

SC066010

Registered provider: Quality Protects Children Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and managed by a private provider. It provides care for up to four children who may experience social or emotional difficulties. On the day of the inspection, four children were in residence.

The manager registered with Ofsted in July 2018.

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 April 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 25 July 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25/07/2023	Full	Good
20/04/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
28/07/2021	Full	Good
08/07/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children develop trusting relationships with staff, and there is a child-focused culture promoted by a highly committed staff team. However, differences of opinion about care strategies and a lack of whole-team cohesiveness lead to children experiencing some inconsistencies in their care.

Teachers who are employed by the provider support staff at education meetings to help to agree a way forward. This focuses on helping children to overcome barriers to education. Staff are aspirational for children and encourage them by promoting the importance of education. They remain mindful and sensitive to the challenges that children experience. This is helping some children to flourish in their learning.

Unaccompanied children from abroad have been helped to adjust and understand the different cultures, values, and diversities of their new home. Staff have taken the necessary steps to ensure that the children have the legal help they are entitled to. Translated information and the effective use of a interpreters ensure that the children have a voice, and their views and opinions are understood by all those involved in their care.

Independence is strongly promoted for children to help them to prepare for life beyond the home. Children are empowered to demonstrate their capabilities in areas such as cooking, budgeting, shopping, and independent travel. This helps to develop the children's self-belief and confidence to try new things.

Staff go to extra lengths to ensure that children have meaningful time with their family members. This includes staff staying in a holiday cottage to support the child to have extra time with a family member.

Children develop their self-esteem through a variety of enjoyable experiences and take part in their hobbies and interests, such as playing for a football team. They enjoy holidays and have new experiences through sight-seeing trips to cities and places of interest. Staff help children to have a broader understanding of diversity by celebrating different religious festivals and having educational conversations about equality. Staff help the children to feel part of their local community by encouraging their friendships.

The children's general health needs are well met. They are supported to attend their health appointments and have access to emergency healthcare when needed. Staff's comforting approach helps children to feel nurtured when they become unwell. However, insufficient help and support in response to substance misuse and smoking does not help children to make healthier lifestyle choices.

Individualised incentive plans give children daily goals and a financial target to work towards. However, staff are not consistently using due diligence to ensure that the

children have met their target before issuing the reward. This does not motivate children to make positive choices.

Careful consideration of the children's needs and well-managed planning occurs when children are admitted to the home. Prior to moving in, staff help children to have a better understanding about what life will be like at the home. This creates early opportunities for children to forge new relationships.

The children's complex and diverse needs mean that children's day-to-day experiences of care vary considerably. Staff have regular conversations with the children to help them to better understand each other's needs and ease their frustrations. Progress is being made, but staff's intervention has yet to fully yield tranquillity in the home.

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

Children feel safe living at this home. The trusting relationships that they develop with staff enhances their sense of safety. Although they are not always content in one another's company, this does not impact on their trust in the adults who care for them.

Missing-from-home incidents are not a common concern at this home. When they have occurred, staff have taken appropriate action to help the children to return home safely. The use of restraint practice is reasonable and proportionate and used in the best interest of keeping children safe. Well-written restraint incident reports assist the manager's evaluation of staff's practice. Staff reflect with the children about the event to help to maintain their relationship and support the child to understand the impact that their behaviour can have on others.

Staff whistle-blow when they have concerns about practice in the home. Leaders take these concerns seriously and follow procedures that keep children safe. Investigations into allegations are shared with the local authority designated officer and notified to the regulator, which enable managers to demonstrate their safeguarding practice.

Staff have occasionally used the police to help them to manage children's challenging behaviour. The manager identified that the response has not always been proportionate or necessary. When this has occurred, staff have not been debriefed. This limits the staff's ability to reflect on and learn from alternative behaviour management approaches. Children share their concerns with staff who have meaningful and reflective conversations with them about the challenges of group living. However, they have not yet found a way to bring the children together to talk through their differences and live harmoniously.

The provider's recruitment practice does not scrutinise and evaluate the suitability of agency workers. For example, employment references are not seen, and limited information is provided about the workers' experience.

