

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 and accommodation for three children and young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 24 to 25 May 2017

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: 7 February 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Declined in effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because

- Children live in a friendly, nurturing and supportive environment. The high standard of individualised care consistently meets their needs and is enabling them to make good progress and achieve better outcomes.
- Children enjoy trusting and meaningful relationships with staff, which provides them with a strong sense of safety and improves their emotional well-being. The children feel safe and are protected from harm. They are encouraged to express their views, make choices and decisions about their lives. Staff listen to their feelings and worries, take them seriously, and respond appropriately to sort out problems. The staff's strong safeguarding practices are helping the children to be safer and protecting them from the risks of bullying, going missing, abuse, exploitation, and extremism.
- Staff members are resilient and determined to help children work through problems when things are difficult. The staff's creative and insightful work is supporting children to manage their feelings and frustrations, and control their behaviour. They support children to learn how to get along with other people and deal with disagreements constructively.
- Staff provide children with stability. Significantly, children tend to live in this home for a number of years and only move on when the time is right for them and in line with their plans. Effective care planning and productive working relationships between the staff, social workers, schools, and health workers mean that children receive the best possible support in meeting all their needs. This gives children every opportunity to settle and overcome their previous experiences.
- The registered manager's effective leadership is making a positive difference to children's lives. Caring, very experienced, skilled, qualified and well-supported staff provide a high quality of care for each child. The manager has a clear and accurate understanding of children's progress and the key priorities for each child. Effective monitoring of the quality of care and support mean that leaders and managers have a realistic understanding of how well the staff are promoting and safeguarding children's welfare and how to make further improvements.

The children's home's areas for development

- Improve the quality of the children's physical environment by decorating and renovating the house, replacing worn carpets. Include children in the design and decoration of the house so that it reflects their ideas and preferences and gives them opportunities to develop practical skills.
- Ensure that the monitoring by the independent person shows how staff's practice is making a difference to children's lives.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
07/02/2017	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
24/11/2016	Full	Good
03/02/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
07/07/2015	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 with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The quality and purpose care standard is that children receive care from staff who deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to- ensure that the premises used for the purpose of the home are designed and furnished as to – (i) meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 6(1) and (2)(c)(i)) In particular, decorate and refurbish the house, replace worn carpets, and actively involve children in the planning, design, and decoration of the premises.	31/08/2017

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

This children's home provides vulnerable children with a stable, nurturing and supportive place to live. Children receive a high quality of individualised and well-planned care that consistently meets their assessed needs and plans. Staff determination to make a positive difference, regardless of the challenges, enables children to make progress, have more opportunities and achieve better outcomes.

Staff members' ability to engage with vulnerable children and build meaningful relationships is an important factor in the children developing a strong sense of belonging and emotional security. They understand how difficult it may be for children to

learn to trust adults and accept the support that they are offering. They are patient and know that some children need time and space to get to know new people and feel comfortable around them. Their friendly and insightful approach provides children with strong messages that staff care about them, are interested in their lives and want what is best for them. This has helped children to feel at home and form secure attachments with staff. Over time, children have become more relaxed and have come to see this as their home and a safe place; for example, one child is now sleeping in her bed rather than on top of it and is making plans to decorate her room. Another child has settled well. He has put up his favourite pictures and photographs in his bedroom. He feels enough at home to make himself snacks and to run himself a bath.

Staff treat children with respect and enable them to express themselves as individuals. They listen to children and always take their wishes and feelings into account. Children are encouraged and supported to influence the running of the home, including how it is decorated, to make choices about the food they eat, how they spend their spare time, and to take part in decisions about what happens to them in the future. The registered manager and staff make sure that social workers and the other professionals working with each child are aware and understand the child's wishes and feelings; for example, one child felt that being educated at home was not working for her and wanted to have her education away from her home. Staff are open and honest when children express wishes that are not always in their best interests. They carefully and clearly explain the reason why they have decided against following the child's wishes, in ways that the child understands and can accept.

Effective care planning and strong working relationships between the staff, families, education, health and social workers ensure that the arrangements for children's care meet their assessed needs. Everyone works extremely well together to ensure that the relevant plans for each child's care are reviewed on an ongoing basis to reflect their progress and continue to meet their needs and circumstances.

Children only come to live at the home when the registered manager is satisfied that the staff have the skills and expertise to meet each child's assessed needs. Careful consideration is given to the impact on children already living in the home. Children move into the home in a carefully and sensitively planned way. They visit to meet staff and other children before they move in. The other children are fully included in the move, such as by helping staff to decorate the new child's room for them. Staff understand that children may not always get along and actively try to help children develop positive relationships. They work to build a better understanding between children: encouraging them to think about how they felt when they first came to live at the home and that it can be scary coming to live in a new place.

