

SC063683

Registered provider: Manchester City Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a local authority run home that accommodates up to six children who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 31 October to 1 November 2017

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 **requires improvement to be good**

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

Date of last inspection: 11 July 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection:

A compliance notice was issued in relation to Regulation 14, care planning. Ofsted carried out a compliance monitoring visit on 7 September and found that the provider had taken significant action to improve. The notice was met.

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- The home identifies risks to children's safety and takes action to address them. It works proactively and in close partnership with the police, families and safeguarding agencies. This helps to protect children. Feedback from parents and children demonstrates that the home provides a safe haven where children feel secure and well looked after.
- Other professionals speak very highly of the service provided and the quality of relationships that staff have developed with children. They recognise that this has been a key feature in promoting children's safety, well-being and progress.
- Staff have worked tirelessly to provide positive experiences for children. They have been consistently available to listen to children and to provide advice and guidance on the full range of matters that are important to them. Staff report that recent training has given them a greater understanding of children's emotional needs and how to support them.
- The home's dogged determination to improve children's life opportunities, coupled with professional challenge of partner agencies, results in small improvements to children's progress and outcomes. Consequently, children improve their engagement and progress in education and their health needs are well promoted and mostly met.
- The home has been extremely proactive in its care planning, and has supported children whose safety has been compromised while living in this home to move on to more suitable placements. It has played a full part in transition planning, and has provided the best possible support to children who have moved at short notice, and have needed secure escorts for their own safety.
- The senior leadership team has taken a stronger strategic lead and this has driven improvements in partnership working, care planning and the overall quality of care. The monitoring and review of children's progress have improved.
- The premises are part way through a programme of renovation and already communal areas and children's bedrooms are cleaner, fresher and more welcoming. Arrangements are in place for the remaining improvements to be made in the very near future.

The children's home's areas for development:

- A programme of staff training has begun, but the manager does not have up-to-

date, accurate information about staff members' training profiles and their individual training and developmental needs.

- Not all staff receive regular one-to-one supervision that supports their professional development.
- There is no registered manager in post. The registered manager left on 1 August 2017. Although an interim manager has been appointed, the registered manager post has not yet been advertised. This delay in recruitment is unacceptable and Ofsted will write to the provider regarding the lack of a registered manager.
- The interim manager's suitability and fitness to be registered have not been assessed by Ofsted as she has not submitted a complete application for registration within the required time frame.
- The updated location assessment does not adequately identify and assess the risks associated with the local area. This means that it does not help the manager and the placing authority to recognise potential risks to children's safety from living in this community.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/07/2017	Full	Inadequate
02/03/2017	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
17/08/2016	Full	Good
30/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

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

Recommendations

- Ensure that all members of staff receive practice-related supervision in accordance with Regulation 33(4)(b) and the home's policy. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.3)
- Ensure that the workforce plan includes training and qualifications completed by staff while working at the home and is used to record ongoing training and continuing professional development needs of the manager and staff. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)
- Review the location assessment to ensure that the home is suitably located so that children are effectively safeguarded and can access services to meet needs identified in their relevant plans. The review should include the identification of any risks and opportunities presented by the home's location and strategies for managing these. In doing so, refer to the non-statutory advice about the location assessment process: 'Children's homes regulation amendments 2014: Advice for children's homes providers on new duties under regulations that came into effect in January and April 2014'. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.1)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The four children who were present at the full inspection in July 2017 have moved to new placements because of increasing concerns for their safety in the community. No children have been admitted to the home since then. Two children moved on to new placements quickly and the remaining two moved on in September and October respectively. The home supported their transitions effectively and staff have maintained friendly contact, as appropriate, with children who have made phone contact with them. This shows children that they are still important to the staff team and are still cared for.

Staff have worked tirelessly to engage children in constructive, enjoyable pursuits, including holidays, outings and fun activities within the home, with limited success. Children have valued the opportunities and one child has enjoyed a holiday away with staff. However, children have been overwhelmingly drawn to unsuitable peers and adults in the community who have had a negative influence on their behaviour and on their safety. This has reduced their willingness to engage in the opportunities offered by the home.

Good partnership arrangements are well established. The quality of relationships between the staff and the children, their families and associated professionals were very good while children were living in the home. Children benefited from high levels of support from staff who they trusted and confided in. With varying levels of engagement, they received services from specialist workers, including sexual health workers, drugs counsellors, the youth justice service and child and adolescent mental health services. They were also offered good levels of support from the local police and the looked after children's nurse who visit the home regularly, and from specialist social workers who provide support for children where sexual exploitation is a concern.

