

SC063683

Registered provider: Manchester City Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and run by a local authority. It is registered to provide care for up to six children. The home is part of an integrated service that provides children and staff with access to a range of services and outreach support. This is reflected in the home's statement of purpose.

At the time of the inspection, four children were living in the home but only one child chose to speak with the inspectors about their experiences. A fifth child is in the process of moving on from the home and was not living there at the time of the inspection.

The manager registered with Ofsted on 15 March 2018.

Inspection dates: 1 and 2 August 2022

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: 15 June 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
15/06/2021	Full	Good
25/09/2019	Full	Good
14/08/2018	Full	Good
16/02/2018	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

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

Most children make some progress when living in the home, but their experiences are not always positive. Some children display complex, challenging and high-risk behaviours and have experienced several placement moves prior to living in the home. Group living dynamics are not fully understood and the needs of children moving into the home are not robustly considered alongside the needs of children already there.

Staff care about children. Professionals and family members are positive about the care children receive. One social worker said: '[Name of child] is making some progress. Staff have a good understanding of [name of child]'s needs. [Name of child] is being helped to develop positive, trusting relationships with staff who understand [name of child].' Children are provided with opportunities to share their views. However, staff are not able to engage all children. This limits their understanding about what is going on for children and increases children's vulnerabilities.

Strong partnership working underpins practice in the home. Regular, multi-disciplinary meetings consider children's individual needs but opportunities to reflect on the impact of group living dynamics, on children's emotional and physical well-being, have been missed.

Children are supported to safely keep in touch with people who are important to them. The team makes efforts to develop relationships with children's family members and friends. Children are helped to develop their understanding of safe and appropriate relationships.

Education is promoted and children are supported to attend. When children choose not to attend, staff work closely with education providers and other services to identify alternative provisions for children. Some children have been supported to re-engage in education and have successfully obtained qualifications.

The team maintains strong links with routine and specialist health services. The staff work together to encourage children to engage and are proactive in addressing children's emotional and physical health needs.

Children have access to a wide range of leisure activities and are encouraged to pursue their interests. Staff struggle to engage some children in activities. Staff are proactive in maintaining contact with children when they are away from the home. However, they often have limited information about children's activities in the community despite this being a known risk for some children.

The home is welcoming and suitably furnished. The lounge and games room are homely, and children's bedrooms are personalised. Since the last inspection, there have been changes in practice, and locks on communal doors are no longer routinely used. However, practices to manage the environment when one child becomes dysregulated do not fully consider the impact on other children. This not only restricts children's movement and choices in the home but is potentially detrimental to the group dynamics.

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

Children say that they have sometimes felt unsafe and have raised concerns about the behaviours of other children. Staff have made efforts to address these concerns and proactively challenge bullying and intimidating behaviours between children. Dynamics in the home have recently changed and risks have reduced. However, due to its commitment to sustaining children's placements, the organisation has not always fully considered the wider safeguarding implications for everyone in the home.

Staff understand children's individual vulnerabilities and risks and are vigilant to children's high-risk behaviours. At times, it has been necessary for staff and police to undertake room searches as a response to safeguarding concerns. During searches, illegal substances and a weapon have been found in children's bedrooms. This places all children and staff at risk of harm.

Staff have responded appropriately to safeguarding incidents and share any safeguarding concerns with relevant agencies. However, important information was missing from one notification which was shared with Ofsted as required by regulation. This limits the regulator's oversight of incidents in the home.

Children's risk and behaviour management plans are not sufficiently robust. They reflect children's individual risks but do not routinely consider group living dynamics. Strategies for staff to follow to keep children safe are not always clear.

There have been several occasions when the police have been called to the home to manage low-level behaviours from children. This is not only distressing for children but may also lead to them being criminalised due to staff not having the skills to respond appropriately to challenging situations. This is something the manager has taken action to address.

There has been a reduction in incidents of children going missing from home. When children do go missing, staff take appropriate action to locate them and encourage their return. Records are detailed, and children have the opportunity to speak with an external professional.

When staff hold children to keep them safe, children and staff do not routinely have the opportunity to reflect on the intervention and records are not robust. Following one incident, the record did not include information about everyone involved,

debriefs had not taken place in line with regulation and there was no oversight from the manager.

When consequences are used as a response to negative behaviours, they do not always provide opportunities for children to reflect and learn from their behaviours, and records lack detail.

