

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

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 October 2024

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

Date of last inspection: 24 October 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/10/2023	Full	Good
08/02/2023	Full	Good
11/02/2020	Full	Requires improvement to be good
28/08/2018	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

At the time of this inspection, the home was providing short-break care for 23 children. Staff provide each child with a high level of individualised support. One social worker said, '[Name of home] is such a lifesaving service for my families. They are working not only in providing overnight breaks, which without this service families would really find it difficult to function as a family, they also provide essential intervention with the children, supporting to develop sleep routines, improve communication skills and develop and embed routines.'

Children receive a well-planned introduction into the home. The manager arranges for the child and parents to visit. The time the child spends at the home is then increased at the child's pace until they are ready to have an overnight stay. The manager takes the children's interests into account to ensure that children who stay overnight at the same time have similar likes and interests. This allows children to develop friendships and means that they enjoy the time that they spend at the home.

Children have positive experiences during their stay. They have fun with the staff and look forward to coming. Staff are skilled in using resources in the home and in the community. This provides opportunities for children that may not have been possible without the short-break service. Staff promote children's individual interests as well as introducing them to new experiences in the community. This helps to develop the children's emotional health and well-being. One social worker said, 'The children have an opportunity to engage in positive activities with peers and this reduces isolation for many of the children.'

Staff have a good understanding of children's communication needs. They support children to develop their communication skills verbally and through Makaton, social stories and the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS). This enables children to participate fully while they are at the home and means that they can choose the activities and meals that they want.

Children have built trusting relationships with staff. This enables staff to support children to develop life skills, starting with small tasks around the home, such as children preparing meals and attending to their personal hygiene. There are clear picture cards which show them the step-by-step actions needed for these essential life skills. This develops children's independence and means that they are less reliant on support from adults.

Staff have good working relationships with teaching staff at the children's schools. Staff regularly communicate with them when children are collected or picked up from school for their short break.. This provides consistency and helps children to manage the transition smoothly.

Staff develop good working relationships with parents and there is regular communication. Staff and parents use a dedicated phone app to share the progress and activities that the child has participated in during their stay. This allows parents to celebrate the child's achievements and the progress they make. Staff also create a video celebrating the children's successes, which is shared with parents. Staff regularly praise children on their achievements and the goals that they have met. This builds children's self-esteem and confidence.

Staff support the children's health by educating them on sexual health, appropriate touch and positive relationships. They also encourage children to have a healthier diet, by introducing them to foods that they may not have tried before. All staff are trained in administering medication and medication practice in the home is safe. This ensures that children continue to take the medication they need during their stay in the home.

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

Children's safety is consistently at the centre of staff practice and children are safe in the home. Staff understand each child's needs and the support that they require to be safe. High staffing levels ensure the safety of children, both in the home and when out in the community. One parent said, 'My child is safe when they stay. I do trust the staff, they understand my child's complex needs.'

Staff have a good understanding of the children's risks and vulnerabilities. Risk assessments are clear and give guidelines to staff on how to manage and minimise risks. Staff monitor children when they are asleep, but this is not on an individual needs-led approach.

Staff have a good understanding of children's emotional and communication needs. This allows them to quickly identify when children are unhappy, and they can communicate with them so that the child's concerns are addressed.

Staff have developed positive and trusting relationships with children. They can recognise when children's emotions are heightened and use distraction techniques to enable the child to return to their usual relaxed emotional state. Staff have regular discussions with the children around their emotions and how this affects their well-being. Children are developing their understanding of these emotions and are more able to communicate at an early stage when they are happy or sad.

Physical intervention has been necessary on five occasions to keep children safe. There is clear management oversight to identify if any changes in practice are needed to prevent incidents reoccurring.

The home is well maintained and decorated to a high standard. It is welcoming and bright and there are age-appropriate toys and sensory equipment available for children. There is a large safe area at the back of the home full of play equipment which the children use regularly to help regulate their sensory needs.

Recruitment records are clear. The manager ensures that all necessary checks are completed before staff start working in the home. This helps to ensure that adults working with children are safe to do so.

The home is visited each month by an independent person who scrutinises the care provided to the children. However, the manager has not ensured that the independent person clearly identifies in their review if the arrangements for safeguarding children and promoting their well-being are being met each time she visits.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The manager is qualified, dedicated, highly inspirational and child-centred and has high expectations of staff. Children are at the heart of everything the manager does. The manager is supported in her role by two deputy managers who share her aspirations and provide consistency for staff and children.

The manager has exceptional oversight and regularly reviews the quality of care provided and the progress children make. She continually looks for new ways to develop the care provided to children. The manager has introduced a new initiative in relation to how staff can help and support children to understand and develop their emotional well-being, self-esteem and resilience. This is now embedded in all areas of practice. This is having a positive impact on children, giving them an understanding of their emotions.

The manager and staff work tirelessly to secure the best support and outcomes for children. The manager escalates concerns and challenges other professionals who fail in their responsibilities, and she is a strong advocate for children.

There is a highly motivated and stable staff team in place who share the manager's aspirations. Staff are enthusiastic, committed and work well together. They all said that they feel supported by the manager. One staff member said, 'The support that management give is outstanding. I have never worked in a place where I have received so much support. If I need any help or to talk to someone, I know they are always there for me.'

The manager is a strong advocate for the continual development of the staff team. There is a comprehensive training programme that is varied and meets the individual and collective needs of staff. Also, staff are given opportunities to take on extra responsibilities. This is providing staff with a shared ownership in the continual development of the care provided.

Staff are well supported in their roles. Strong leadership empowers staff and enables them to grow and evolve as caring professionals. The manager supports staff to be reflective, to help them develop their knowledge and skills. She achieves this through regular discussions with staff in supervision sessions and observations, and in guidance and support given to staff while they carry out their roles.

Regular team meetings take place which focus on children's needs and progress. This gives an opportunity for staff to come together and share ideas, knowledge and skills. This is helping to develop consistency in the team.

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 registered person may only use devices for the monitoring or surveillance of children if— the monitoring or surveillance is for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child concerned, or other children; the child's placing authority consents in writing to the monitoring or surveillance; so far as reasonably practicable in the light of the child's age and understanding, the child is informed in advance of the intention to do the monitoring or surveillance; and the monitoring or surveillance is no more intrusive than necessary, having regard to the child's need for privacy. (Regulation 24 (1)(a)(b)(c)(d)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that night-time monitoring of the children while they are asleep is only carried out when there is a need or risk identified for each individual child.	30 December 2024

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that any individual appointed to carry out visits to the home as an independent person makes a rigorous and impartial assessment of the home's arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children in the home's care. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.5)

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 Metropolitan Borough Council, 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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