

SC036019

Registered provider: Derby City Council

Assurance inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned by a local authority and provides care for up to four children who experience social and emotional difficulties. There are currently two children living at the home.

The home is led by an experienced manager, who is registered with Ofsted.

Inspection date: 21 November 2023

Date of last inspection: 6 July 2023

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Information about this inspection

At this inspection, the inspector 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 did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance inspection.

The care of children

Children and staff have warm relationships. The children can identify staff who they trust and who they can go to with any worries they might have. There are also improved relationships between children. Previous concerns around bullying between peers is no longer a concern as effective action has been taken to improve this.

Staff encourage children to make progress in education. One child has recently been supported to improve school attendance and is now working towards attending full-time. Another child has been out of education for some time but is being helped to explore colleges where they could be supported to gain functional skills qualifications. Staff are strong advocates for the children, recognising the importance of education in preparing them for their future.

Managers understand the importance of children having the opportunity to share their feelings and to reflect following any incidents that are of concern. Individual key-work sessions for children have been identified as an area for development. Consequently, managers have supported staff to ensure that recording reflects conversations taking place between staff and the children. A better system of tracking key-work session means that managers can identify the topics that need further exploration and be sure that children's voices are being listened to with increased frequency.

There has been an increase in incidents resulting in damage to the property. This has led to a deterioration in conditions at the home. The shared spaces are not as homely or inviting as at the last inspection. The manager continues to request that damage to the property is repaired quickly, and the staff are thinking creatively about how to ensure the space remains a nice place for the children. Children's bedrooms are personalised and one child was in the process of decorating their room, with the support of staff.

The safety of children

The manager has commissioned independent advice from consultants to understand the children's challenging behaviours and how best to respond. Consequently, risk assessments and care plans have been adapted to be more individualised and accessible for staff. Plans are now clear about the actions required before, during and after an incident. There is a focus on de-escalation and avoiding children being held.

Staff respond well when children go missing from home. The children's individual risk assessments have been updated to include required actions when the child leaves the local area on public transport and known addresses where the child has been found. Staff are proactive when children go missing. They work well with the police, social care and the child's family. Staff have been able to establish children's patterns of behaviour and they are therefore able to respond to episodes of them going missing with increasing effectiveness.

There has been an increase in physical interventions for one child. Records of physical interventions are not always thorough and do not always include required details about the duration of the hold or the type of hold used. Children and staff are not always offered the opportunity to debrief following incidents. There is not yet effective oversight of the appropriateness or proportionality of the interventions used. This has the potential to put children at risk.

When serious incidents occur or allegations are made, these are appropriately reported to both social care and Ofsted, which shows that staff understand the actions required to keep children safe. However, recording of incidents remains inconsistent. Records lack detail, are often spread over several documents and do not offer the wider context of incidents. Therefore, it is not always possible to understand staff actions or learning following serious incidents at the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

Staff retention is good. There are sufficient staff to care for the children, but several vacancies remain. Recruitment remains ongoing and two new members of staff have recently been appointed.

When there are incidents at the home, staff sometimes struggle to prioritise completing the required documentation. The manager said she has sometimes supported on shifts, which has taken her away from having the necessary oversight of incidents.

The manager has worked hard to ensure that staff have accessed the required training, and this is now up to date for most staff. When more specific training is required, this is quickly requested. Regular meetings with the manager of the neighbouring children's home are enabling shared learning and better collaboration to manage incidents that involve children from both homes.

The manager understands the importance of thorough auditing to track children's progress. She has begun to develop monthly monitoring systems to understand the incidents occurring at the home. The home is visited regularly by an independent visitor. Their reports are provided to Ofsted but do not always include required consultation with children, families or professionals. Similarly, the regulation 45 report is submitted to Ofsted, but the manager's evaluation and oversight of the care provided to children at the home are not at an acceptable level.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/07/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
23/01/2020	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
02/07/2019	Full	Good
19/11/2018	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

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 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)(b)) This specifically refers to ensuring that records of incidents, episodes of children going missing and restraints are clear, detailed and demonstrate management oversight, reflection and learning.	4 December 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. 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) (4))	4 December 2023

This specifically refers to ensuring the independent visitor's reports include consultation with stakeholders and have clear statements about the safety of children in the home.	
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality of care review") at least once every 6 months. In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating— the quality of care provided for children; the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. After completing a quality of care review, the registered person must produce a written report about the quality of care review and the actions which the registered person intends to take as a result of the quality of care review ("the quality of care review report"). The registered person must— supply to HMCI a copy of the quality of care review report within 28 days of the date on which the quality of care review is completed; and make a copy of the quality of care review report available on request to a placing authority, if the placing authority is not the parent of a child accommodated in the home. The system referred to in paragraph (2) must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff. (Regulation 45 (1) (2)(a)(b)(c) (3) (4)(a)(b) (5)) This particularly refers to ensuring that reports include the manager's evaluation and analysis of the care at the home and have clear actions to improve outcomes for children.	4 December 2023

Recommendation

- For children's homes to be nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of their children, they will, in most cases, be homely, domestic environments. Children's homes must comply with relevant health and safety legislations (alarms, food hygiene, etc.); however, in doing so, homes should seek as far as possible to maintain a domestic rather than institutional impression. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC036019

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Derby City Council

Registered provider address: Derby City Council, Treasurers Department, Council House, Corporation Street, Derby DE1 2FE

Responsible individual: Sharon Green

Registered manager: Cheryl Lawrence

Inspector

Louise Copping, Social Care Inspector

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