

SC035439

Registered provider: Lancashire County Council

Assurance 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 provides care for up to three children who may have emotional and social difficulties.

At the time of this inspection, three children were living at the home. Two of the children were spoken to by the inspectors.

The manager registered with Ofsted in August 2023.

Inspection date: 13 November 2025

Date of last inspection: 3 September 2025

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Information about this inspection

At this inspection, the inspectors evaluated:

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

Inspectors have 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 identified the following serious and widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance inspection:

Risks to children have significantly increased. Decisions about which children should live together are poorly considered and have placed children at significant risk of harm.

Staff do not take effective action or follow children's risk assessments, leading to multiple incidents of children going missing from the home, placing them at significant risk of harm while missing.

Children's daily routines are poor. Staff have failed to establish and maintain routines that promote education and meaningful activity. As a result, children are frequently awake until the early hours of the morning, leading to irregular attendance and poor engagement at school.

The home environment is negatively impacted by having locks on some doors such as the lounge, gym and pantry. These restrictions compromise the homeliness of the setting and significantly limit children's access to positive experiences and activities essential for their well-being.

There have been significant changes in the staff team, including the addition of 11 new members of staff since June 2025. This level of staff turnover has created instability and disrupted continuity of care, compromising the ability to build secure and trusting relationships essential for children's safety and well-being.

Managers have failed to consistently identify poor practice or take timely action to address this. While investigations into identified concerns have been thorough, not all required actions have been completed. Furthermore, managers have not challenged effectively poor practice by specific staff members, leaving children exposed to ongoing risk.

There are gaps in staff training, including safeguarding and child sexual exploitation, despite the known risks to children. Substance misuse training has not been completed by all staff and there is no evidence of team discussions promoting professional curiosity. These gaps in training significantly compromise staff's ability to protect children and leave them at increased risk of harm.

Management oversight of records is inconsistent, with some documents undated, unsigned or written inappropriately, reducing accountability. In some cases, managers have minimised serious concerns despite clear warning signs, such as a child expressing intent to go missing, which significantly compromises safeguarding.

There is no formal system of supervision of agency staff. This compromises accountability and the ability to monitor staff practice effectively. Although supervision sessions with permanent members of staff occur regularly and include discussions on well-being and induction, their quality and impact are inconsistent. Staff have reported during supervision that colleagues have made inappropriate comments about children, yet these poor attitudes remain unchallenged.

Agency night staff do not monitor children effectively. In one instance, an agency worker recorded the wrong child's name in the evening log, demonstrating a lack of preparation and competence to provide safe care.

The staff duty rota is incomplete, with some staff names missing. This lack of clarity reduces accountability and makes it difficult to ensure safe and consistent care for children.

A case review was held on 18 November 2025 where it was agreed that compliance notices under regulation 12, the protection of children standard and regulation 13, the leadership and management standard, would be issued.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
03/09/2025	Full	Requires improvement to be good
29/05/2025	Full	Inadequate
23/10/2024	Full	Requires improvement to be good
11/06/2024	Full	Inadequate

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; 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, managers and staff must follow safeguarding procedures when children go missing from home. All known risks to children must be thoroughly assessed to prevent the placement of children together where this could escalate risk. All staff must complete safeguarding training to ensure that they have the knowledge and skills to safeguard children effectively.	12 December 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— 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 the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; ensure that the home’s workforce provides continuity of care to 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)(d)(e)(h)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that they implement an effective monitoring system so that there is an improved level of oversight and evaluation of significant incidents. Staff must work together as a team and provide continuity of care to children. Staff must understand their roles and responsibilities to ensure that they provide safe and effective care to children.	12 December 2025
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;	12 December 2025

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; promote opportunities for each child to learn informally; 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; 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 each child who is above compulsory school age to participate in further education, training or employment and to prepare for future care, education or employment; 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)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(ix)(x)) In particular, the registered person must advocate on behalf of children who are not in an appropriate educational placement, by challenging and escalating concerns with the placing authority and virtual school. The registered person must ensure that when children are not in receipt of education, they are provided with suitable, structured activities to help them to sustain or regain their confidence.	
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that each child's relevant plans are followed; (Regulation 14 (1)(a) (2)(c))	12 December 2025

In particular, the registered person must ensure that children have structured plans and routines each day.	
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; 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)) The registered person must ensure that locks on internal doors are removed.	12 December 2025
Schedule 4 sets out the other information that the registered person must keep in relation to a children’s home. The registered person must— maintain in the home the records in Schedule 4; (Regulation 37 (1) (2)(a)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that the home’s rotas contain a record of actual hours worked and contain staff full names.	12 December 2025

*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home’s policies on record-keeping and ensure that staff communicate with one another all important information relating to children living in the home. This includes the effective use of handover time when staff are starting and ending shift. (‘Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards’, page 62, paragraph 14.4)
- The registered person should ensure that staff consistently follow the home’s policies and procedures, and that everyone working in the home understand their

roles and responsibilities including adhering to professional boundaries for the benefit of the children living in the home. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.20)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC035439

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Lancashire County Council

Registered provider address: Lancashire County Council, PO Box 78, Preston
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Responsible individual: Tracey Sykes

Registered manager: Richard Lawler

Inspectors

Cathy Wilkins, Social Care Inspector
Sophie Thomson, Social Care Inspector

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