

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 to 23 children who have a learning disability, physical disability and/or complex health needs. It is registered to provide short-break care for up to four children at a time.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since January 2010. He is the registered manager for another children's home within the same local authority. The registered manager has been absent from post since October 2018.

Inspection dates: 11 to 12 February 2020

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 **inadequate**

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: 28 August 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/08/2018	Full	Outstanding
30/11/2017	Full	Outstanding
14/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
14/12/2016	Full	Good

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 the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. (Regulation 12 (1) (a)(b)(2)(d)) This is specifically in relation to ensuring that the home's fire risk assessment and health and safety assessment are updated as required. Additionally, to ensure that all fire doors remain fit for purpose.	27/03/2020
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 ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; and use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(2)(c)(h)) This is specifically in relation to improving the registered manager's oversight of the home's records and the staff's training. Additionally, ensure that the staff are provided with regular formal supervision.	27/03/2020
The registered person must keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16 (3)(a)(b))	27/03/2020
The registered person must ensure that all employees have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once a year. (Regulation 33 (4)(c))	27/03/2020

Recommendations

- Staff should continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. Where there are safeguarding concerns for a child, their placement plan, agreed between the home and parent/carers and social workers, must include details of the steps the home will take to manage any assessed risks on a day to day basis. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5) In particular, strengthening the risk assessments and agreeing them with parents and carers.
- The behaviour management strategy should be understood and applied at all times by staff and must be kept under review and revised where appropriate. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.34) In particular, strengthening the behaviour management plans and agreeing them with parents and carers.
- Children's records are recorded in a way that is helpful to understand children's lives. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraphs 14.4 and 14.5) In particular, the children's records should clearly show their experiences and progress and how the service is helping them to achieve better outcomes. The staff should make sure that this information is consistently made available to the children's parents and carers.

Inspection judgements

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

Weaknesses in leadership and management have negatively impacted on the home's overall inspection judgement. The leadership and management shortfalls identified at this inspection have resulted in a judgement of inadequate in this area.

The judgement of the effectiveness of leaders and managers is a graded judgement. This means that if this area is judged to be inadequate, the judgement for overall experiences and progress of children can be no more than requires improvement to be good.

Despite the inadequacies in leadership, the children benefit from having short breaks at a friendly and child-centred service. They were observed laughing and joking with the staff and enjoying playing in the home's newly refurbished garden.

The staff make sure that the children are fully prepared for their first overnight stay at the home. The children are carefully introduced to the home at a pace that reflects their individual needs. These well-planned introduction visits provide the children with valuable opportunities to meet staff and other children before they sleep over.

The staff have an in-depth understanding of each child's needs and interests, which helps them to provide personalised care to the children. However, the children's records do not clearly demonstrate their experiences and progress and how the staff are helping them to achieve better outcomes.

The children have opportunities to attend a wide range of fun activities in the local community, such as bowling, going on nature walks and trips to the park. As a result, the children's social skills, independence and confidence increase.

The staff encourage and support children to make choices about their care and activities in a meaningful way. This often involves the staff skilfully using different communication tools and interpreting the children's body language.

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

Shortfalls in the home's risk assessments are potentially compromising the children's welfare and safety. In particular, the fire risk assessment and health and safety assessments are not being undertaken at least annually as required.

The manager does not undertake regular audits of the children's medication records to ensure that all medication is being administered safely and as prescribed.

The children's written safeguarding and behaviour management plans are an area for improvement. For example, some had not been updated to reflect changes in the child's behaviour and the strategies for managing behaviour were not always clearly documented. Furthermore, there was little evidence of these plans being agreed and signed by parents and carers.

The staff are skilled at nurturing trusting relationships with the children, which helps them to settle and feel safe during their short-break visits. Furthermore, the parents and carers trust the staff and they are confident that their children are safe and secure in the staff's care.

The staff treat children with dignity and always make sure that children's intimate care needs are met sensitively.

The children are encouraged and supported by the staff to take age-appropriate risks, like other children do, have fun and flourish.

The safe recruitment policy and procedures are enhancing the children's welfare and safety. Consistent safe recruitment practice is ensuring that all staff are rigorously vetted before they start to work at the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The registered manager is currently absent from post. The senior residential worker and responsible individual are managing the service in the interim. The responsible individual oversaw this inspection.

Weak management oversight of the service is potentially compromising the children's welfare and safety, for example the identified shortfalls in the fire and the health and safety assessments of the home.

The manager's commitment to the continuous development of the home is not evident. The requirement raised at the last inspection has not been met. The staff are still not receiving annual appraisals to evaluate their performance and identify any gaps in their learning and development. Additionally, the recommendation raised at the last inspection in relation to improving the children's records has not been satisfactorily addressed.

The home's statement of purpose has not been kept up to date to reflect all changes within the home, such as the changes in management. This does not ensure that all stakeholders, including parents and carers, are fully informed of the current management arrangements.

The monitoring of staff's training is weak. The responsible individual was not able to provide details of the training that the staff have attended, other than the mandatory training. As a result, she was not certain if all staff had completed some relevant training, such as fire safety and child protection training that is specific to disabled children.

The staff do not receive regular professional supervision from a manager. Consequently, opportunities for the staff to formally reflect on their practice with their line manager are missed.

Communication with parents and carers is variable. While some parents receive feedback after their child's visits to the service, others do not. Furthermore, consultation with parents and carers is an area for improvement.

Prior to the inspection, the responsible individual and senior residential worker had already identified some of the weaknesses in the management of the home, such as the shortfalls in the children's records and consultation with parents and carers.

The stable, experienced and nurturing staff team is a key strength of this service. Without a doubt, the staff have the children's best interests at the centre of their practice and they make sure that the children enjoy their short-break visits to the home.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council

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

Responsible individual: Ruth France

Registered manager: James De Turberville

Inspector

Marina Tully, social care inspector

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