

SC411030

Registered provider: Meadows Care Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is operated by a private organisation. The provider states in their statement of purpose that they provide therapeutic support for children who may experience social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, based on childhood trauma.

The manager registered with Ofsted in April 2021.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

We last visited this setting on 24 February 2021 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 1 and 2 February 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	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: 30 July 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
30/07/2019	Full	Good
23/10/2018	Full	Good
24/01/2018	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
20/06/2017	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

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

Children's care is planned in partnership with the company psychologist. Detailed therapeutic pathways provide the child, and the staff caring for them, with strategies to support their emotional health and the tools to enable them to begin to understand their childhood trauma.

In accordance with the home's statement of purpose, the children are offered individual therapy sessions. Those children who engage with this service make good progress in building new relationships and developing self-esteem and confidence. However, not all children engage and therefore some children do not have the full benefit from the professional support available.

Improvements in educational attendance and attainment are not sustained and this remains an area for further development. Children's attendance is inconsistent. There are extended periods when children refuse to attend school. At these times, staff and visiting teachers encourage children to work on small educational assignments at home. However, children's engagement in these sessions is minimal. The registered manager has actively highlighted these concerns with the placing authority and virtual head, without resolution.

Children receive suitable support to maintain contact with the important people in their lives. Contact plans are in place and provide clear information and guidance regarding contact arrangements and any restrictions.

Children are encouraged to try out new activities and develop hobbies in line with their individual interests. For example, one child enjoys spending time at the gym, going to the cinema or having pamper nights with staff at the home. When children find it difficult to engage in activities, staff consistently seek out new and interesting pursuits to encourage their participation.

The home has experienced some significant damage. The registered manager and staff ensure that damage is repaired quickly. However, because of damage, the home lacks items such as pictures, mirrors and accessories that help to create a homely environment.

Children's bedrooms are designed and decorated to reflect their personalities. However, the communal areas of the home are not always accessible to children. For example, areas such as the kitchen and living room are locked during periods of disruption or at children's bedtimes. Locked doors restrict children's movements around the home and create an institutional environment.

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

Children who have moved into this home have experienced significant childhood trauma. This can result in children exhibiting challenging behaviours as a result of frequent emotional dysregulation.

Extensive individual risk assessments are completed for each child. Each assessment provides a clear description of the risks for each child and the strategies in place to help alleviate some of these risks. However, some plans are not routinely updated to ensure that the most current strategies are in place. For example, the checking of children's devices is no longer required, but remains on one child's risk assessment.

Behaviour management plans identify the triggers for challenging behaviour and the steps to be taken to de-escalate potentially explosive situations. The staff work hard to promote positive behaviours and consistently review plans that are not effective with the home's psychologist. However, when plans fail to address behaviours, this has led to assaults on staff, property damage and theft from the home. A staff member said, 'We are trying everything to ensure a positive transition for this child, but when they disengage it makes it really hard.'

Furthermore, some sanctions in place to address negative behaviours are not relevant to the behaviour being exhibited, for example, children being prevented from using the home's internet for behaviour unrelated to internet usage. This has resulted in an escalation of challenging behaviours.

Risk assessments are in place to enable children to have safe free time in the community. Staff keep in contact with children via their mobiles and visit them in the community on a regular basis to check they are safe and well. However, it is not always clear what the children are doing in the community or who they are associating with. Therefore, previously identified risks such as criminal activity cannot be appropriately assessed, reviewed or managed.

Since the last monitoring visit, in February 2021, there has been a significant reduction in children being reported as missing from the home. This is because the staff are clear on the procedures in place and take effective action when a child absents themselves from the home. A staff member said, 'We will do everything we can to bring them back home and we will stay with them at all times.'

