

SC039689

Registered provider: Lancashire County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is operated by a local authority. It provides care for up to six children who may have emotional or behavioural needs.

There is a manager in post who registered with Ofsted in July 2019.

At the time of the inspection there were six children living in the home.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

We last visited this setting on 16 September 2020 to carry out an assurance visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 14 to 15 September 2021

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: 20 August 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: Requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
20/08/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good
24/04/2018	Full	Requires improvement to be good
16/08/2017	Full	Good
01/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

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

Children's progress is mixed. Children are doing well in some areas but not progressing so well in others. Similarly, children's experiences are varied. They enjoy some positive experiences but due to problematic relationships, have lived through some unpleasant events.

Children described many things about the home that they like. They spoke very positively about their bedrooms, which are decorated to a good standard and nicely personalised. One child commented that he found the structure and routines at the home reassuring. Another child spoke positively about her first experience of having pets and was observed enjoying time with them.

Feedback from parents and external professionals was wholly positive. One social worker described the home as a 'warm and nurturing environment' and a parent said that their child's overall well-being had significantly increased since he had lived at the home.

Children described generally good relationships with staff, but some said that they did not always feel that they were listened to, or that their views were taken into account. One child had recently raised some issues and felt that he had not received a helpful response. Records of direct work supported this information and also provided further examples of when children's views had been noted, but not meaningfully considered.

Shortfalls in care planning were identified. The manager seeks input from relevant external professionals to help ensure that children receive appropriate care. However, children's internal care plans lack guidance about how to meet some aspects of their day-to-day needs.

Some children are making exceptionally good progress in education. For example, one child is currently completing A levels and is planning to go to university. Other children face barriers to attending school or learning. Staff work closely with external partners to ensure that children have the necessary support to overcome these challenges.

Plans to support children who are soon to move on to independent settings require some improvement. Children's plans do not identify their individual strengths, needs or progress and, as such, fail to identify areas where additional support is required to help children prepare for their next steps.

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

There is evidence that risks to children's safety and well-being have reduced since their admission. For example, children rarely go missing from home, despite some having a history of doing so in previous placements.

Individualised risk management plans are in place for each child. However, the quality of these is variable. Risks are not always clearly identified or, in some cases, strategies to manage them are not consistently followed. Furthermore, work with children to support them to develop their understanding of personal safety and safe behaviour is limited.

Children's relationships have been problematic at times. There have been a number of incidents where children have behaved negatively towards each other. The manager ensures that such incidents are recorded and has put measures in place to reduce incidents, such as increased monitoring. However, the work done with children in relation to bullying is limited and does not assist children to fully understand the impact of their actions on others.

All staff are trained in positive behaviour support. This helps them to develop skills in de-escalating challenging situations effectively. As a result, physical restraints do not occur regularly in the home. On the small number of occasions that staff have been required to physically intervene to safeguard children, clear records have been completed and carefully monitored by the manager.

At times, staff use consequences with the aim of helping children understand the impact of their behaviours. The use of consequences is inconsistent. They are not well-recorded, and their effectiveness is not explored. This area of practice should be reviewed to help ensure that consequences are meaningful and restorative in nature.

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

There is a manager has been registered with Ofsted since July 2019. Staff and external professionals spoke very highly of the manager, describing him as 'strongly committed' and 'child centred'.

Staff report good levels of support and say that the home is a positive place to work. This is reflected in a low staff turnover which results in children receiving care from a consistent team of staff who know them well.

Staff are provided with a range of training to assist them in their roles. All staff, except for one recent starter, hold nationally recognised qualifications in children's residential care. In addition, training in areas relevant to children's individual needs is provided.

The process of accepting new children into the home is not consistently effective. Impact risk assessments for two children indicated potential problems in terms of their compatibility with other children already resident, but these risks were not sufficiently considered. As a result, both children's placements ended soon after they moved to the home.

The manager has taken appropriate action to address the requirements made following the last inspection of the home. Significant incidents are monitored, and actions are taken to ensure learning is acted on. For example, the manager promptly reviewed and improved security of the home following a recent concern.

Monitoring is not effective in all areas. For example, shortfalls have not been identified through internal monitoring in areas such as consequences and direct work with children. In addition, children's views, wishes and experiences are not fully explored or considered when assessing quality or planning developments in the home.

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 children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who— take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff— ascertain and consider each child's views, wishes and feelings, and balance these against what they judge to be in the child's best interests when making decisions about the child's care and welfare; help each child to express views, wishes and feelings; help each child to understand how the child's views, wishes and feelings have been taken into account and give the child reasons for decisions in relation to the child; ensure that each child— is enabled to provide feedback to, and raise issues with, a relevant person about the support and services that the child receives. (Regulation 7 (1)(c) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(b)(i))	29 October 2021
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—	29 October 2021

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; help each child to understand how to keep safe; manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iv))	
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home; demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received; and use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(b) (2)(f)(g)(ii)(h))	29 October 2021
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 arrangements are in place to—	29 October 2021

plan for, and help, each child to prepare to leave the home or to move into adult care in a way that is consistent with arrangements agreed with the child's placing authority. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(iii))	
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Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that any sanctions used to address poor behaviour are restorative in nature, to help children recognise the impact of their behaviour on themselves, other children, the staff caring for them and the wider community. In some cases, it will be important for children to make reparation in some form to anyone hurt by their behaviour and the staff in the home should be skilled to support the child to understand this and carry it out. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards, page 46, paragraph 9.38)
- The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards, page 62, paragraph 14.4)
- The registered person should ensure that young people receive practical, individualised support to prepare for their move away from the home. This support should take into account the young person's individual strengths and needs. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 17, paragraph 3.27)
- The registered person should ensure that following the use of restraint, staff debrief takes place and facilitates a review of the incident, to identify effective practice and respond promptly where any issues or trends of concern emerge. The review should provide the opportunity for amending practice to ensure it meets the needs of each child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.59)

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: SC039689

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: PO Box 78, County Hall, Fishergate, Preston PR1 8XJ

Responsible individual: Gwyneth Monk

Registered manager: Warren Howarth

Inspectors

Marie Cordingley, Social Care Inspector
Emma Thornton, Social Care Inspector

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