

SC040926

Registered provider: Wigan Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority short-break service is registered to provide care for up to three children. The home provides planned short-break care and/or emergency care arrangements for children with emotional and/or behavioural needs. Outreach support is also provided to children and their parents/carers in the community.

The home was registered with Ofsted in May 2003 and the manager has been registered with Ofsted since April 2009.

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 February 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: 27 February 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
27/02/2024	Full	Outstanding
21/03/2023	Full	Good
15/03/2022	Full	Good
17/09/2019	Full	Inadequate

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Staff excel at prioritising children's well-being. Staff build trusting and meaningful relationships with the children, which ensures that their emotional, physical and mental health needs are met.

Children have the opportunity to be represented by an advocate. Staff have developed innovative ways of ensuring that there is no delay in children receiving support from an advocate. One member of staff has created a key fob which, when held up to a mobile phone, can instantly access an advocate referral form to avoid any delay.

One unaccompanied asylum-seeking child has fled their home country. During their journey to the UK, they lost a close family member. The child moved into the home through the emergency placement service. The staff took great care to translate the child's paperwork into Arabic, their native language. This is a powerful example of how the home quickly establishes secure, trusting relationships that provide children with a safe space.

Children are supported to access short breaks that provide them with the space and time to make sense of their personal experiences. The staff provide an environment that fosters and nurtures a trauma-informed approach to care. Staff use 'talking mats' to help children understand their needs better; this is underpinned by a model of care that uses PACE (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy). This is being developed further by leaders and managers implementing Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy, which helps to underpin the language used to support children to be able to share their wishes, feelings and concerns in a pragmatic and strength-based way.

Staff use language that cares. Records and documents are written to the child and use terms that are caring and child focused. Therefore, records are easier for children to read and understand and also provide a strength-based narrative.

Children's views and opinions are consistently sought and listened to and are used to develop the service. The manager and staff are assisted by a group of skilled and knowledgeable 'young inspectors', who visit the home to assess the service according to their established criteria. Their lived experience is of great significance and has a positive impact. Recently, the 'young inspectors' suggested that one area of the home should feel more 'homely', and the manager promptly took action to address this.

Children are welcomed into the home, which is a bright, homely, happy and friendly environment. They have access to board games, books and a well-equipped garden space. There is a 'chill zone', which is designed to help children to be open and reflective about their lived experience when they complete one-to-one work with staff.

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

Comprehensive risk assessments are compiled, with contributions from all those involved in children's lives. These include potential triggers of challenging behaviour, and strategies that staff can use to manage behaviour. This enables staff to meet children's needs and promote their safety.

Staff are very aware of children's vulnerabilities and of how to keep them safe. Handover meetings, when shifts change, ensure that staff share all information and any communication with families. Staff record and act on any concerns, with effective use of body maps.

Safer recruitment checks are completed for new staff before they work at the home. Managers regularly observe staff's interactions with children and the teamwork dynamics. Staff receive regular supervisions and appraisals and attend team meetings to support their work with children.

Safeguarding incidents are rare and, when they do occur, staff respond in a timely, confident and considered way. Safeguarding processes are followed and relevant people are notified of safeguarding concerns. However, Ofsted was not notified of one incident when a child was missing from the home overnight. This did not ensure that the regulator had effective oversight of the incident.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager is a confident leader who has exceptionally high aspirations for the children. She leads by example, modelling focused and nurturing interactions between staff and children. The registered manager is supported by a skilled and competent leadership team and a knowledgeable and confident staff team. The registered manager communicates effectively with the leadership team, and this provides an additional layer of management oversight. As a result, the running of the home and the quality of care provided to the children are exceptional. Leaders and managers meet daily in the 'safety huddle' to discuss the needs of the children and staff to ensure that any safeguarding issues are identified and addressed without delay.

Leaders and managers create an environment where staff are enabled to work confidently and consistently with high levels of autonomy. Staff have high aspirations for their own development and the work they do with the children. This drives a culture of professionalism and exceptionally high standards of care.

The manager works exceptionally well with partner agencies to gather information about the children from those professionals who also know the children well.

Staff have access to a wide range of training, which ensures that they care for children safely and consistently. Staff training is specific to the needs of the children and other relevant topics, equipping them with awareness of the current risks children may face,

including knife crime and the use of racist or inappropriate language in the community. Staff are trained in trauma-informed language and practice. This helps them to consistently develop their knowledge and skills.

Leaders and managers have a strong understanding of the strengths and areas for development. The registered manager has created a learning environment where practice is continually evaluated to uphold the high standards. There is clear evidence when paperwork or processes are proactively amended, demonstrating the manager's ability to anticipate change rather than responding to issues as they arise.

The manager ensures that practice is informed by research. This ensures that the service evolves in line with emerging theoretical approaches and best practice. This includes developing trauma-informed environments, language and evaluation.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that Ofsted is notified if there is an incident relating to the protection, safeguarding or welfare of a child living in the home which the registered person considers to be serious. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 63, paragraph 14.10)

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: Steven Swinhoe

Registered manager: Victoria Hanlon

Inspector

James Meeks, Social Care Inspector

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