

SC037657

Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council

Monitoring visit

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 have social and/or emotional difficulties.

The registered manager has been registered since March 2017.

Inspection date: 26 November 2019

This monitoring visit

This monitoring visit was undertaken due to concerns being raised about the welfare and safety of children living at this home.

During this monitoring visit, Marina Tully, social care regulatory inspector, identified poor practice in relation to safeguarding, risk management, care planning and the leadership and management of the home. These inadequacies are having a significant and detrimental impact on children's safety, welfare and progress.

There has been no stable manager at the home since October 2018 and this has had a negative impact on the staff team and children. In the absence of a stable manager, the staff have lacked the necessary oversight, guidance and support to work effectively with the children or to work consistently as a team. For example, some staff have followed safeguarding procedures when children have either been collected by, or returned to the home, in private hire taxis, but others have not. This has compromised the safety and welfare of children in their care and demonstrates staff's lack of understanding about their roles and responsibilities.

The home has not been led in a way that keeps children and staff safe from harm. For example, a child did not feel safe living in the home after another child had threatened to harm her with a pair of scissors. The responsible individual, who is overseeing the management of the home in the manager's absence, was not aware of this incident until it was brought to her attention on the day of the monitoring

visit. This raises concerns about staff's understanding of the need to report all safeguarding incidents to the relevant line manager. Their failing to do so undermines the manager's oversight of children's safety and experiences in the home.

Inadequate staffing levels and a lack of gender balance in the staff team is having a negative impact on children's safety, welfare and progress. Despite children stating that they do not feel comfortable in males' company, the three female children have been cared for by a male-only team on several occasions. This has prevented children from developing positive relationships with, and accepting care, support and guidance from, some members of staff.

There has been a significant increase in children going missing from the home and being placed at risk of child sexual exploitation. In particular, two children have been frequently going missing from the home together. On one occasion, while the two children were missing from the home, one child is alleged to have pushed the other into a lake. The home failed to adequately assess the level of risk that these two children pose to each other.

Risk assessments are weak. In particular, impact risk assessments have not fully considered the potential risks for all children and whether or not the staff have the knowledge, skills and competence to meet all of the children's needs. As a result, children have been inappropriately placed and this has had a detrimental impact on all children's welfare and progress. For example, children's emotional well-being and school attendance have declined, as well as a child's placement ending in an unplanned way.

The strategies for managing children's behaviour are ineffective. Some children's challenging and disruptive behaviour has been unsettling for other children and problematic for staff to manage. On occasions, some staff have felt it necessary to call for police assistance to manage incidents at the home, potentially placing the children at risk of criminalisation. This demonstrates the staff's inability to manage behaviour and help children to understand how their actions negatively impact on others.

How staff support, manage and respond to children's behaviour is variable. As a result, children are not benefiting from consistent routines, boundaries and guidance. Although some staff challenge children when they sleep in each other's bedrooms, a safeguarding measure put in place to keep children safe, others do not. Staff's inconsistent practice is hindering children's safety and undermining strong team working.

The home's day-to-day care is not arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe from harm. For example, on one occasion, a child was up through the night and used cooking facilities without staff's knowledge or supervision.

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

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
The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on mutual respect and trust; an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults. (Regulation 11 (1))	6 January 2020
* 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— (i) 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; (ii) help each child to understand how to keep safe; (iii) have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; (iv) manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other; (v) understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; (vi) take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and (vii) are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies; (b) 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)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(b))	6 January 2020
* 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	6 January 2020

fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— (a) lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home’s statement of purpose; (b) ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate; (d) ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; (e) ensure that the home’s workforce provides continuity of care to each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(2)(a)(b)(d)(e))	
The care planning standard is that children receive effectively planned care in or through the children’s home; and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home’s statement of purpose. (Regulation 14 (1)(2)(a))	6 January 2020

* These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this visit was to monitor the action taken and the progress made by the children’s home since its last Ofsted inspection.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC037657

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: Ruth France

Registered manager: James De Turberville

Inspector

Marina Tully, social care inspector

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