

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 children with learning and/or physical disabilities. The home is registered to provide care for up to three children at one time. The provider must ensure that a placement of any child or young person is made under short-break arrangements and not as a permanent placement.

The manager registered with Ofsted in July 2022.

At the time of this inspection, two children were staying at the home overnight. Both children spent time with the inspector.

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 November 2025

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: 29 October 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
29/10/2024	Full	Good
24/10/2023	Full	Good
08/02/2023	Full	Good
11/02/2020	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

This short-break service is operated by a local authority offering help and support to children and their families. Children are cared for by nurturing and dedicated staff who know them well. Positive relationships and regular communication between staff and children's families result in children experiencing continuity of care and routine while staying at the home.

Children are making good progress in many aspects of their lives. The manager works with parents and professionals to create individual, tailored plans and work to agreed goals to help support children and family dynamics. Parents say that they can see the progress the children are making in developing their life skills and confidence in going out on activities. This positive development is enabling families to spend more time together, enjoying outings and creating positive memories.

Staff build trusting relationships with children. All children, including those who are nonverbal or have barriers to communication, are supported to express their views and feelings. Staff use children's preferred methods of communication, such as Makaton, individualised symbol systems and social stories. This enables children to participate fully when they stay at the home.

Children have positive experiences and fun during their stays, and they build friendships with other children. Staff are skilled in using resources to give children opportunities that may not have been possible without the short-break service. Parents and social workers say that children look forward to their stays.

Staff support the health needs of the children during their stay. This includes working with health professionals and parents. This helps to manage children's lifelong conditions. The manager ensures that staff have the appropriate skills and knowledge to meet the children's complex health needs.

Staff support children to develop life skills in line with their ability. This is achieved through staff sensitively encouraging children to meet set goals, such as helping to prepare meals, attending to their own personal hygiene or going shopping. This helps children to become less dependent on adults and start developing more independence.

Staff celebrate the achievements of the children. After each stay, staff complete a written record for children and their families. This is full of photos of the activities and positive comments relating to what each child has done. This ensures effective communication between the staff and families and gives children a lasting record of their experiences.

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

Staff prioritise the safety of children and have a good understanding of their individual needs and vulnerabilities. Children receive a high level of supervision and support that is in line with their assessed needs, both in the home and when out in the community. This significantly limits the opportunity for children to be exposed to unnecessary risk. Parents and professionals say that staff keep the children safe.

Staff are appropriately trained in safeguarding and understand their roles and responsibilities in keeping children safe. They follow clear risk management plans, which have been formulated with parents and professionals involved in the child's care. They are regularly reviewed and updated, with clear and consistent strategies for staff to follow, which ensures the children's safety during their short stay.

Staff are calm and nurturing in their approach, and positive behaviour is consistently promoted. Staff have a good understanding of the behaviour's children exhibit if they are frustrated or when they are trying to communicate their needs. Staff use de-escalation techniques to meet the individual child's needs and to communicate with them so that the child's concerns are addressed.

The management team works closely with other professionals to ensure that children are safe. The manager regularly attends child-in-need meetings with other safeguarding agencies, when required, to support children who are at increased risk. The manager offers additional stays for children when families are in crisis. This support helps children to remain in the care of their parents and ensures the safety of the child.

Physical intervention has only been used on a few occasions, to guide a child to their recognised safe place to prevent them from hurting themselves or others. Staff are trained to intervene safely, and they follow good practice and record incidents in detail. The manager and staff are curious about children's triggers and look at ways of helping them when they are distressed so that incidents do not reoccur.

Children benefit from staying in a spacious and welcoming home, which is maintained to a high standard. Children's bedrooms are decorated in a child-friendly theme. The staff ensure that bedrooms are set up with the child's preferred bedding before they arrive for their stay, to create a familiar safe space for them. However, some fire escape routes are not clear of hazards for a safe evacuation in the event of a fire.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is managed by a strong and highly experienced manager. She understands the individual needs of the children and the impact the care provided has on their outcomes. The manager is supported by two capable deputy managers who share the same aspirations for children. They are child centred and hard-working. Children are at the heart of everything the management team does.

The manager has excellent systems in place to ensure that she has clear oversight of the day-to-day practice at the home. There are systems in place to monitor the progress the children make, which means children receive high-quality care during their short stays.

There is a stable staff team whose members share the manager's aspirations for the children. There is a strong ethos of teamwork. Staff are given the opportunity to play an active role by taking on extra responsibilities. This gives them shared ownership, builds on their confidence and helps in their development.

The management team provides each member of staff with excellent support, guidance and encouragement. Staff receive regular, high-quality supervision and say that they feel well supported by the management team.

There is a comprehensive staff training programme in place. This starts at induction and continues with staff having regular ongoing training. The manager ensures that staff receive the appropriate specialised training to meet the individual needs of the children in their care before they start their overnight stays. This ensures that the staff have the appropriate skills and knowledge to meet each individual child's needs. However, not all staff have completed their qualifications in the appropriate timescales.

Professionals value the support that the staff provide to children, their families and carers. Staff attend all meetings for children and complete reports about their stays at the home. This helps to ensure that all professionals are working together to meet the children's holistic needs.

Team meetings take place regularly and staff have an opportunity to reflect on and share their experience and knowledge about the needs of the children. The manager also invites an external therapeutic service to attend these meetings to provide advice and guidance to staff on the ongoing needs of the children. This provides consistency for children.

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 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; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; 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 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)(iii)(v)(vi)(b)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that all fire escape routes are clear of any hazards.	20 January 2026
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	20 January 2026

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 has the appropriate experience, qualification, and skills for the work that the individual is to perform.

For the purposes of paragraph (3)(b), an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification if, by the relevant date, the individual has attained—

the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England) (“the Level 3 Diploma”); or

a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the Level 3 Diploma.

The relevant date is—

in the case of an individual who starts working in a care role in a home after 1st April 2014, the date which falls 2 years after the date on which the individual started working in a care role in a home; or

in the case of an individual who was working in a care role in a home on 1st April 2014, 1st April 2016.

(Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3)(b) (4)(a)(b) (5)(a)(b))

In particular, the registered person must ensure that all staff in a care role have obtained their relevant qualification by the relevant date.

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: Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council

Registered provider address: Children's Regulatory Services, 1st Floor Nutgrove Villa, Huyton Municipal Building, c/o Postroom, Archway Road, Huyton, Merseyside L36 9YU

Responsible individual: Karen Jude

Registered manager: Julia Nelson

Inspector

Simon Jones, Social Care Inspector

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