Children receive suitable support to maintain contact with the important people in their lives. Contact plans are in place and provide clear information and guidance regarding where contact is permitted or restricted.

Children are encouraged to try out new activities and develop hobbies in accordance with their individual interests. Some children attend music festivals and concerts and say, 'I had the best time.'

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

Since the last inspection in January 2022, two long-term placements have moved on. Two new children who have moved into the home have exhibited behaviours that challenge the staff.

Negative relationships between some children are not managed effectively. Children come together and disrupt the home, resulting in assaults and damage. As a result of extreme aggression, the staff have, on occasion, contacted the police to assist in managing behaviours.

There has been an escalation in the use of holding children to keep them safe. Overall, this measure is used when children become physically aggressive. However, assessments do not include the measures that staff are to take should they be unable to safely manage a physical hold.

Children do not consistently engage with a debrief after being physically held, and records are not kept to indicate that a debrief has been offered. The lack of children's engagement indicates that relationships between children and staff are not yet secure. As a result, staff find it difficult to manage children's behaviours when they are in crisis.

Individual assessments take account of children's known behaviours and the triggers that serve to escalate behaviours further. However, strategies to successfully manage these behaviours are ineffective.

Staff have taken short-term action to take a child to a holiday apartment to minimise the impact of other children's behaviours on them. This supported the child to have undisturbed sleep, prepare for exams and continue with their education.

Children's engagement with staff has declined. Since one child's placement ended, staff have been working hard to rebuild trusting relationships with the two remaining children.

Incidents of children being reported as absent or missing from the home have reduced. One child with a significant history of being missing from home has not engaged in this behaviour since his admission. When an incident occurs, staff follow the home's procedures and are swift in ascertaining the child's whereabouts to ensure their safe return home.

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

The registered manager resigned from her position in December 2022. A new manager has been appointed to the home and is awaiting registration with Ofsted.

The manager's internal monitoring requires improvement. This is because when shortfalls are identified, such as the prolonged delay in finding a suitable school for one child, the action to address them is not clearly identified.

Children's case records, including assessments of risk, are monitored. However, records are not updated to indicate if the agreed measures are effective or if additional support measures are required. This means that staff do not consistently receive effective guidance in the management of challenging behaviours.

Overall, the staff are provided with regular supervision. Records of supervision taking place indicate that there have been opportunities to reflect on disruptions in the home. Therefore, staff are provided with some opportunities to reflect on their practice to aid their continued development.

Staff are provided with both online and face-to-face training. Records of training are updated, and opportunities for future training are discussed in team meetings and individual supervision sessions.

Several new staff working in the home do not have experience in residential childcare. They have undertaken mandatory training and completed an induction period. The inexperienced staff work alongside experienced staff. However, staff are not experienced in dealing with and managing the level of aggression that is exhibited in this home. As a result, some staff are anxious and unsure if they will remain in their post.

External monitoring is undertaken by independent reviewing officers who are employed by the authority. However, the external review is deficient. Consultation with children, parents and professionals is not routinely undertaken. Therefore, crucial feedback is not gathered to form the overall analysis of care or areas for further development.

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 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 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)(c)(h))	14 April 2023
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; 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.	14 April 2023

(Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv))	
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. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b))	14 April 2023
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— help each child to achieve the child’s education and training targets, as recorded in the child’s relevant plans; support each child’s learning and development, including helping the child to develop independent study skills and, where appropriate, helping the child to complete independent study; understand the barriers to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child to overcome any such barriers; help each child to understand the importance and value of education, learning, training and employment; 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;	14 April 2023

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; help each child to attend education or training in accordance with the expectations in the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 8 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(vii)(viii)(x))	
The registered person must prepare and implement a policy ("the behaviour management policy") which sets out— how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the children's home; and the measures of control, discipline and restraint which may be used in relation to children in the home. The registered person must keep the behaviour management policy under review and, where appropriate, revise it. The registered person must ensure that— within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (1)(a)(b) (2) (3)(c))	14 April 2023
The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month. 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; and to inspect the premises of the home and such of the home's records (except for a child's case records, unless the child and the child's placing authority consent) as the independent person requires. A visit by the independent person to the home may be unannounced.	14 April 2023

The independent person must produce a report about a visit (“the independent person’s report”) which sets out, in particular, the independent person’s opinion as to whether—

children are effectively safeguarded; and

the conduct of the home promotes children’s well-being.
(Regulation 44 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3) (4)(a)(b))

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: PO Box 78, Preston PR1 8XJ

Responsible individual: John Simpson

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Maria McGranaghan, 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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