

SC040437

Registered provider: Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and managed by a local authority. It provides care for up to five children who may experience social and emotional difficulties. The home operates a short break service and provides an outreach service.

At the time of the inspection, two children were living in the home.

The manager registered with Ofsted in April 2019.

Inspection dates: 20 and 21 May 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 12 November 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/11/2024	Full	Outstanding
14/11/2023	Full	Good
16/02/2023	Full	Good
05/07/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children receive high-quality care from staff in a nurturing and supportive environment where their individual needs are met with sensitivity. Staff build warm, trusting relationships with each child, promoting emotional well-being, confidence and a strong sense of belonging. The home provides a stable and stimulating setting in which children make exceptional progress in all areas of their development.

Staff demonstrate consistent commitment to promoting children's identity. Staff create a safe, inclusive environment where children feel respected, accepted and confident to express their identity without fear of judgement. Individualised support plans reflect each child's preferences and staff actively seek out relevant resources and specialist training to enhance their knowledge and practice in this area. This proactive approach ensures that children receive care that supports their identity and promotes their emotional well-being. As a result, children are empowered to develop a strong sense of self, contributing to their overall progress and positive outcomes.

Education is exceptionally well promoted in the home, with a strong culture of learning embedded in daily life. Staff have high aspirations for all children and work proactively to remove barriers to education. Staff advocate effectively with schools and external professionals to ensure that each child receives the support they need. One child, who had previously been out of education for an extended period, has now successfully returned to full-time education. This is a significant achievement, reflecting the staff's encouragement to motivate children to engage positively with their learning.

Children make considerable progress in their personal presentation and oral health within a short period. Staff provide consistent, sensitive support that promotes self-care routines and builds children's confidence in their appearance and hygiene. Improvements are clearly evidenced, with children engaging more regularly in brushing their teeth, attending dental appointments and taking pride in their personal grooming. This progress reflects the staff's trauma-informed approach, creating a safe and trusting environment where children feel motivated and supported to care for themselves. These positive changes contribute significantly to children's overall health.

A key strength of the home is the promotion and support offered to family time, recognising its importance for children's emotional well-being. Staff actively encourage and facilitate meaningful time between children and their families, working closely with parents and carers to ensure that visits are positive, supported and adapted to individual needs. Family time is carefully planned and well-managed, creating opportunities for children to strengthen family bonds while ensuring that their safety and emotional needs are met. This commitment to promoting family connections helps children feel valued and supported, contributing to their overall stability.

Following a recent change in registration, access to short breaks for children have temporarily been reduced. However, the quality of care and support provided to families

has remained at a high standard. Staff have responded with flexibility and dedication, maintaining consistent outreach to families and ensuring that children's needs continue to be met. Staff have worked closely with parents and professionals to provide emotional, practical and therapeutic support in the home and community. Plans are now well underway to reintroduce short breaks in a way that is carefully matched to each child's needs, demonstrating the team's commitment to responsive, child-centred care.

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

Staff demonstrate a strong ability to identify, assess and manage risk, resulting in a clear reduction in risk for children. Risk assessments are thorough, dynamic and regularly reviewed in response to changing needs and behaviours. Staff use their detailed understanding of each child to implement proactive strategies that promote safety while encouraging appropriate independence. As a result, incidents have decreased significantly and children feel safer and more secure.

Incidents of children being missing from the home are rare. When they do occur, staff respond with clear, consistent and highly effective action. Staff's response is well-coordinated, involving effective communication with professionals and families to ensure the child's safety. Staff follow established protocols, conduct thorough searches and maintain regular updates with all agencies. Staff are both child-centred and focused on reducing future incidents, with reflective debriefs and individual support plans in place to address underlying causes. This proactive, structured response ensures that children are protected and the home maintains a strong focus on safeguarding and well-being.

Staff are highly skilled in the use of de-escalation techniques, which means that physical restraint has not been required. Staff build strong, trusting relationships with children and use their understanding of individual needs to defuse situations calmly and effectively. Staff consistently promote emotional regulation through open communication, empathy and clear routines. Children feel understood and supported, and challenging behaviours are managed safely and respectfully. This trauma-informed approach creates a stable and nurturing environment where children thrive.

