

SC037647

Registered provider: Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority home provides short-break care for up to 18 children with learning and/or physical disabilities. The home is registered to provide care for up to three children at one time.

The manager registered with Ofsted in July 2022.

At the time of the inspection, no children were staying at the home overnight. One child was having an introductory day visit in the home.

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 February 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 11 February 2020

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
11/02/2020	Full	Requires improvement to be good
28/08/2018	Full	Outstanding
30/11/2017	Full	Outstanding
14/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Staff place children's well-being at the centre of their practice. Plans are comprehensive and are consistent with the local authority's care plans.

Introductions for children to the home are gradual and carried out with sensitivity. Careful and thorough planning reduces children's anxieties about staying away from their family home. Staff meet children, parents, and teachers from the child's school so that a holistic picture of each child is formed prior to overnight stays.

Families are encouraged to visit the home before children have overnight stays. This was evident during the inspection as one child was on his second evening meal visit.

Staff help children to work towards simple, achievable goals. Staff encourage children to make choices about their care, for example through using 'now' and 'next' cards, which the children like.

Children's plans are written in the child's voice. However, inspectors found use of outdated language in a child's care planning documents, and a child's diagnosis is not clear in one record. Some children do not have updated Education, Health and Care plans on file despite managers continually requesting these documents from the placing authority. However, individual home-care plans are reflective of each child's current needs.

Further work is required to ensure that managers involve parents in contributing to and reviewing their child's plans. This will support staff to have a clear understanding of how to meet the children's needs during their stays at the home.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Children are safe in the home due to a high level of staffing and the manager actively matching children's overnight stays during the year. Staff have a good understanding of children's individual risks and vulnerabilities, which are clearly written in their plans.

Children's plans are detailed and set out how children should be supported during their stay. There is an emphasis on working with children's parents and professionals to inform care plans that are consistent. One professional said, 'It is a fantastic home which meets children's needs and helps parents relax knowing their children are being cared for well.'

Staff use a wide range of verbal and non-verbal communication methods, specific to each child, to seek children's views and wishes. This practice ensures that children engage in decisions about their stays and overall care.

Risk assessments are robust and are regularly reviewed and updated with strong management oversight. The location risk assessment is comprehensive. However, the local offer for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities should be included so that children's experiences can be widened.

There have been some medication errors since the last inspection; however, these have not impacted negatively on children's well-being. The manager acknowledged this shortfall prior to the inspection, and children's records have been reviewed to limit errors and have a strong management oversight. The staff team is due to attend bespoke training, including waking night staff, so that all care staff have oversight of their legal responsibility in this area.

Children achieve important targets to increase their independence and well-being. However, children who are transitioning to adult services face uncertainty. One parent spoke of facing a 'cliff edge' when her son turned 18. The manager has limited ability to influence this, and the responsible individual has acknowledged this as an area to develop.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager demonstrates a sincere passion for improving children's outcomes and works well with external professionals to ensure that children's needs are met.

Since the last inspection, records for children have been comprehensively overhauled, and they demonstrate the journey of the child effectively. Plans are regularly reviewed by staff before each child stays overnight. This allows staff to understand any changes to the children's individual care needs.

Managers use monitoring systems, including self-auditing and independent person reports, to drive improvements effectively. This ensures that managers have good oversight of the home so that they can monitor the quality of care provided for children. This helps staff to monitor and review children's plans, and any learning from practice is shared with staff during supervision sessions and team meetings.

Staff feel supported by the manager and deputy managers and say that the management team is approachable and open to ideas. For example, a member of staff has developed an activity book which allows children to choose activities in the local area that they would like to do.

The manager's oversight of the whole staff team, including staff who are working overnight, is not yet effective. This is still an area for staff development, and it is important that this is included in the next review of the quality of care.

The manager has ambitions to develop the service, which includes hosting coffee mornings and drop-in sessions for parents and other professionals, such as the social workers from the children with disability team.

The home provides a welcoming and positive environment for children. However, there are some areas, such as the kitchen and bathroom, which need updating, and some sensory equipment needs replacing. The manager has already identified these issues and investment has been secured to address these areas.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that parents and children, where possible, understand the records the home keeps about them. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.5)
- The registered person should ensure that medicines are administered in line with the medically approved protocol, which includes when medication is refused. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.15)
- The registered person should ensure that she works with the placing authority to enable children to transition from the home when they become adults. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 17, paragraph 3.7)
- The registered person should ensure that she has oversight of all staff in the home, including daytime staff and overnight staff. This specifically relates to regulation 45, which requires the registered person to complete a review of the quality of care at least once every six months. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.23)

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: SC037647

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Knowsley MBC, Children's Services, Huyton
Municipal Buildings, 6th Floor, Huyton, Knowsley, Merseyside L36 9YU

Responsible individual: Karen Jude

Registered manager: Julia Nelson

Inspectors

Colin Jones, Social Care Inspector
Karen Willson, Social Care Inspector

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