

1242116

Registered provider: Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority children's home provides care and accommodation for up to four children and young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

This is its first inspection since it was registered on 31 October 2017.

Inspection dates: 15 to 16 June 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 **good**

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

Date of last inspection: Not applicable

Overall judgement at last inspection: Not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- Young people live in a friendly, caring and supportive home. The high standard of individualised care consistently meets their needs and is enabling them to make good progress in education, social skills, sport and emotional well-being, and achieve better outcomes.
- Young people are building trusting and meaningful relationships with staff, which provide them with a strong sense of safety. Staff use skilful and creative ways to understand young people's needs and to get to know them. They are interested in young people and want them to be safe, happy, and to do well, no matter the challenges they face.
- Young people feel safe. Staff's strong safeguarding practices are helping the young people to be safer and protecting them from the risks of bullying, going missing, abuse, exploitation and extremism. Staff have created an open safeguarding culture, where young people have a number of trusted adults, both inside and outside the home, they can talk to if they have concerns.
- Young people are encouraged to express their views, make choices and decisions about their lives. Staff listen to young people, take them seriously, and respond appropriately to wishes and feelings. Young people are developing strong negotiation skills and the ability to put across their views constructively.
- Staff provide young people with the stability they need. Effective care planning and productive working relationships between the staff, social workers, schools and health workers mean that young people receive the best possible support in meeting all of their needs. The registered manager and staff take decisive action when young people are struggling and may not be getting the support they need to do well.
- Leaders and managers have built a supportive environment for the caring and experienced staff to provide a high quality of care for each child. Staff are developing into a cohesive, resilient and competent team. They are encouraged and supported to reflect on and improve their skills, knowledge and practice.

The children's home's areas for development:

- Behaviour management and incident records to include information about young people's views, discussions with staff, and in-depth analysis of the effectiveness of staff's intervention. Better oversight of these records will assist the registered manager to understand better what happened, understand the behaviour, identify patterns and emerging themes, build on good practice, and work out how best to support children in the future.
- Information about young people's educational progress and attainment, including school reports, should be available and included in their case records.
- The external monitoring of the home by the independent person should provide

more in-depth scrutiny and show how effectively staff's practice is making a difference to children's lives.

- Information gathered from telephone interviews to verify staff's written references, and written assessments of staff's suitability when they have criminal convictions, should be included in their recruitment files.

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
<p>The registered person must ensure that (a) 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 effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and 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 (3)(a)(vii), (b) (i)(ii) and (c)).</p> <p>This relates to records of sanctions ('consequences') and serious incidents, and the registered person making sure that children's comments are recorded, and that each incident or sanction is reviewed and evaluated by the registered manager or an authorised person who had not been directly involved in the decision to use the measure.</p>	30/06/2017
<p>The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child. (Regulation 36(1)(a))</p> <p>In particular, every school report received in respect of the child while the child is accommodated in the home. Also, written evidence of each child's progress, attendance and attainment from their school or education provider.</p>	30/06/2017

Recommendations

- The registered person ensures that recruitment of staff safeguards children and minimises potential risks to them. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1) In particular, keep a written record of the outcome of enquiries made to verify written references; and when a person wishing to work at the home has a criminal conviction and the assessment of that person's suitability.
- The registered person ensures that the independent person completes a rigorous assessment of the home's arrangements for safeguarding and promoting children's welfare, including the impact of the quality of care on children's experiences and outcomes. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.5)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

This children's home gives young people a friendly, nurturing and supportive place to live. Young people receive a high quality of individualised and well-planned care that consistently meets their assessed needs and plans. Staff's enthusiasm and perseverance, regardless of the challenges, are making a positive difference to young people's lives. Staff are helping children to have more opportunities, make progress and achieve better outcomes.

Staff's ability to build positive and meaningful relationships with young people is the reason young people are developing a strong sense of belonging and emotional security. Staff understand how difficult it may be for young people to trust adults and accept the support that they are offering. They are patient and know that some children need time and space to get to know new people and feel comfortable around them. They use activities that young people enjoy, including going to the gym, going for a bike ride, playing badminton and car journeys, to get to know young people and as informal opportunities for direct work. They enable young people to talk and think about things in a natural way. Their creative and insightful approach is giving young people strong messages that staff care about them, are interested in their lives and want what is best for them. This is helping young people to form secure attachments with staff and feel at home.