Staff are trained in the use of de-escalation and redirection techniques as well as physical intervention strategies. Staff use a calm and supportive approach to help the children return to an emotionally calm state. This has proved successful for some children. However, strategies to manage a child's aggression when it is not safe to use physical intervention require further development.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The leadership and management of the home are good. This inspection acknowledges the difficulties the home has encountered since the last monitoring visit, including significant changes in the staff team, a new registered manager and the impact of a change in the long-term plan for one child.

The registered manager and staff work in partnership with placing authorities, a range of agencies and the company therapist to ensure that children are provided with the correct help and support. When concerns arise, the manager takes appropriate action to escalate the matters to bring about an acceptable resolution.

The home employs a suitably experienced staff team. However, most staff members are female. To promote a positive gender balance, the registered manager should consider the employment of additional male staff.

Team meetings take place regularly and are used to review the care and progress of children. The team works flexibly together to develop new strategies to work with children who are difficult to engage. Staff demonstrate a high level of commitment to their role and to the children they care for.

The staff receive ongoing training, including mandatory training and relevant online focused training. A staff member said, 'The training is great. We complete the mandatory training, but we also have regular training with the therapists and teachers.'

Notifications in accordance with regulation 40 are routinely provided to the regulatory body. This means that incidents are independently reviewed against the steps taken to manage and reduce risks or for emerging patterns and trends.

The home employs a strong and committed staff team with the majority of residential staff being qualified at level 3 of the children and children's workforce diploma. The training at this level ensures that the staff team is suitably qualified in the care and management of children.

The registered manager provides consistent formal and informal supervision. The staff are clear on their roles and responsibilities and work closely with partner colleagues, including the psychologists and education team. Overall, this agency partnership promotes a consistent approach to the care and support provided to the children.

Internal monitoring systems provide the home with a clear approach to the overall monitoring of care. Detailed information highlights areas for development and the manager's action plan details the methods used to enhance the service. Likewise, external monitoring takes place in accordance with regulation. The independent visitor's report provides a constructive insight into the progress the service makes and the positive impact this has on the lives of children and their families.

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; help each child to understand how to keep safe; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other; 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)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v))	4 March 2022
The registered person must ensure that— the privacy of children is appropriately protected; children can access all appropriate areas of the children's home's premises; and any limitation placed on a child's privacy or access to any area of the home's premises— is intended to safeguard each child accommodated in the home;	4 March 2022

is necessary and proportionate; is kept under review and, if necessary, revised; and allows children as much freedom as is possible when balanced against the need to protect them and keep them safe. (Regulation 21(a)(b)(c)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)) In particular, ensure the removal of locks from communal areas of the home.	
The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— help each child to achieve the child’s education and training targets, as recorded in the child’s relevant plans; support each child’s learning and development, including helping the child to develop independent study skills and, where appropriate, helping the child to complete independent study; understand the barriers to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child to overcome any such barriers; help each child to understand the importance and value of education, learning, training and employment. (Regulation 8 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv))	4 March 2022

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the behaviour management strategy for each child is understood and applied at all times by staff and must be kept under review and revised where appropriate. This specifically relates to the management of aggressive behaviours and the suitability of sanctions. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations, including the quality standards’, page 46, paragraph 9.34)

- The registered person should ensure that the home is a nurturing and supportive environment that meets the needs of their children. Specifically, develop the aesthetics of the home to create a homely and cosy environment. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should lead a team which provides high-quality care for all children living in the home. They must lead and manage the home in a way that delivers the ethos, outcomes and approach set out in the home's statement of purpose. They should also play a key role in shaping the ethos of the home through developing a culture of high aspiration for all children which is demonstrated through consistent care, routines and boundaries provided to children. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 52, paragraph 10.4)
- The registered person should, whenever possible, ensure that staff in day-to-day contact with children include staff from different gender groups. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.22)

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: SC411030

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Meadows Care Limited

Registered provider address: Egerton House, Wardle Road, Lancashire OL12 9EN

Responsible individual: Karen Brandon

Registered manager: Jade Walsh

Inspector

Maria McGranaghan, Social Care Inspector

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