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

The home is managed by a suitably skilled and experienced manager. She is hardworking, driven, and is supported by a deputy manager. Staff say they feel supported by the home's managers. However, there has been a reduction in management oversight due to competing demands placed on the management team. This reduces opportunities for learning, reflection and development of the home.

An experienced core team of permanent staff and contracted agency staff provides consistency for children. The team is resilient and committed to improving outcomes. There has been a number of challenges around the retention of new staff and any shortfalls are covered by the team. This is positive for children but ultimately increases pressure on the team. One staff member told the inspectors that the team is motivated and committed, but due to staffing shortfalls and complex behaviours displayed by children, communication and morale have dipped.

Staff have access to relevant training opportunities and regular team meetings. Managers have an open-door policy but formal supervisions for some staff have not taken place in line with the organisation's policy. This limits opportunities for staff to develop and learn.

A number of recording shortfalls were identified during the inspection. These had not previously been identified by managers. Some records were missing, others lacked details and another document contained information that was not correct. The lack of clarity and consistency in recordings reduces management oversight and means opportunities to reflect and learn from incidents have been missed.

There has been ongoing work to address shortfalls in the quality of the independent monitoring of the home. The improvements made are not yet fully embedded. This is something the organisation intends to keep under review.

The requirement and two recommendations made at the previous inspection have been met. The recommendation around the quality of recordings has not been met and a requirement has been set.

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; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(v)) This specifically relates to ensuring that staff remain vigilant to potential group living risks. Staff should understand their role in responding to children's individual behaviours, to reduce unnecessary police involvement in managing behaviours in the home.	7 October 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— ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child;	7 October 2022

ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; 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; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(d)(f)(h)) This specifically relates to ensuring that incidents and practice in the home are overseen and evaluated by the manager and that children's records are maintained to a high standard.	
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; that arrangements are in place to— ensure the effective induction of each child into the home; manage and review the placement of each child in the home; and 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)(a)(b)(i)(ii)(iii)) This specifically relates to ensuring that decision-making relating to children's placements in the home takes into consideration whether the child's assessed needs can be met	7 October 2022

by the staff, and the impact of that placement on other children living in the home. In addition, that the registered person considers the impact of any arrangements to restrict movement in the home on all children living in the home.	
The registered person must ensure that all employees— receive practice related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(b)) This specifically relates to ensuring that supervision takes place in line with the organisation’s supervision policy and provides staff with the opportunity to focus and reflect on the needs and progress of children.	7 October 2022
The registered person must prepare and implement a policy (“the behaviour management policy”) which sets out— how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the children’s home; and the measures of control, discipline and restraint which may be used in relation to children in the home. The registered person must keep the behaviour management policy under review and, where appropriate, revise it. The registered person must ensure that— within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes— the name of the child; details of the child’s behaviour leading to the use of the measure; the date, time and location of the use of the measure; a description of the measure and its duration; details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure; the name of the person who used the measure (“the user”), and of any other person present when the measure was used;	7 October 2022

the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and a description of any injury to the child or any other person, and any medical treatment administered, as a result of the measure; within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (1)(a)(b) (2) (3)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(viii)(b)(i)(ii)(c)) This specifically relates to ensuring that records are clear and that children and staff have the opportunity to reflect on the intervention. In addition, the manager must regularly review the practice of staff and ensure that the impact on children is fully evaluated.	
A notification made under this regulation— must include details of— the matter; the other persons, bodies or organisations (if any) who or which have been notified; and any actions taken by the registered person as a result of the matter. (Regulation 40 (5)(a)(i)(ii)(iii))	7 October 2022

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that any registered manager employed in the home has sufficient capacity to ensure that the quality standards are met for each child in the home. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 52, paragraph 10.7)

- The registered person should ensure that any sanctions used to address poor behaviour maximise the opportunity for children to reflect and learn and are clearly recorded with oversight from the manager ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.38)
- The registered person should ensure that any individual appointed to carry out visits to the home as an independent person makes a rigorous and impartial assessment of the home's arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children in the home's care. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 5, paragraph 15.5)

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: SC063683

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Town Hall Extension, Albert Square, Manchester
M60 2LA

Responsible individual: Sean McKendrick

Registered manager: Christine (Esther) Smith

Inspectors

Caroline Bertram, Social Care Inspector
Rob Neild, Social Care Inspector

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