Staff treat young people with respect and enable them to express themselves as individuals. They have the skills and confidence to communicate with children easily. They understand the importance of listening to young people's views and involving them in decisions affecting their lives. Staff are open and honest when young people express wishes that are not always in their best interests. They carefully and clearly explain the reason why they have decided against following the young person's wishes, in ways that they understand and can accept. Staff work effectively with advocates to make sure that young people know their rights to have their say and to know where they can get support from to make sure their views are taken seriously. A young person has made a

complaint to the advocate when he felt he had been treated unfairly. The senior manager and registered manager have taken appropriate action to investigate and deal with the young person's concerns. On another occasion, young people called a meeting with staff to share concerns about changes to the incentive system. The registered manager and staff accepted the young people and worked with them to improve the system and set targets that young people felt would work. Young people showed excellent negotiation skills and the ability to put across their views constructively.

Young people only come to live at the home when the registered manager is satisfied that the staff have the skills and expertise to meet each young person's assessed needs. This has included agreeing to two brothers living together based on their wishes and what was in both of their best interests. Careful consideration was given to the impact on each young person living in the home. Living together has been positive for the brothers and is helping them to build their relationship.

Staff's ability to build strong professional relationships with young people's families and the services involved in their lives has been influential in young people receiving the right help at the right time to improve their lives. Effective care planning ensures that the arrangements for young people's care meet their assessed needs. Everyone works extremely well together to ensure that the relevant plans for each young person's care are reviewed on an ongoing basis to reflect their progress and continue to meet their needs and circumstances. Staff actively ensure that young people get the support they need to deal with new and emerging needs. They have worked sensitively to meet two young people's wishes for them to have a place to visit at the cemetery to remember their mother and celebrate her life.

Young people are benefiting from the stability and continuity of care that staff provide. A young person has moved on successfully into his accommodation and is doing well in his apprenticeship. Staff ensured that he had the practical skills to live independently and was emotionally resilient to cope with the next stage of his life. Similarly, staff are working with the other young people to prepare them for adult life.

Staff are supporting young people to see important people in their lives, including their families and friends. They work actively and positively to help children maintain and build meaningful relationships, understand their identity, feel part of their family and improve their self-esteem. Staff make every effort to ensure that seeing family and friends is a safe and positive experience for young people. They help young people to understand what makes a friendship. They encourage young people's friends to visit and take part in activities. Staff work closely with the other young people's parents and carers to ensure that everyone is safe and enjoys the social experiences of young people of their age. Some young people are becoming more confident socially and are making friends.

Since moving into the home, each young person's participation in education has improved. Staff's perseverance is enabling a young person to feel more confident in groups and to go to college. They work sensitively and assertively at a pace with which he feels comfortable, and help him see the benefits of education. Young people have up-

to-date education plans. Staff are working hard with the children, virtual school, schools and education providers to meet young people's educational needs. They have worked together effectively to help a young person overcome problems in school and he now goes every day and his behaviour in school is much better. Staff are encouraging young people to enjoy learning and engage in education by building on their interests and talents. A young person has gained a BTEC National Diploma in Sports Leadership and will start at a football college in the autumn term. Staff give him the chance to show off his skills by coaching them and trying to improve their movement and passing. They create opportunities for informal learning and for young people to take part in sports and activities they enjoy, including going to the gym, running, mountain biking and climbing, boxing, playing football, playing computer games and art.

Staff actively promote young people's physical health and emotional well-being. They also encourage young people's awareness of healthy lifestyles, the importance of healthy diets and good sexual health and the dangers of using drugs. Staff manage young people's specific health needs with sensitivity and confidence. They closely monitor young people to make sure that they are healthy, supporting them to attend routine health checks. Staff also ensure that young people always have suitable medical advice and treatment when they are feeling unwell. Staff help to improve young people's emotional well-being by providing them with warm and positive relationships that help young people feel safe, and working with health and youth services to provide opportunities to build their self-esteem and social confidence.

