

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. They 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 the inspection, two children were staying at the home overnight.

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 October 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 8 February 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
08/02/2023	Full	good
11/02/2020	Full	requires improvement to be good
28/08/2018	Full	outstanding
30/11/2017	Full	outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Staff provide short break care to 22 children and provide a high level of individualised support and personalised care. This enables the children to benefit from positive experiences while they are away from the family home. The children enjoy coming to the home and it gives them the opportunity to build friendships.

Staff know the children well and they have a good understanding of each child's needs. The staff are child centred and speak enthusiastically about each individual child's progress. One professional said, 'The children who access [name of home] have made progress, due in no small part to the consistent approach of the staff team, and their knowledge of individual need.'

Staff have a good understanding of each individual child's communication needs and preferred methods. By using Makaton, Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) and social stories, the children are involved in their day-to-day care. They actively choose their meals and activities that they would like to do. The children have access to an advocate who regularly visits the home to offer support to the children.

The children have built trusting relationships with staff. Children are sensitively supported by staff to start learning essential life skills, such as attending to their personal hygiene or helping to prepare meals. There are clear picture cards developed which show them the step-by-step actions needed to undertake these essential life skills. This ensures that the children are developing the skills required to become independent.

The children are introduced to the home at their own pace, by visiting with their families and staying for tea. When the child feels ready, they can start having overnight stays.

The manager ensures that parents are involved in the planning of the child moving into the home. The parents share their knowledge of the child and this enables the child's needs to be identified. There is regular communication between staff and parents to ensure that children feel comfortable when they are coming to stay at the home. However, the manager has not ensured that parents are contributing and regularly reviewing the short stay plan. This is a missed opportunity to agree a shared goal between the team and the family.

Staff work closely with the children's schools. This helps children to continue to attend safely. There are regular updates and any issues are handed over appropriately and sensitively. The manager advocates for the children and their parents and is actively challenging other professionals when educational plans have not been annually reviewed.

Children are having positive experiences while staying at the home. Children are actively supported in going out in the community to access activities that they would not normally be able to do. This enhances their life experiences. Photos of the children enjoying the activities of which they have been part are displayed around the home.

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

Children receive a high level of supervision and support that is in line with their assessed needs. Keeping children safe is a priority for staff and is integral to daily practice. One parent said, 'I trust the staff to look after my son. I feel at ease when he is at the home. I feel he is safe; the staff know my child's needs well.'

Children are protected from harm. There are robust safeguarding procedures in place that are known by all staff. When concerns have been identified, the manager ensures that these are escalated to safeguard children.

Staff have a good understanding of the children's risks and underlying needs. Risk assessments identify the children's vulnerabilities and include comprehensive guidance and strategies for staff to follow. There have been no incidents of children going missing from care.

Staff are calm and caring in their approach to providing care for the children, and they have a good understanding of the behaviours children exhibit due to their needs. Staff use calming strategies identified in the children's individual behaviour support plans to help and support them. There have been no physical interventions.

The home is safe, spacious and welcoming and has a relaxed atmosphere. Children's bedrooms are decorated in a child friendly theme and the children get a choice in which bedroom they would like to stay in each time they come to the home. There is a large soft play area where children can safely play, and it is accessible to all children including those with physical needs. All health and safety checks are complete and up to date.

The management of medication is safe and effective. Staff are trained and ensure that children receive appropriate medication when they are staying at the home. In addition, a health professional has attended a staff meeting and supported staff to understand the effects of medication. This has helped staff to continue to develop their knowledge and understanding around medication.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The home is managed by a qualified, dedicated, inspirational and ambitious manager. She is supported by two extremely capable deputy managers, who share the same aspirations for children. These qualities are being reflected through the whole staff team. All staff spoken to are child centred and share the same passion for improving the children's lives. One staff member said, 'She [the manager] has

guided, supported and promoted our team to work at our strengths, and is always available together with deputy managers to support and guide the staff team.'

The manager has excellent oversight of the events in the home. She has a good understanding of the strengths and the developmental needs of the staff and continues to improve the staff practice. The manager has a clear plan of how to keep improving the quality of the service and care for children. There are robust systems in place to monitor the progress that children make. Children receive high-quality care.

The local authority is extremely complimentary about staff and the care that they provide to children. They hold them in high regard. One social worker said, 'In my view, staff perform a vital service to young people and their families, who are often facing difficult experiences. They provide an invaluable 'lifeline' in the form of not only respite but also personal support, which often goes above and beyond what is expected of them.'

The recording of the children's positive experiences in the home has improved. The support staff give to children is more informative and clearly meets the child's needs identified in their plans. Plans are child friendly and have photos of the child's input, so the children can see their achievements.

There is a stable staff team in place and they are all clear on the ethos of the home. The manager and her deputies provide excellent support, guidance and encouragement to the staff team. Staff receive regular reflective supervision and they all say that they feel supported by the management team.

There is a comprehensive training programme and all staff have completed their mandatory training. The manager ensures that prior to a child moving into the home, staff receive additional training to meet the identified needs of the individual child. This enables staff to continually develop their skills and knowledge to meet each child's needs.

Team meetings are an opportunity for staff to reflect and share ideas. The manager incorporates a theme each month, which enables staff to refresh their knowledge and skills. Also, staff have an opportunity to get advice from an external therapeutic service, from which a representative attends to offer support around understanding the needs of the children.

The manager has developed good working relationships with other professionals, and this has been confirmed by the positive feedback. One professional stated, 'The manager played a crucial part in safety planning for one of our children by providing some additional crises respite and continuing to provide outreach work when the child was able to return home. I have been impressed and grateful for the support they have provided the CWD team.'

The manager is committed to ensuring that children's needs continue to be met when they become young adults. She is actively working alongside other

professionals in ensuring that appropriate services are available and staff play an active part in supporting children through this change.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that parents and, where possible, children understand the records the home keeps about them. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.5).

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

Responsible individual: Karen Jude

Registered manager: Julia Nelson

Inspector

Simon Jones, Social Care Inspector

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