

SC040926

Registered provider: Wigan Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority home provides short breaks for up to five children at any one time. The home also provides outreach support to children and their parents and/or carers in the community.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since April 2009.

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 inspections on 12 April 2021. We last visited this setting on 11 March 2021 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 March 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 17 September 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
17/09/2019	Full	Inadequate
08/01/2019	Full	Good
04/10/2017	Full	Good
07/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Staff provide children with nurturing care and support during their short breaks. In addition to this, they offer outreach support and guidance to the children's parents and carers. As a result, many children achieve permanency within their families.

Staff are skilled at building positive relationships with children. Children look forward to their short breaks and they value staff's care and support. This is reflected in a child's comments, 'The people [staff] here are really nice and caring. They make you feel welcome and they are always there if you need a chat or a cry.'

Staff provide children with opportunities to try new hobbies and interests, such as hill climbing, map reading and paddle boarding. In addition to this, the home is a safe place where children can come and have a break away from stressful situations.

With staff's ongoing support, children make noticeable progress in many aspects of their lives. For example, a child who had not attended school for two years re-engaged with their education.

The in-house psychologists and speech and language therapist provide children and their families with expert help and support. This is ensuring that children's emotional and communication needs are suitably assessed and met.

Staff involve children in the preparation of healthy meals. This helps children to feel involved and build their independence skills.

Parents, carers and social workers speak highly of the short-break care provided to children. Undoubtedly, managers and staff are child centred and work tirelessly to ensure that children's experiences and family relationships improve.

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

Staff's calm, understanding and consistent approach is helping children and their families to work through difficult times. Furthermore, with staff's constant guidance and support, children develop better ways to deal with their anxieties, frustrations and anger.

Staff support and encourage parents and carers to understand and manage their children's behaviour at home. They help them to establish good routines and consistent boundaries. Staff's unwavering support helps parents and carers to rebuild relationships with their children. As a result, children's family homes become a safer and happier environment.

Staff know the children very well and understand the triggers to risk-taking behaviours. Staff's restorative approach to behaviour management is helping

children to improve their behaviour and keep themselves and others safe. The use of restraint or sanctions is extremely rare in this home.

Managers and staff ensure that the home is a safe and secure place for children to stay. All health and safety checks, such as fire, gas and electric servicing, are carried out in a timely way.

The manager assesses the local area annually to ensure that the home's location remains safe. The assessment is thorough and reflects the practices implemented by the staff team to keep children safe.

In the main, high-risk behaviour such as going missing from home and substance misuse are infrequent. However, on occasion, staff do not proactively safeguard children. For example, when children have moved into the home on an emergency and gone missing from care, or misused substances, staff have not always taken appropriate action.

Furthermore, children's risk assessments often lack important information and clear strategies for staff to follow. This does not ensure that staff are fully aware of their safeguarding roles, or the manager's expectations.

The manager does not ensure that return home interviews are undertaken by an independent person when children go missing from their care. Opportunities to gain insight into the reasons why children go missing are being lost.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

An experienced and suitably qualified registered manager leads the home well. She manages and supports a stable, content and dedicated staff team. Two deputy managers also provide staff with effective support and guidance. A strong and child-centred management team is ensuring that children receive good-quality care and support.

Joint working with parents, carers and relevant professionals is a key strength of the manager and staff team. Communication between staff and all stakeholders is strong. This ensures that everyone is fully aware of children's progress and experiences when children stay at the home.

Staff work in a happy, supportive and settled environment. They receive regular professional supervision and their performance is reviewed annually. This ensures that they have the opportunity to reflect on their practice and identify their strengths and any areas for development. As a result, children and families receive support from a stable, knowledgeable and content staff team.

Staff benefit from having access to relevant training, such as safeguarding, behaviour management and trauma-informed practice. However, they do not receive training about substance misuse, child criminal exploitation and e-safety. Such

training would further enhance staff's safeguarding knowledge, understanding and skills.

Shortfalls in the manager's monitoring and evaluation of serious incidents and the relevant records are undermining the home's continuous development and improvement journey. Weaknesses in staff's practice are not being routinely identified and addressed.

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 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— 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. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)) This relates to ensuring that all known and potential risks to children are thoroughly assessed. Risk assessments should provide staff with clear and effective strategies for managing risk.	29 April 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 ensuring that the manager's oversight of risk assessments and incident reports is thorough and addresses any shortfalls in staff's recordings and practice.	29 April 2022

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that independent return home interviews are undertaken when children have been missing from home. Staff should take account of information provided by such interviews when assessing risk. ('Guide to the Children's Home's Regulations, including the quality standards' page 45, paragraph 9.30)
- The registered person should ensure that staff can access training in relation to child criminal exploitation, substance misuse, and e-safety. ('Guide to the Children's Home's Regulations, including the quality standards' page 53, paragraph 10.11)

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: SC040926

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Wigan Council

Registered provider address: Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council, Town Hall,
Library Street, Wigan WN1 1YN

Responsible individual: Shirley Parkinson

Registered manager: Victoria Hanlon

Inspector

Marina Tully, Social Care Inspector

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