The home is located in an area that supports young people's safety and well-being, and enables them to keep positive links with their own community. The young people live in homely, pleasant and comfortable accommodation, which is furnished and decorated to a very high standard. They have plenty of personal space, and their bedrooms and bathrooms are tidy and decorated to reflect their characters and interests. Young people are proud of the house and work hard to keep it clean and tidy. They feel it is very much their home and have put up their favourite photographs and display their artwork on the lounge wall.

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

Young people live in a safe and supportive home. They feel safe and are protected from harm, bullying, exploitation, extremism and neglect. They are building trusting relationships with staff and feel able to talk to them if they are worried or upset. A young person said that: 'You can talk to staff; they listen and try to help you.' Young people also talk to trusted people they see regularly, who are independent of the staff, including an advocate, youth worker and tutor.

Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities in protecting young people. They take appropriate action to involve social workers and the police when they have concerns about young people's safety. They took appropriate protective action when a young person was at risk of harm in the community. They worked effectively with the police, young parents, social workers, youth workers, schools and health professionals to understand and manage the risks to young people's welfare.

Staff actively and continuously assess the risks to individual young people and make sure that the arrangements for their care protect them. Staff balance protecting young people effectively while enabling them to take appropriate and reasonable risks to promote their personal growth. Staff take reasonable precautions to build young people's confidence and independence in the community. They are helping young people to understand and learn skills to manage risk and keep themselves and others safe.

Staff keep in touch with young people when they go out. They know where young people are going and how they plan to spend their time. On the occasions when young people have gone missing, staff have always acted quickly to try to find them by actively looking for them, making contact with their family and friends, and informing the police and social workers. When young people return home, staff always check and monitor their welfare. Young people always have the opportunity to talk to staff and an independent person about what happened and the reasons for them not wanting to come home. Staff have a clear understanding of the reasons for children going missing, for example, wanting to stay out later with their friends. Staff are using incentives successfully to get young people to come in on time.

Staff's approach for encouraging positive behaviour is based on open and warm relationships with young people. They give young people a good standard of parenting that helps young people understand the expectations for behaviour and to know that they are loved. Young people live in an environment that helps them to build positive self-esteem and a sense of emotional security. Staff constantly praise, reward and celebrate young people's talents and achievements in sport, education, employment and art. Rewards are increasing based on young people choosing activities they enjoy; for example, a young person went mountain biking in Wales as a reward for completing his GCSEs.

Staff show empathy and understand how young people's experiences and circumstances leave them feeling anxious, frustrated and angry and sometimes find it challenging to build positive relationships. Staff actively help young people to understand how to build friendships and what makes a positive and healthy relationship. They encourage children to learn how to deal with problems and resolve disagreements constructively. Staff use clear and achievable incentives to promote positive behaviour. Young people are fully involved in setting their individual targets and rewards. This approach is encouraging better school attendance, a reduction in young people's use of cannabis, and improvements in young people's personal care.

Occasionally, staff have struggled to help young people to manage their feelings and control their behaviour, which has resulted in staff calling the police for help. The registered manager and senior member of staff are working with staff to reflect on these incidents and to think about how they can work more consistently to support young people better when they are angry and frustrated. Staff use reasonable sanctions fairly (known as 'consequences') to attempt to address young people's negative behaviour. Young people are encouraged to choose the sanction; for example, a young person decided that he needed to come in earlier after failing to come in on time the previous

day. The written sanctions records are not routinely reviewed by the registered manager or an authorised person who had not been directly involved in the decision to use the measure. The records do not always show a reflective and evaluative account of each incident. The lack of information about young people's views, discussions with staff, and in-depth analysis of the effectiveness of the whole incident is a missed opportunity for the manager to understand better what happened, understand the behaviour, identify patterns and emerging themes, build on good practice, and work out how best to support young people in the future.

The registered manager ensures that people working at the home go through a rigorous selection procedure and their suitability is carefully checked. He makes sure that they have the right personal qualities, enthusiasm, experience, skills and values to work with vulnerable young people. He makes every effort to prevent unsuitable people from working at the home. He gets all of the available information to make decisions about a person's suitability. This includes verifying by telephone information about a person's practice, experiences and abilities from previous employers and other referees. However, a record of the outcome of his calls to referees was not included in staff's recruitment files. Likewise, an assessment of people's suitability when they have a criminal conviction was not available in the recruitment records.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The children's home is managed by a permanent and experienced registered manager. He is qualified with the appropriate level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Health and Social Care. The registered manager leads an experienced and skilled staff team that delivers the home's aims to provide young people with a nurturing environment and make a positive difference to their lives. Young people receive the continuity of care that helps them form positive attachments and relationships with the people caring for them each day. Staff actively build a friendly atmosphere in which young people feel safe, their views are taken seriously, and they are encouraged and supported to make the right choices. Staff have high aspirations for every young person and give them a high quality of individualised care that meets each young person's assessed needs. They ensure that young people get opportunities to reach their potential and have improved outcomes.