Children benefit from the stability and continuity of care that staff provide. They usually live at this home for a number of years and only move on in a planned way when they are ready and it is in their best interests. Since the last inspection, two children who had been living at this home for over four years moved out. One of them returned to live with her family. Staff worked hard to build a positive relationship with the child's mother and encourage her to work with them and the social worker. They helped to improve the

child's relationship with her mother and for the parent to have a better understanding of her daughter's needs and how best to meet them. The child wrote to the staff, 'Goodbye and thank you for all the staff for looking after me for four years.'

The other child moved into his own accommodation as part of his pathway plan into adult life. This was an exceptionally well-planned move. Staff ensured that he had the practical skills to live independently and was emotionally resilient to cope with this significant change. They helped him find suitable accommodation where he wanted to live, in a neighbouring town close to support from his family. They helped him to set up home and continue to offer him support when he needs it. His social worker said, 'His overall experience was positive. The staff never gave up on him, they persevered to help him, even when it was difficult. This is why he is where he is at this stage – doing well with his apprenticeship and living in his own place.'

Children are seeing much more of their families since they moved into the home. Carefully planned arrangements help children to spend time with their parents, families, friends and other people important to them. Staff work actively and positively to help children maintain and build meaningful relationships, understand their identity, feel part of their family and improve their self-esteem. Staff make every effort to ensure that seeing family and friends is a safe and positive experience for children. They get on well with the children's families and help them to play an active role in their children's lives. They are open and deal appropriately with any concerns that families may have about their children's care.

Both children living at the home are currently not in full-time education. Staff are working hard with the children, virtual school, education providers and social workers to support the children's participation in education. Both children have clear and up-to-date education plans that show what needs to happen. This includes the arrangements for assessment of their education needs, and programmes to help build their confidence, self-esteem and social skills to prepare them emotionally for school. Staff are encouraging children to enjoy learning. They build on children's interests, such as art, make-up, animals, history and current affairs, to help them engage in education. Suitable daily routines encourage children to take part in educational activities, including one-to-one work with a tutor outside the home, and visits to museums. Staff encourage children to get involved in practical tasks and gain qualification through the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network. They are helping a child to develop her creative talents by her designing, budgeting and completing the renovation of the computer room. Children's progress through informal learning is clearly recorded in their plans, and this information is being used with education providers to carefully tailor education programmes to children's individual needs and interests.

Children live in a healthy environment that actively promotes their physical health and emotional well-being. Staff have an excellent understanding of children's specific health needs, and manage their health with sensitivity and confidence. They closely monitor children to make sure that they are healthy, supporting them to attend routine health checks. Staff also ensure that the children always have suitable medical advice and treatment when they are feeling unwell or if children are concerned about their health.

For example, staff recognise when children are struggling emotionally or have a low mood. They work closely with health services, including psychologists and psychiatrists, to provide children with the necessary care and treatment. They help children to manage their own physical and mental health and understand the risks associated with alcohol, tobacco and cannabis on their health. Importantly, they help to improve children's emotional well-being by providing them with warm and positive relationships that help children feel safe, and working with health and youth services to provide opportunities for build their self-esteem and social confidence.

The home is located in an area that supports children's safety and well-being, and enables them to keep positive links with their own community. Overall, the house provides children with a welcoming home that meets their basic care needs. Children have their own personal space and enough room for their belongings. However, the design and decoration of the house does not necessarily reflect the needs and preferences of the children living there. The decoration is dull, some of the colour scheme and pictures do not match, some of the ornaments are damaged and have not been replaced, and some Christmas decorations are still on display. Also, some of the carpets, including on the stairs, are worn and need replacing.

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

Children live in a safe and supportive home. They feel safe and are protected from harm, bullying, exploitation, extremism and neglect. They have trusting relationships with staff and feel able to talk to any of them if they are worried or upset. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities in protecting children. They are vigilant and alert to the signs of abuse, exploitation, extremism and neglect. They take appropriate action to involve social workers and the police when they have concerns about children's safety. They work effectively with children, parents, social workers, schools and health professionals, and the police to understand and manage the risks to children's welfare. The registered manager informs Ofsted when there are serious concerns about children's safety. This helps to monitor how effectively staff manage these concerns and how they take the action needed to protect children.

Staff actively and continuously assess the risks to individual children and make sure that the arrangements for their care protect them. Staff balance protecting children effectively while enabling them to take appropriate and reasonable risks to promote their personal growth. Staff take reasonable precautions to promote children's confidence and independence in the community, and to promote their understanding of how to use social media safely. They work effectively with children to help them understand and learn skills to manage risk and keep themselves and others safe by letting staff know when they have felt uncomfortable with someone's behaviour, and when they have received harmful text messages or photographs.

The times when children go missing have dramatically reduced. When they go out, children let staff know where they are going, keep in touch, and come in on time. On the rare occasions when children have gone missing, staff always act quickly to try to find

the child by actively looking for them, making contact with their family and friends and informing the police and social workers. When there have been concerns that a child is going missing more often and may be at risk of exploitation, the registered manager has appropriately called a multi-agency risk management meeting to assess and manage the risks for the child. When children return home they always have the opportunity to talk to staff and an independent person about what happened and the reasons for them not wanting to come home. Staff have a clear understanding of the reasons for children going missing, for example after falling out with another child and needing a break. Following on such incident, staff worked really well with the child's family to find her quickly, make sure she was safe, and to sort out the problem once she returned.