Key-work sessions are delivered to a highly effective standard, providing children with education and support to help them understand and manage risk. Staff use these sessions to explore issues such as peer pressure, online safety, exploitation and emotional well-being in a way that is age-appropriate, engaging and reflective. Sessions are thoughtfully planned and adapted to each child's experiences, helping them develop insight into their own behaviours and the potential consequences. Subsequently, children become more confident in recognising risky situations and are better equipped to make safer, more informed choices.

Room searches are conducted only when necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of children, reflecting staff's commitment to respectful and proportionate safeguarding practice. Staff clearly understand the balance between privacy and protection and searches are conducted in line with the home's procedures, only when there is a justified

concern for a child's safety or that of others. Each search is sensitively managed, with children's dignity and emotional needs carefully considered.

Children's independence is promoted and carefully considered in line with their individual abilities and developmental needs. Staff demonstrate a thorough understanding of each child's strengths and areas for growth, providing targeted support that enables children to develop essential life skills at a suitable pace. Children are consistently encouraged and empowered to undertake tasks that build confidence and self-reliance, such as cooking, budgeting and personal care. Celebrations of progress reinforce children's sense of achievement and motivate further development. This ensures that children are well-prepared for adulthood and promotes a positive sense of self-worth.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager provides highly effective oversight and demonstrates a deep understanding of each child's needs and progress. Her oversight is proactive and reflective, ensuring that all care planning, risk management and decision-making are thorough, child centred and regularly reviewed. The registered manager and senior staff members offer consistent, accessible support to the team, promoting a culture of learning and accountability. Staff feel valued and well supported, with regular supervision, debriefs and access to targeted training that enhances their skills and confidence. This strong leadership drives ambitious standards of care and contributes directly to the excellent outcomes achieved by children.

The staff team is highly experienced, which is a significant strength of the home. Staff bring a wealth of knowledge, skill and understanding to their roles, which they apply consistently to deliver high-quality care and support. Staff's experience enables them to respond confidently and effectively to complex situations, ensuring that children's needs are met with empathy, consistency and professionalism. The team works collaboratively, sharing best practice and learning to continually improve outcomes for children. As a result, children benefit from stable, trusting relationships with adults who know them well and are highly attuned to their individual needs.

The registered manager actively encourages staff's continued development. Due to this, staff are proactive in identifying training needs and sourcing specialist training to meet the specific and emerging needs of the children, further enhancing the quality of care. The team's reflective and collaborative practice ensures every child receives highly individualised support, contributing to sustained and meaningful progress.

Working relationships with professionals and families are excellent and significantly enhance the quality of care and support provided to children. Staff communicate openly, effectively and regularly with all involved, ensuring a consistent and coordinated approach to meeting each child's needs. Professionals speak highly of the team's proactive engagement and willingness to work collaboratively to achieve the best outcomes. One social worker said, '[The children] have exhibited significant progress since moving in [to the home]. The structured and supportive environment has evidently contributed to their development.' Families feel listened to, respected and actively involved in their child's care. One parent said, 'I have learnt from the staff. Staff support

[children] but support me too. I owe them a lot.' This strong partnership working promotes stability and a shared commitment to children's progress.

The home demonstrates a significant commitment to trauma-informed practice by actively seeking a nationally recognised accreditation in this area. Staff consistently engage in specialist training to deepen their understanding of trauma and its impact on children, ensuring that care is not only responsive but also therapeutic. The home's trauma-informed approach is embedded in all aspects of care, creating a nurturing and safe environment for children to develop and thrive. By pursuing a formal accreditation, the home is further embedding this best practice, demonstrating a commitment to ongoing improvement and ensuring the highest standards of care for children who have experienced trauma.

The registered manager demonstrates effective leadership by developing presentations and sharing positive practices with leaders and managers within the local authority. Through reflective practice, the registered manager has identified the need for a specialist provision within the local authority to meet the growing needs of children with complex mental health challenges. By proactively highlighting this gap in provision, the registered manager has shown a clear commitment to improving outcomes for children with complex needs. The registered manager's ability to identify emerging needs and drive strategic planning ensures that the home remains responsive and adaptable while maintaining the home's identity and integrity.

No requirements or recommendations were made during this inspection.

Information about this inspection

The inspector has 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: SC040437

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

Registered provider address: Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, Town Hall,
King William Street, Blackburn BB1 7DY

Responsible individual: Tracy Lysons

Registered manager: Melanie Cogan

Inspector

Carrie Mayes, Social Care Inspector

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