Partner professionals recognise that factors and people outside of the home have significantly influenced children's lack of engagement with support services. The home and partner agencies have been persistent in their attempts to engage with children, and have had some limited success. For example, a child with a previously very poor record of engagement with education benefited from tuition provided at the home, even though she did not engage fully with the education programme provided.

Children's health needs were very well promoted and staff ensured that children had every opportunity to get health advice and the treatment they required. This helped to ensure that children's health needs were taken into account fully when they moved on to future placements.

Children were supported to learn self-care skills, cooking and basic independence skills, in accordance with their age and developmental needs. Children's files demonstrate that key-worker time was used in an effective way to help children reflect on their behaviour, learn new strategies and build confidence and skills.

Improvements to the premises mean that the home is fresh, safe and clean. Children's bedrooms are suitably furnished, and provide desks and safe storage facilities as well as the usual bedroom furniture. The manager recognises that more needs to be done so as to provide a more welcoming and homely environment. Arrangements are in place for the exterior of the premises to be upgraded and for flooring and bathrooms to be renovated in the very near future.

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

In July 2017, children caused significant disturbances in the neighbourhood, culminating in a gang of youths approaching the home to assault children. The staff team dealt with this serious incident calmly and effectively, which kept everyone safe. The home's relationships with the local community deteriorated; in July 2017, concerned neighbours raised a petition calling for the home to be closed.

The local authority recognised that children were not safe, and that their behaviour was continuing to deteriorate. It increased its efforts to secure alternative placements and two children had been moved to more suitable homes by the end of July 2017. A decision was taken not to admit more children until all children had moved from the

home, so as to reduce the likelihood of newly admitted children being drawn into crime and dangerous behaviour by those already in placement.

Delays in finding suitable placements for the remaining two children were exacerbated due to their high safeguarding needs and their engagement in behaviour that put themselves and others at risk. Consequently, one stayed at the home until early September and another remained until mid October. Both continued to engage in dangerous behaviour in the community during that time. They frequently went missing or left the home without permission. They continued to be at risk of sexual exploitation, criminality and drug and alcohol misuse.

The home strengthened its safeguarding practice and worked extremely well with the police, safeguarding agencies, families and children. Staff redoubled their efforts to build close bonds with children. They revisited safeguarding training and undertook further training that was focused on understanding and responding effectively to children's emotional needs. Partner professionals reported that children 'built up really good relationships with staff... but the outside influences were too strong'. They said that the home 'could not have done any more' to protect children any better.

The home has adopted the local authority's Signs of Safety model of intervention. This helps staff to nurture children's strengths, assess their unsafe behaviour and take action to safeguard them. Relevant documents, including individual placement plans, journals and risk assessments, demonstrate that the home addresses children's individual safeguarding needs through appropriate planned responses to unsafe behaviour and other risks. Social work colleagues confirmed that they are fully involved in developing children's plans and risk assessments, and that the home keeps them up to date with any developments and changes.

Safeguarding practice is strong. The swift and responsive action taken by the staff team when children have gone missing or engaged in dangerous pastimes has been key to protecting children from dangers, including from fire and from sexual exploitation. A safeguarding professional explained: 'The staff were our eyes and ears. They had a really good risk management plan which was very effective. The information they gave us, like car number plates and social media content, has meant the police could take action.'

Working in close partnership with children's families and friends, including their friends' parents, enabled the home to understand where children were and what risk-taking behaviour they were involved in. This meant that staff were able to protect children better. They followed children who they considered to be in danger in the community and kept them in sight, as far as possible. Children came to accept this and felt safe having staff nearby. Staff maintained frequent phone contact with them and gave them good guidance and advice. They shared information with safeguarding professionals, which enabled specialist workers to provide focused interventions with children.

Staff have a good understanding of child protection and the importance of sharing concerning information, including disclosures of abuse, quickly and with relevant parties,

even when children have later retracted disclosures. This shows a good understanding of children's emotional and safety needs. Allegations against staff are dealt with appropriately. Action taken protects children and staff and maintains confidentiality. The home shares information appropriately with the local authority's designated officer for safeguarding, with social work colleagues and with Ofsted. The manager contributes effectively to safeguarding strategy meetings and cooperates fully with child protection investigations.

Feedback from children and partner professionals demonstrates clearly that children felt safe and well cared for in the home. For example, one child reported: 'I love the staff and all the things we do in here.'