Staff members' skills in building warm and constructive relationships with children form the basis for encouraging positive behaviour and managing negative behaviour. They provide children with a high standard of parenting that helps children understand the expectations for behaviour and to know that they are loved. Staff provide children with an environment that helps them to build positive self-esteem and a sense of emotional security. Staff constantly praise, reward and celebrate children's achievements, which is helping children to feel positive about themselves and understand the benefits of positive behaviour. Staff show empathy towards children and understand how children's experiences and circumstances leave them feeling anxious, frustrated and angry. Their compassionate approach is helping children to learn how to understand and deal with their frustrations and worries safely. Children are becoming less likely to show aggressive behaviour and more able to accept suitable boundaries.

Staff actively help children to understand how to build friendships and what makes a positive and healthy relationship. They encourage children to learn how to deal with problems and resolve disagreements constructively. The two children living in the home are still getting used to each other and struggle to get along at times. Their arguments have included the use of sexist and racist language. Staff have intervened appropriately to challenge this behaviour and let the children know that this is unacceptable. Staff members' calm, but assertive, approach has managed these difficult situations safely. They are working with both children to help them to develop understanding and empathy towards each other, including letting them know why this language is so harmful, its meaning and how it affects the other person.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

A new registered manager has been in charge of the home since March 2017. He is a very experienced and suitably qualified manager. He is providing clear, strong and effective leadership and management and a drive to improve the quality of the service. The change of managers was carefully planned and avoided any unnecessary disruption to children's lives and the running of the home. The registered manager is also in charge of another of the local authority's children's homes. He is using his time effectively and has sufficient capacity to be visible and accessible to children and staff, and to suitably complete his management responsibilities.

The registered manager leads a vastly experienced staff team that delivers the home's objective to provide children with a nurturing environment and make a positive difference to their lives. They actively promote a friendly atmosphere in which children are accepted, feel safe and are encouraged to express themselves as individuals. They have high aspirations for every child and provide a high quality of individualised care that meets each child's assessed needs and provides them opportunities to reach their potential and have improved outcomes.

Leaders and the registered manager have a clear understanding of the quality of the care and its impact on children's lives. Their detailed monitoring, alongside independent scrutiny, of the quality of care evaluates how effectively staff are applying the quality standards and meeting children's needs. However, the monitoring by the independent person, does not always show the impact of staff's practice on children's progress. Leaders and managers use their findings to improve children's experiences and the running of the home. Senior managers have also recently made money available to improve the standard of the decoration of the house. The introduction of a new recording system is helping staff to record and share information about children's experiences efficiently, and to monitor their progress.

The registered manager and staff have a clear understanding of the progress that every child is making. They closely monitor each child's experiences and development. This helps them to identify when a child's plan is not meeting his or her needs and take effective action to tackle the obstacles to the child's progress, including actively challenging when the responses from other services are not effective. They work effectively with social workers, the virtual school and education providers to ensure that children's education plans are up to date, meet their needs, and support children to achieve their education potential. Staff's ability to build strong professional relationships with children's families and the services involved in the child's life has been influential in children receiving the right help at the right time to improve children's lives. This has included helping them to achieve in education, move successfully to live in their own accommodation, understand and manage emotional health, and improve relationships with parents and the people caring for them.

Leaders and the registered manager make sure that staff work in a supportive environment that enables them to care for vulnerable children safely. The staffing arrangements ensure that there are sufficient knowledgeable, experienced and skilful staff available to meet all the children's assessed needs. This has included using an additional member of staff to work specifically with a child around her emotional welfare and personal safety. The stable and cohesive staff team ensures that children receive the continuity of care that helps them form positive attachments and relationships with the people caring for them each day. The registered manager and staff receive effective support and guidance through regular practice-related supervision and team meetings. Consequently, they have the regular opportunities that they need to discuss children's needs, reflect on their practice, share skills, and highlight any areas for their development. The staff have their performance and suitability to carry out their role formally appraised each year.

Leaders and the registered manager ensure that all staff receive up-to-date training relevant to the needs of the children. They support and encourage staff to develop their interests, knowledge and skills through access to research materials. Staff have completed training in attachment and trauma, which is helping them to gain a better understanding of how children's experiences influence how they show emotions through their behaviour, and how best to help individual children. For example, staff members' support for children to manage their feelings through sensory and self-soothing techniques is helping children to feel less anxious. Staff have the appropriate residential child care qualifications and have opportunities for continuous professional development relevant to their roles, including working towards higher qualifications in social work and management.

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 difference 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 who 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: SC037657

Provision sub-type: Children's home

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

Responsible individual: Ruth France

Registered manager: James De Turberville

Inspector(s)

Nick Veysey, social care regulatory inspector

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