

SC063683

Registered provider: Manchester City Council

Assurance inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority children's home is part of an integrated service that provides children and staff with access to a range of services and outreach support. The home is registered to provide care for up to six children.

At the time of the inspection, four children were living in the home. Three children spoke with the inspector about their experiences of living in the home.

The manager registered with Ofsted in March 2018.

Inspection date: 22 November 2022

Date of last inspection: 1 August 2022

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Information about this inspection

At this inspection, the inspector evaluated:

- the care of children
- the safety of children
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers.

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children, using the social care common inspection framework. This assurance 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'.

Findings from the inspection

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance inspection.

The care of children

Compared to their individual starting points, all children make some progress when living in the home. However, due to complex group living dynamics, children's experiences are not always positive. Staff are vigilant to these dynamics and are proactive in pre-empting and addressing behaviours between children.

Staff care about children. They are proactive in building positive relationships with children, including those who are harder to engage. Staff work closely with other professionals to understand what is going on for children when they are away from the home. They make efforts to develop links with children's families and social networks. However, some children struggle to accept staff taking an interest in what is going on for them and are resistant to accepting support from the team.

Children have opportunities to develop positive peer relationships through access to leisure and social activities. They are supported to pursue their interests. Children's education is well promoted and encouraged and attendance has improved for all children. Older children are helped to attend college and one child has secured an apprenticeship.

Children's health needs are particularly well understood. Staff are proactive in seeking medical advice and attention as required. All children benefit from access to routine and specialist healthcare to meet their individual needs.

Children know how to raise concerns. They say they are listened to but do not always feel heard. The rationale for some rules and boundaries in relation to children not having continual access to the home's Wi-Fi and friends not coming into the home, and access to communal rooms being restricted at times do not consider children's individual circumstances. These blanket rules differentiate children from their peers outside the home and reduce opportunities for children to develop a sense of belonging.

Efforts have been made to make the home a welcoming environment for children. The lounge and communal areas are suitably decorated and furnished. Children's bedrooms are personalised. However, some areas of the home look tired and would benefit from redecoration. There is damage to flooring in the games room and a child's bedroom and many window coverings need repair. External window restrictors look unsightly and are not reflective of a homely environment.

The safety of children

The staff team has benefited from access to additional training and development opportunities since the last inspection, leading to improved practice and consistency in the home. Staff are more vigilant to complex group living dynamics and have taken appropriate action to address bullying concerns raised by children. One social worker said, 'They are doing what they need to be doing to keep children safe.'

However, despite a significant reduction in incidents between children, one child felt his safety has been compromised at times because of the behaviours of another child. This is continually being addressed by staff, senior managers and his social worker but his concerns have not reduced.

Staff have a good understanding of the risks and vulnerabilities children may be exposed to in the home, in the community and online. They regularly speak to children about issues that are affecting them. Children's plans are sufficiently detailed and regularly updated and provide staff with strategies to follow to keep children safe.

There has been a reduction in incidents of children going missing from the home. When children do go missing, staff know how to respond and are proactive in trying to locate them and encourage their return.

Safeguarding incidents, allegations and complaints are well managed. There is robust oversight from managers. Ongoing consultation with relevant professionals ensures there is a coordinated response to safeguarding children. Clear processes have been implemented to ensure incidents are notified to Ofsted as required by regulation.

Changes in practice have led to a reduction in incidents. The police have not been called to the home to manage children's behaviours. Staff holding children to keep them safe is a last resort. Records of holding children are sufficiently detailed. Consequences used as a response to negative behaviours provide opportunities for children to reflect and learn from their behaviours.

Processes for children moving into the home have been strengthened. Managers consult with the staff team and other services linked to the home to ensure they carefully consider the needs of any children moving into the home alongside the needs of children already living there.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

The manager was absent at the time of the inspection. The assistant manager and service manager facilitated the inspection and demonstrated strong and effective leadership of the home.

Managers have strengthened internal and external monitoring processes, giving them more robust oversight. However, changes to ensure that the registered

manager has sufficient capacity to fulfil her role have not yet been fully embedded. The recommendation made at the last inspection has been restated to allow the provider to demonstrate that they can sustain the changes.

Managers are committed to improving outcomes for children. They have taken action to address practice and recording shortfalls identified at the last inspection and are continually striving to develop the service.

Team development days, training opportunities and increased supervision mean staff have the relevant skills and experiences to meet the needs of the children in their care. Staff say they work well together as a team and that morale has improved. New staff are made to feel welcome. Staffing shortfalls are being addressed through ongoing recruitment campaigns. To provide consistency for children, any gaps are covered by the team or contracted agency staff.

The six requirements and two of the recommendations made at the last inspection have been met. One recommendation has been restated.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
01/08/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
15/06/2021	Full	Good
25/09/2019	Full	Good
14/08/2018	Full	Good

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 quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's homes overall aims and outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential; In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— understand and apply the home's statement of purpose; ensure that staff— treat each child with dignity and respect; provide to children living in the home the physical necessities they need on order to live their comfortably; ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child; and enable each child to participate in the daily life of the home. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(iii)(vii)(c)(i)(ii)) This specifically relates to the registered person ensuring that all floor and window coverings are well maintained and free from hazards, that the home is decorated and furnished to a high standard throughout, and that they review the use of external window restrictors. Also, that any rules or routines implemented around Wi-Fi access and visitors to the home are personalised and meet the individual needs of each child.	31 January 2023

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. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 52, paragraph 10.7)
This recommendation was made at the last inspection and is restated.
- The registered person should review any practice in the home that may limit a child's access to communal areas, ensuring that any decisions to limit children's access are only made to safeguard each child and that children understand these reasons. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.10)
- The registered person should ensure that when incidents of bullying occur between children, they are supported to understand the impact of their behaviours and the actions being taken to address any concerns. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 16, paragraph 3.12)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC063683

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Manchester City Council

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

Responsible individual: Sean McKendrick

Registered manager: Esther Smith

Inspector

Caroline Bertram, Social Care Inspector

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