The registered manager is also in charge of another of the local authority's children's homes located in the same street. He is accessible to provide staff with support and supervision. An experienced and qualified senior member of the staff is permanently based in the home and supports the registered manager effectively in the day-to-day running and development of the home. This senior member of staff is in charge when the registered manager is not available. The registered manager shows that he has the capacity to fulfil the management responsibilities for both children's homes, but at times, young people feel that the manager is not accessible enough. They have asked him to attend the young people's meetings so they can get decisions made without any unnecessary delays. In addition, the registered manager is not providing effective management oversight of the behaviour management and serious incident records. This is a missed opportunity for the registered manager to understand the effectiveness of behaviour management strategies and staff's ability to manage situations when young

people are struggling.

The senior manager's own monitoring has also identified this as an issue. She is taking appropriate action to increase the registered manager's oversight by ensuring that young people's behaviour management plans are updated to include their views and that the manager reviews young people's case records each month. In this way, the senior manager and registered manager show that they have a clear understanding of the standard of care and take action to improve things.

New methods of recording are improving the quality of the written information about young people. Direct work records are written in an engaging and interesting way that provide a detailed and colourful picture of the work done with young people. They often include photographs showing how young people spend their time with staff; for example, showing work about healthy food and exercise, and young people and staff sitting around the table negotiating their targets and rewards. The quality of this work helps staff understand young people's experiences and development, and to monitor their progress. This helps staff to identify when a young person's plan is not meeting his or her needs and to take effective action to tackle the obstacles to the young person making progress. Staff work in effective partnerships with social workers, the virtual school, young people's schools and education providers to make sure that young people get the right support to help them take part in education and develop their skills and opportunities.

The external monitoring of the home by an independent person does not always show the level of scrutiny that is needed to develop the quality of care. The independent person has not identified the lack of appropriate management oversight of serious incident and behaviour management records. Also, the lack of detailed analysis of the impact of staff's work on children's lives and their outcomes is not helping leaders and managers to understand and measure young people's progress.

The senior manager and the registered manager make sure that staff work in a supportive environment that enables them to care for young people safely. The staffing arrangements ensure that there are sufficient knowledgeable, experienced and skilful staff available to meet the young people's assessed needs. This is a relatively new staff team comprising people with experience in residential childcare, education, youth work and early years. The registered manager is building a stable, resilient and creative team. He encourages team members to use skills and ideas to develop the quality of care for young people. Staff completed a thorough and relevant induction and training programme that prepared them properly to understand their roles. The registered manager and staff receive effective support and guidance through regular practice-related supervision, team meetings and development days. Consequently, they have the regular opportunities that they require to discuss young people's needs, reflect on and improve their practice, share skills and highlight any areas for their development. The monthly team meetings are always well attended by the staff and often include experts from outside the home to develop staff's knowledge and skills. Recently, this has included information about education, employment and training opportunities for young people in the local area, and communicating and engaging with young people. Staff have

the appropriate residential childcare qualifications and have opportunities for continuous professional development relevant to their roles, including working towards higher qualifications in social work and management. They have access to a comprehensive and suitable training programme, as well as being supported and encouraged to develop their interests, knowledge and skills through access to research materials. Staff showed that training around attachment, cognitive behavioural therapy and understanding young people's journeys has helped them to understand the impact of young people's experiences and feelings on their behaviour, and to think about ways of supporting them constructively.

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 difference 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: 1242116

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Knowsley MBC, Children's Services, Huyton Municipal Buildings, 6th Floor, Huyton, Merseyside L36 9YU

Responsible individual: Ruth France

Registered manager: Christopher Browne

Inspector

Nick Veysey, social care inspector

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