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

The home has been extremely proactive in its professional challenge of partners responsible for children's care planning and placements, such as the manager maintaining frequent contact with partners and seeking daily progress updates until new placements were found. Throughout July and August, weekly professional meetings kept children's progress as a high priority for the senior leadership team. At a compliance monitoring visit in September 2017, Ofsted found the home and the local authority were doing everything possible to find more appropriate placements for the remaining children.

The registered manager left on 1 August 2017 and an interim manager has been in post since then. Although the interim manager is in the process of submitting an application for registration to Ofsted, she has not done so within the 90 days required. Consequently, she is not compliant with the Care Standards Act 2000 (Part II) and her suitability and fitness have not been assessed. Ofsted will write to the provider to address this issue outside of this inspection.

Improvement-board meetings, led by senior leaders, took place during August. Scrutiny of the home has been more robust, with a strong focus on ensuring improved practice within the home. Despite this, there have been significant delays in recruiting a permanent manager, such that, after three months, the registered manager post has not yet been advertised. This does not demonstrate that the provider recognises the importance of this key role in driving improvements within the home.

The oversight and monitoring of the operation of the home have significantly improved and most staff are now receiving one-to-one supervision as well as group supervision. However, one-to-one meetings are not being held routinely and regularly with all staff. This means that not all staff have regular opportunities to reflect on their practice and discuss their developmental and training needs in a safe, confidential meeting.

The staff training programme has been revisited and staff have received training that helps them to understand the impact of early trauma and how to respond to children's emotional needs. Face-to-face training is supplemented by online training and plans are in place for all staff to renew their skills over the forthcoming months. The manager

does not have a reliable and accurate training matrix, and is not able to clearly see what training individual members of staff have done. This does not enable her to maintain a good overview of the skills and areas for development of the staff team.

Several professionals commented that the location of the home has been a major feature in the deterioration in children's behaviour and the home's inability to keep children safe in the community. For example, one said: 'There are a lot of risks in this area. There are CSE links locally and a well-known hotspot is only a 15- to 20-minute walk away. The city centre and dangerous areas are too easily accessible. Outside pulls are too strong and children get drawn into crime. The outside pull is massive. Children who have not done well at this home are doing much better now they have moved away from the area.'

A requirement to review the suitability of the location of the home was made at the last inspection. The location assessment has been updated. It does not fully assess the risks associated with the area and, in particular, the proximity to known hotspots for child exploitation. It does not take into account children's engagement with local criminality and the negative views of the local community about the home. Consequently, the assessment does not reliably demonstrate the suitability of the location, nor does it fully demonstrate how the home mitigates against potential risks to children's safety that are associated with the location of the home. This negates its use as a risk assessment and a risk management tool.

The quality of independent monitoring of the home has appreciably improved so that reports give an accurate reflection of the home and highlight shortfalls in practice and concerns about children's safety and welfare. This helps the manager to address areas for improvement and enables the responsible individual to maintain good oversight of the operation of the home.

The interim manager receives good line-management support and supervision. She has a good understanding of the home's strengths and areas for development and she is taking action to improve the operation of the home. This involves improvements to the premises, record-keeping and day-to-day practices. She is building her skills through engagement with other professionals. She has taken steps to address the requirements raised at the last inspection.

The statement of purpose has been reviewed and shared with Ofsted. The home is no longer taking children who need emergency accommodation. This recognises the need to maintain stability for children who are already in placement. A more robust admission process has been devised which involves more careful assessment of children's complex needs, including their emotional and mental health needs, and better matching of children. The process has not yet been tested, as no children have been admitted. The manager anticipates that the home will provide a service for younger children who are unlikely to be drawn into dangerous activities in the community.

The interim manager has maintained exceptionally good oversight of children's progress, experiences and development. She has worked extremely closely with partner agencies,

providing good professional challenge when other services were not fulfilling their duties to children. This enabled children to access the support, services and education they needed. Her knowledge and understanding of each child's needs have enabled her to lead the staff team to deliver good, nurturing care. This was recognised by social work professionals, who said: 'She [the young person] needed strong, nurturing, surrogate parenting and she got it.'

Children's views about the quality of care are regularly obtained by the manager and records demonstrate that children have been completely satisfied with the care provided. For example, one said: 'I like everything. It's just amazing.' Their views are used to inform the manager's review of the service and the development of the home.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: Manchester City Council, PO Box 532, Manchester M60 2LA

Responsible individual: Amanda Amesbury

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Sharon Lloyd: social care inspector

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