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

The manager is vastly experienced and highly focused and committed on making a difference to the children's lives. He makes child-centred decisions about the children, who identify him as a trusted and important figure in their lives.

Discontent about care practices and managerial decisions have impacted on staff's morale. Issues of staff gossiping amplify the frustrations that some of the staff have experienced. Managers have made attempts to address this behaviour, but it continues to cause a divide in the team.

A lack of clear guidance by managers about children's changing needs has left staff feeling unclear about the boundaries. This has led to some inconsistencies in their practice and has impacted on their confidence.

Some staff work excessive hours to cover the gaps in the staff rota. This demonstrates their commitment and flexibility in caring for children. However, some staff are feeling fatigued as a result of the long hours and shortfalls in staffing. Leaders are recruiting new staff to bolster the team, but none have been appointed yet.

Senior managers take appropriate action to investigate concerns and use mediation effectively to resolve conflict in response to grievances raised by staff.

The manager and staff strongly advocate for children and take appropriate action to escalate their concerns when the responses from other services are insufficient. Most social workers value the open lines of communication that they have with staff. However, a breakdown in the quality of communication with one child's social worker meant that they were not fully aware of how the staff were meeting the child's complex needs.

Staff receive practice-related supervision. A decision to increase the frequency has not yet been embedded. A variety of training supports staff to fulfil their roles. Gaps in staff's practice are supported by managers sourcing additional training that is aimed at strengthening staff's knowledge.

Team meetings are child-focused and used by the manager to support the operational aspects of the home. Key discussions involving staff practice are agreed. However, not all the actions arising from team meetings are completed. For example, a risk assessment addressing strategies to reduce the risk of violence against staff has not been completed. This does not provide staff with the structure, guidance, or support needed when managing risk.

The environment is homely, and children personalise their bedrooms to make the space their own. An ongoing programme of improvements demonstrates the provider's commitment to the upkeep of the home. However, some areas of the home are not cleaned adequately, including some of the children's bedrooms. This is not always an easy task, particularly when some children dislike staff accessing their bedroom.

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 health and well-being standard is that— the health and well-being needs of children are met; children receive advice, services and support in relation to their health and well-being; and children are helped to lead healthy lifestyles. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff help each child to— understand and develop skills to promote the child's well-being. (Regulation 10 (1) (a)(b) (2)(a)(iv)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that staff help children with support and guidance about the dangers of smoking, substance misuse, and alcohol misuse, and that children have access to support services that help them to lead healthy lifestyles.	2 June 2024
The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— mutual respect and trust; an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff—	2 June 2024

help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone; de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children; have the skills to recognise incidents or indications of bullying and how to deal with them; that each child is encouraged to build and maintain positive relationships with others. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(iv)(xi)(xiii)(b)) The registered person must ensure that children are helped to resolve conflict with one another through restorative practice, and that a culture is developed that helps children to communicate and live harmoniously with one another.	
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— lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose; ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(c)(e)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that: they review the team's approach to caring for children and lead staff to have a clear understanding about the approach that ensures that children experience consistency in their care;	2 June 2024

they review with the team the routines and boundaries for the children to ensure that staff are clear on the agreed approach, aligned to the children's needs; and staff have risk assessments to follow, and managers have taken sufficient action to be reassured that staff know the actions they must take to keep children safe in relation to pertinent matters, such as the safe management of knives.	
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children's home; or if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that— the individual is of integrity and good character; the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform; full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3)(d))	2 June 2024

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff use due diligence when reviewing the evidence that helps them to determine if children achieve their daily incentives, so they are consistently motivated to make positive choices. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 39, paragraph 8.13)
- The registered person should review the day-to-day monitoring system for the home to ensure that all areas of the home are effectively cleaned, and staff help the

children to have clean and tidy bedrooms. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.23)

- The registered person should review the rota system to ensure that staff are not working excessive hours that put them at risk of fatigue. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.19)

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: SC066010

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Quality Protects Children Ltd

Registered provider address: Hill House, Archway Road, Huyton, Liverpool L36 9XB

Responsible individual: Anthony Nolan

Registered manager: Robert Sharp

Inspector

Aaron Mcloughlin, Social Care Inspector

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