

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 three children. The local authority owns and manages this home.

The registered manager post has been vacant since November 2021. A new manager has been appointed. She is not registered with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 August 2022

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: 30 March 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
30/03/2022	Interim	Improved effectiveness
12/10/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good
08/01/2020	Full	Outstanding
18/12/2018	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

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

This home provides short breaks and residential provision for children with complex needs. Children are cared for by a nurturing staff team that knows them well.

Inspectors found that care planning arrangements are not robust. Since the last inspection, two children have moved into the home in an unplanned way. As a result, planned stays were cancelled for several children. This means that children and their families were unable to access this much-needed respite support.

The home is suitably equipped to care for children with additional physical needs. The home has recently undergone some refurbishment. However, not all the accommodation provided to children is finished to a high standard. Additional work has been requested by the responsible individual. However, there are no timescales set for this work to be carried out.

Children engage in a wide range of positive activities inside and outside of the home. There are lots of photos displayed around the home of children taking part in new experiences and activities that they enjoy. This is helping build their confidence. As a result, children have opportunities for making new friendships and having fun.

Children attend school on a full-time basis and are making good progress. Where there have been difficulties with one child due to his high levels of anxiety, staff have worked proactively with a range of professionals to help the child overcome these barriers. Additionally, the manager has suitably escalated the lack of up-to-date education, health and care plans for some children.

Children and parents are involved in all aspects of the home. They are regularly consulted on their views. This is done using a monthly child-friendly newsletter, questionnaires and children's meetings. Additionally, these give opportunities to celebrate birthdays and other positive achievements. As a result, children are encouraged to fulfil their potential.

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

Robust recruitment procedures are not in place. Records of recruitment do not demonstrate that all required references have been sought, and rigorous employment checks have not been completed prior to staff starting work at the home. This means that potentially unsuitable adults could be employed at the home which would place children at risk of harm.

Improvements have been made to children's risk management plans. Plans identify areas of concern and provide strategies to enable staff to manage risk. However,

when one child was admitted to the home in an emergency, inspectors found the risk management plan was of poor quality. The manager took action to address this during the inspection. Furthermore, one child's plan did not include guidelines in relation to a specific risk for that child. This means that staff do not have the written guidance they need to keep children safe from harm.

The manager has introduced new incident records in the home to make these clearer. However, the inspectors found shortfalls in the recording of some incidents. Staff do not consistently record the details of the incident in full and, on occasions, children have not had an opportunity to take part in a debrief following an incident. This does not ensure that children are suitably safeguarded. Additionally, there is limited management oversight and any associated learning from these incidents. This means that opportunities to reflect and identify alternative strategies are missed.

There are effective and robust medication procedures in place. There is safe storage of all medications including controlled drugs. This ensures that children have the appropriate and correct medication that they need to maintain their emotional well-being.

Children do not go missing from the home due to the high staffing levels. Staff know the children well and can demonstrate what action they would take should a child go missing from this home.

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

There has been no registered manager in post since November 2021. A new manager has been appointed. She has worked at the home for several years and knows the service well. The manager has recently submitted her application to register with Ofsted.

There are weaknesses in the manager's monitoring and reviewing processes. This lack of oversight has led to documents not being completed, a lack of evaluation following incidents, and a lack of clarity to children's plans. Furthermore, the manager had failed to identify the issues identified during the inspection in relation to risk assessments and recruitment checks.

Some children's records are written in a child-centred way. However, records are not consistently documented to a good standard. It is not always clear when records have been written or who the author is. This is not helpful to the child understanding their time in the home.

Since the last inspection, progress has been made in the training and development of staff working in this home. As a result, there have been improvements in staff receiving all necessary training. This ensures that staff have the knowledge and skills to support children's complex needs.

Children are supported by a caring and dedicated staff team. Staff work collaboratively to provide consistency. They treat the children with dignity and respect. Feedback from parents and professionals is positive. One parent said that their child was well cared for. A professional said, 'Staff speak very warmly of [name of child] and he responds with cuddles and smiles.'

There is a system in place to ensure that staff have regular supervision in line with the organisation's policy. Information and good practice are shared within team meetings and handovers.

Managers are aware of the strengths and areas for development in the home. The home's development plan identifies areas for improvement and is regularly reviewed. The leadership team took on board the shortfalls identified and discussed actions to address the areas that require further improvement. At the last inspection, there were four requirements issued. Only one of these has been met and, subsequently, three requirements are repeated.

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 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; that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(b))	6 October 2022
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(h))	6 October 2022
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	6 October 2022

that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home's statement of purpose; that arrangements are in place to— ensure the effective induction of each child into the home; manage and review the placement of each child in the home; and plan for, and help, each child to prepare to leave the home or to move into adult care in a way that is consistent with arrangements agreed with the child's placing authority; that each child's relevant plans are followed. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(i)(ii)(iii)(c))	
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children's home; or if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that— the individual is of integrity and good character; the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform; the individual is mentally and physically fit for the purposes of the work that the individual is to perform; and full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3)(a)(b)(c)(d))	6 October 2022
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which—	6 October 2022

include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child;

are kept up to date; and

are signed and dated by the author of each entry.

Case records must be kept—

if the child dies before attaining the age of 18, for 15 years from the date of the child's death;

in cases not falling within sub-paragraph (a), for 75 years from the child's date of birth;

securely in the children's home during the period when the child to whom the case records relate is accommodated there; and

in a secure place after the child has ceased to be accommodated in the home.

(Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(b)(c)(d))

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the children's home is a homely and domestic environment. Decoration is required in some aspects of the home. One of the bathrooms requires the tiles to be replaced, and the walls in the corridors and dining areas to be updated and freshened up. Additionally, all televisions to be taken from the cabinets and placed on the walls. ('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: SC035954

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider:

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

Responsible individual: Debra Kewley

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Judith Birchall, Social Care Inspector
Genevieve O'Reilly, Social Care Inspector

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