

SC036026

Registered provider: Sheffield City Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and managed by a local authority. It offers care for up to five children who experience social and/or emotional difficulties. The home is intended to operate as a hub where children stay for short periods until they are ready to move on to a permanent home.

Four children were living at the home at the time of the inspection.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since 4 July 2023.

Inspection dates: 30 and 31 January 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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Date of last inspection: 17 May 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
17/05/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
24/08/2021	Full	Good
15/10/2019	Full	Good
12/09/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

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

The staff and manager understand the children's needs and experiences. This helps children build and maintain close relationships with staff. Children have trusted staff whom they can share their views with. There has been a reduction in some of the children displaying challenging behaviour since moving to the home. This has been attributed to the relationships between staff and children as well as the implementation of firm boundaries. There have been some instances of professionals describing staff as going 'above and beyond' for children. However, an absence of suitable homes for some of the children to move on to has led to four children living here instead of three. This means staff are required to manage the competing needs of children who all have complex needs. Some children have discussed finding the dynamics in the home difficult to manage. For one child, this has led to frustration and unhappiness.

Children are engaging with education. There are examples of children attending education after moving into the home despite refusing to do so beforehand. Staff work in collaboration with the virtual school to identify schools and work placements. Children's talents are identified and promoted. One child's talent in music has been supported by staff and enabled them to participate in a live music workshop and join a band. Independence skills are also promoted and supported. Children learn independence skills, such as budgeting and cooking, to prepare them for moving on to semi-independent homes when they are ready.

Children's health needs are met. Appointments are supported and attended. There is an example of a child engaging with medical appointments to resolve an ongoing issue which they had refused to do before moving to the home. There is regular consultation with the multi-agency psychological support team to understand children's emotional and mental health and access treatment.

Family relationships are supported and staff provide families with regular updates. Some children are regularly driven long distances to see their families. Families can also visit the home if it is deemed safe for them to do so. This allows the children to develop a sense of identity and maintain networks that may support them when they reach adulthood.

A significant number of agency staff have been used since the last inspection. This has been due to a combination of staff vacancies and staff sickness. Permanent members of staff accompany agency staff to ensure a familiar face for children. However, one child raised their unhappiness over the amount of different staff working in the home. This raises concerns over continuity of care for the children.

Damage to the home is not repaired promptly. One child's bedroom contains furniture which is damaged. The child's bedroom walls also had dirty marks on them

which have not been painted over or cleaned off. There had been a lack of persistence and creativity to encourage the child to allow the room to be decorated and repaired. Rubbish bags have also been left to pile up outside the home around the bins. These things have led to the home looking unkempt and makes it difficult for children to take pride in where they live.

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

Staff use distraction and redirection to de-escalate situations when children are becoming upset or frustrated. Staff also use therapeutic approaches to help children feel calmer when they become angry or frustrated. Physical interventions are used as a last resort and are proportionate. Staff are trained to manage the children's behaviour effectively and safely. Staff understand the processes required after a hold. Children are debriefed and there is management oversight.

Allegations against staff are taken seriously and acted on promptly. There is oversight from the manager and the local authority designated officer. Allegation meetings are recorded clearly and provide supportive plans to reduce incidents moving forward.

Room searches are undertaken proportionately. Children are informed why a room search is required. The manager's oversight of room searches is present.

Risk assessments are not always updated, meaning some risks are not clear to staff. There was one example of a risk assessment lacking clarity as to whether a child should receive face-to-face or virtual visits. The child alleged they had been seriously assaulted on an evening when a face-to-face visit was not undertaken. There have been other instances of staff not going looking for children or contacting police in line with the missing protocol. On some occasions, a lack of staff has been the reason for staff not going looking for children.

