

SC037657

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 children's home provides care for up to three children with social and emotional difficulties.

The manager was registered with Ofsted in December 2020.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

We last visited this setting on 18 March 2021 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 January 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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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: 24 April 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/04/2019	Full	Good
19/04/2018	Full	Good
24/05/2017	Full	Good
07/02/2017	Interim	Declined in effectiveness

Inspection judgements

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

At the time of the inspection, one child was living at the home.

The child is settled, happy and making noticeable progress. In particular, the child is learning essential life skills, such as shopping, cleaning and arranging medical appointments independently. All of this will benefit them when they reach adulthood and move on from the home.

The child is cared for by a nurturing and child-focused staff team. The child feels well supported and cared for by the manager and staff. Warm interactions between the staff and child were observed during the inspection.

The child is involved in a range of activities, for example a holiday in Wales, walks on local beaches and fundraising for animal charities. These new opportunities and experiences are increasing the child's confidence and self-esteem. The staff have ensured that these positive memories are captured in the child's records.

The home's care plan is personalised and provides a detailed overview of the child's journey and progress. As a result, the staff understand and promote the child's needs consistently.

The staff understand the importance of promoting children's emotional health. They recognise signs when a child is struggling emotionally and help them to access specialist services for support. The child's emotional health is therefore improving.

The manager and staff do not have sufficient understanding of the child's educational targets, as set out in their relevant plans. Furthermore, the child's current education, health and care plan (EHC plan) was not on the child's file, making it difficult for staff to access this information. The manager provided conflicting information when asked about the child's personal education plan. The shortfalls identified in education have undermined the child's educational progress and attainment.

The manager and staff are not aware of the local offer that sets out the support available for children with special education needs or disabilities. Their lack of knowledge in this area could prevent children from accessing a range of professionals and services intended to help them achieve their full potential.

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

High-risk incidents, such as children going missing from home and child sexual exploitation, are not a concern at this home. The child is safe and feels safe.

Staff have not always reported concerns to the relevant people swiftly. For example, there were delays in notifying the police and the child's family when a person who was unrelated to the home made threats to harm the child.

On several occasions, the child has been caught smoking in the home. Although the strategies used for tackling this are ineffective, the staff continued to use them. Staff have not always followed through on the sanctions used to deter this behaviour. Additionally, direct work with the child about smoking is inconsistent and often meaningless.

The shortfalls identified in managing behaviour, as outlined above, are preventing children from learning how to take responsibility for their actions and make positive changes. Furthermore, they reflect weaknesses in the manager's overview of the behaviour management practice used in the home.

Serious incidents in the home are infrequent. However, when serious incidents happen, the records do not provide sufficient information. Consequently, the records do not enable a thorough review of the incidents and staff's safeguarding practice. This also highlights weaknesses in the manager's oversight and evaluation of these records.

The shortfalls found in safer recruitment practice potentially compromise the welfare and safety of children. In the two staff files sampled, issues were found in references, a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, verification of reasons for leaving previous employment and copies of qualification certificates on file.

The child trusts the manager and staff and confides in them. These trusting relationships are helping staff to keep the child safe. Staff support the child to take age-appropriate risks as part of their development of independent living skills.

The manager has ensured that the home is a safe and welcoming environment for children to live in. Health and safety checks are routinely undertaken to ensure that the appliances in the home remain fit for purpose and safe.

Additionally, the manager has undertaken a thorough assessment of the local area to ensure that any risks are known and managed. Although this assessment is helping to increase children's safety, it could be further strengthened by including the details of all consultations undertaken with relevant professionals.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The manager is suitably experienced. She is child-centred and this is reflected in her decision-making. For example, when matching children to the home, her decisions are firmly based on the needs of the children already living there. Her child-focused approach ensures that children are provided with stability.

The staff team is stable. This means that children are provided with consistent care and support.

The staff are well supported. They benefit from regular professional supervision and team meetings. This provides them with the time to reflect on their practice and share their views and experiences. As a result, the team feels valued.

Staff training is a strength. The manager has a comprehensive workforce plan in place that provides her with a clear overview of the team's strengths and any areas for development. The child is being cared for by a well-trained and knowledgeable team.

The home's statement of purpose is regularly updated to reflect changes in the staff team. However, it does not provide details of the staff's qualifications as required.

The independent monitoring visits support the manager to make continuous improvements in the home. The rigour of this monitoring could be further strengthened by including some unannounced visits.

The manager's monitoring is an area for improvement. Shortfalls were found in her oversight of some records and staff practice. Additionally, her quality-of-care review reports lack evaluation, feedback from children and actions for further development. Weaknesses in the manager's monitoring are undermining the home's improvement journey.

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
In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— seek to develop and maintain effective professional relationships with such persons, bodies or organisations as the registered person considers appropriate having regard to the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the children's home is to provide care and accommodation. (Regulation 5(d)) This relates to the registered person's and staff's understanding of the local offer, which sets out the support available for children with special education needs or disabilities.	25 February 2022
The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff— help each child to achieve the child's education and training targets, as recorded in the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 8 (1) (2)(a)(i)) This relates to the manager and staff understanding the educational targets that are set out in children's EHC plans.	25 February 2022
The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— an understanding about acceptable behaviour. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff—	25 February 2022

encourage each child to take responsibility for the child's behaviour, in accordance with the child's age and understanding. (Regulation 11 (1)(b) (2)(a)(iii)) This relates to helping children to understand the dangers of smoking in the home on themselves and others, enabling them to take responsibility for their behaviour and make the necessary changes.	
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— take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(vi)) This relates to reporting concerns to the relevant people in a timely way.	25 February 2022
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— use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(h)) This relates to the manager's monitoring and evaluation of safeguarding and behaviour management practice and records.	25 February 2022
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety.	25 February 2022

The requirements are that— full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1) (3)(d)) This relates to obtaining references, DBS checks, verifying reasons for leaving previous employment and having certificates of relevant qualifications on staff's files.	
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality of care review") at least once every 6 months. In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating— the quality of care provided for children; the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. (Regulation 45 (1) (2)(a)(b)(c))	25 February 2022

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the home's statement of purpose provides details of all staff's qualifications. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 14, paragraph 3.5)
- The registered person should ensure that the location assessment clearly provides details of the professionals consulted with, the date and any information provided. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.1)
- The registered person should ensure that independent monitoring of the home includes unannounced visits to enhance the rigour of the assessment of the home's arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children. ('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: SC037657

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council

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

Responsible individual: Pamela Foster

Registered manager: Jane Vowles

Inspector

Marina Tully, Social Care Inspector

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