

SC035954

Registered provider: Metropolitan Borough of Wirral

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This service provides short-term breaks for up to six children. The provider states in their statement of purpose that they provide care for children who may have physical disabilities and/or complex learning disabilities. In addition, the home also provides accommodation on a permanent basis for up to six children. The local authority owns and manages this home.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since October 2022.

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 February 2024

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: 23 August 2022

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
23/08/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
30/03/2022	Interim	Improved effectiveness
12/10/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good
08/01/2020	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

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

Some children have left the residential and short-break provision. Three children have moved into the home since the last inspection. Before their arrival, staff provide children with opportunities to visit the home, and this helps children to settle in. When children move on from the home, their moves are well planned, and they take photo books with them as keepsakes.

Some of the children do not have current education and health care plans and for those that do, some contain inaccurate and out-of-date information. The manager has escalated this with senior leaders in the local authority. Despite her best efforts, this remains a significant shortfall. As a result, staff do not have all the information they need to fully understand children's needs and how best to support them.

For one child where restrictions of liberty are identified as part of their care plan, a court-directed order has expired. The manager has escalated this issue with the local authority appropriately, although sufficient action has not been taken. As such, some restrictions placed on the child do not have the required court oversight and could be considered unlawful.

Children have access to a spacious living environment and are provided with a range of specialised equipment. However, some areas of the home require ongoing attention and maintenance. Various walls and doors in the home require repair and redecoration as they are unclean in places and appear tired. For example, new flooring is required in the dining area of the residential provision, and one door is currently boarded. This requires new glass to be purchased. This is necessary to ensure that children live in a more homely environment.

Children experience activities both inside and outside the home. Trips are planned, and children benefit from community-based activities. There are regular theme nights and in-house activities that children enjoy.

Children's health needs are met. They are encouraged to eat healthily through the provision of a wide and varied menu, and their input is considered in developing these menus. Staff collaborate with multi-agency teams to look at healthy eating programmes and support for children to help them manage their well-being and personal hygiene. Since the last inspection, a new electronic medical tracking system has been implemented. This helps ensure that all children's appointments are attended and any required actions are noted.

Staff are working in partnership with education providers to share information daily. Staff attend all education meetings. Children are making progress in school, and their attendance is good.

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

Inspectors identified shortfalls in safeguarding practice and in the implementation of safeguarding policies. For example, when one child made an allegation following a physical intervention, staff and managers did not take sufficient action in line with the home's child protection policy. During the inspection, the provider took the necessary action to address this.

Physical interventions take place as a last resort. Where necessary, they form part of the child's behaviour support plan, including techniques to be used. However, the recording is not always in line with regulations. For example, information about the duration of holds and staff debriefs is missing. It is unclear how children who may not use verbal communication share their views during debriefs.

Children are supported by appropriate staffing ratios due to their complex needs. As a result, incidents of children going missing from home are rare. When a child did go missing from the home, staff responded appropriately. Following this incident, staff discussions took place around lessons learned, and children's plans were reviewed.

Since the last inspection, there has been one reported medication error. Staff took prompt action to ensure the safety and well-being of the child involved. The manager has since made improvements in the administration of medication procedures. Staff have completed training in a series of competencies. There are more robust checks in place to ensure all children receive the correct dose of medication. Medication is stored in a safe place and records are detailed.

Improvements have been made to recruitment practice. Safe recruitment processes are understood and implemented by the manager. This means that all staff are vetted before working in the home.

The manager has ensured that fire practices in the home are safe. Each child has a personal emergency evacuation plan that provides staff with details of the support that child requires in the event of a fire. All staff are suitably trained in fire safety. Children regularly take part in fire evacuations and receive child-friendly certificates as rewards for their participation.

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

There is a suitably qualified and experienced manager in post, who has a professional ethos. Two deputies support the manager, and together, they put the children at the centre of all decisions. The manager is supported by a stable team of experienced staff who know the children well. Staff said the manager is flexible and approachable, and the team works well together.

Due to currently high levels of sickness absence, there has been a reliance on the use of agency staff. However, leaders and managers ensure that only agency staff who the children know work at the home to ensure continuity of care.

The manager finds the external monitoring of the home valuable. She has recently implemented auditing systems. However, actions identified within the audits do not always comment on the quality of information contained within the children's records. The oversight of the home is improving, but the changes are not fully embedded in practice, and this remains an area of development. Furthermore, inspectors found that not all staff have received training relevant to children's individual needs, for example deprivation of liberty safeguards, autism, self-harm and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. As a result, not all staff have the required knowledge to meet children's needs or understand the requirements of some court-directed orders.

Leaders and managers recognise the strengths and areas for wider development. The registered manager is working closely with the responsible individual on the home's development plan to help focus on the improvements needed in the home. A recommendation has been made to address this.

Supervision is variable in quality. Not all records are signed, and records do not demonstrate that discussions are detailed and reflective in nature with clear actions for staff to improve their practice. A recommendation has been made to address this.

There is positive feedback from families and professionals. One parent said, 'They are always so receptive and friendly.' Another parent said, 'Staff really understand my child's needs.' One professional said, 'When [name of child] was struggling with his mental health, the staff sought immediate support.'

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
In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 5 (c)) This specifically relates to ensuring that up-to-date children's educational, health and care plans and court-directed orders are obtained, that these are held on the children's files and they influence care planning effectively.	5 April 2024
The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(i)) This specifically relates to redecoration of many areas of the home, from the short-breaks provision and across the	5 April 2024

residential area, including replacement flooring and glass in the door in the residential side of the home. This specifically relates to the ongoing maintenance and upkeep of all units in a timely way to ensure that they provide a suitable, homely environment for children.	
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— 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; are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(v)(vi)(vii)) In particular, staff and managers should take effective action when an allegation is made by a child in line with their safeguarding policy and ensure that this is properly recorded.	5 April 2024
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;	5 April 2024

use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(c)(h)) In particular, the manager must ensure that she has oversight over children's records, including restraints, and ensure that all staff receive training in deprivation of liberty safeguards, autism, self-harm and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.	
The registered person must ensure that— within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes— a description of the measure and its duration; the name of the person who used the measure ("the user"), and of any other person present when the measure was used; the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and 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 (3)(a)(iv)(vi)(vii)(b)(i)(iii)(c)) In particular, the manager must ensure that staff are completing information about the duration of holds used, comment on the effectiveness, provide clear oversight of all restraints and have spoken to the child, taking into account their communication needs.	5 April 2024

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that there is a workforce plan in place which can fulfil the workforce requirements of regulation 16, schedule 1. The plan should include any new training and qualifications completed by staff, detail the process for managing poor performance and timescales for induction and supervision of new staff. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)
- The registered person should ensure that supervision records are signed by both parties and contain a detailed account of the discussions held and that practice is discussed and reflected on. Additionally, ensure that team meeting minutes are detailed and contain clear actions. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.4)

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: SC035954

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Metropolitan Borough of Wirral

Registered provider address: Education Department, Hamilton Building, Conway Street, Birkenhead, Merseyside CH41 4FD

Responsible individual: Debra Kewley

Registered manager: Susan Hughes

Inspectors

Judith Birchall, Social Care Inspector

Gareth Dakin, His majesty's Inspector, Social Care

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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