The home's fire systems are not fully functioning due to the children tampering with and damaging them. For example, a smoke detector has been continuously ripped from the ceiling after being reinstalled. Also, closing devices on bedroom doors which close in the event of a fire are broken so that they can be left open. This has been an ongoing issue since at least August 2023. This raises concerns over the safety of the children and staff from fire. However, the children have metal bedframes and fireproof bedding to reduce the risk of fire. Fire alarm tests and fire drills are also regularly undertaken.

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

Staff receive regular supervision sessions that are reflective and support practice. Supervisors have received training from an external provider to ensure the quality of supervision. Staff feel supported and speak with senior staff members and managers

outside of formal supervision if they have problems or worries. They are supported by the team to meet the children's needs. Team meetings are held regularly. The children and staff practice are discussed. Staff also raise any issues and concerns they may have. However, there is no accountability for actions from the meetings. This has contributed to delays in things such as memory books and weekly planners being completed.

Safer recruitment is effective. Staff have the necessary checks and documents on file. Checks on staff from overseas are also completed to ensure their suitability to work with children. The location risk assessment is reviewed annually and there is consultation with the relevant partners to minimise risk to children.

Complaints are managed appropriately. Action is taken to address the issue and prevent further problems. The children are involved in the process. Complainants receive feedback when the process is completed and there is sufficient management oversight. In instances where complaints have been made by neighbours, the process has helped to improve relations between the children and the local community.

The statement of purpose does not give an accurate reflection of the home. Children are living at the home for long periods, meaning the hub model is not functioning properly. This has been a theme since the last inspection. There has also been no psychologist in post for some time. This means that psychological assessment and support cannot be accessed as set out in the statement of purpose.

Children's care plans are kept up to date, helping staff to meet the children's needs. The manager completes a quality of care review setting out what systems are in place to ascertain the children's wishes and feelings. However, the manager does not include the children's feedback in the review. This makes it difficult to understand how children's wishes and feelings have impacted on the care they receive. The manager's oversight of incidents has been insufficient. The oversight does not provide effective scrutiny, meaning the completion of actions is not confirmed and practice is not improved through reflection.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person 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 must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
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)(2)(c)(i)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that damage to the home is repaired in a timely manner, that home waste is disposed of appropriately and that children's bedrooms are decorated to an acceptable standard.	30 April 2024
After consultation with the fire and rescue authority, the registered person must— take adequate precautions against the risk of fire, including the provision of suitable fire equipment in the children's home. (Regulation 25 (1)(a)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that fire systems are fully functioning and cannot be disabled by children living in the home.	30 April 2024
The registered person must ensure that the employment of any person on a temporary basis at the children's home does not prevent children from receiving such continuity of care as is reasonable to meet their needs.	30 April 2024

(Regulation 31 (1))	
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; 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)(v)(vi)(b)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that staff have detailed and clear plans which set out the actions staff must take to ensure children’s safety. In the event staffing numbers prevent action being taken, the registered person must ensure that there is an effective contingency plan which staff must follow.	30 April 2024
The registered person must compile in relation to the children’s home a statement (“the statement of purpose”) which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1. The registered person must— keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it. (Regulation 16 (1) (3)(a)) In particular, the registered person must make clear in the statement of purpose that the in-house psychologist position is vacant and that the hub model of moving children on to new homes quickly is not currently in place.	30 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—	30 April 2024

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 work as a team where appropriate;

ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child;

understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home.

(Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(d)(f))

In particular, the registered person must provide sufficient scrutiny of shortfalls in staff practice to improve the level of care for children. The registered person must also ensure that tasks from team meetings have clear timescales and that the person expected to complete them is identified.

Recommendation

- The registered person should provide the views of children in their quality of care review report so it is clear how they have informed the planning and processes in the home. (‘Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards’, page 65, paragraph 15.4)

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: SC036026

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Sheffield City Council

Registered provider address: Town Hall, Pinstone Street, Sheffield S1 2HH

Responsible individual: Sally Williams

Registered manager: Carly Peters

Inspectors

Ed McCallum, Social Care Inspector
Joanna Beal, Social Care Inspector

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