

SC036304

Registered provider: Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority home provides care for up to three children who may have emotional and/or social difficulties.

Children were spoken to during the inspection.

The manager registered with Ofsted in March 2007.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

Inspection dates: 22 to 23 June 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **inadequate**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **inadequate**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **inadequate**

There are serious and widespread failures that mean children are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded, and the care and experiences of children and young people are poor and they are not making progress.

Date of last inspection: 25 June 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25/06/2019	Full	Good
26/02/2019	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
24/07/2018	Full	Good
18/05/2017	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

Children's overall experience and progress are hindered by serious and widespread shortfalls in safeguarding practice, and leadership and management.

The manager has not ensured that the home is a safe and welcoming environment for children to live in. There have been delays in addressing damage to furniture, for example a broken wardrobe and chest of drawers in a child's bedroom. The poor maintenance of the home is undermining the ethos the manager is seeking to create of a welcoming and well-cared for home.

Additionally, the use of locks on the kitchen door and games room not only unnecessarily restricts the children's access to all areas of the home, but also detracts from a homely environment.

Inconsistent daily routines and the lack of clear home-tuition plans are compromising the children's education. The staff do not consistently encourage and support the children to engage with home tuition when they are excluded from school or placed on a reduced timetable.

The manager does not ensure that there is always a sufficient number of staff at the home to care for each child. Frequently, there are more casual staff working in the home than permanent staff. The children do not benefit from the continuity of care that is provided by a consistent staff team; therefore, children have not been able to build positive relationships with staff members.

At times, when the manager and staff refer to the children, they use language that has the potential to stigmatise the children. This is unhelpful to children and could negatively impact on the children's self-esteem and identity, and their relationships with the manager and staff.

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

The staff do not have adequate knowledge and understanding of risks to the children. They are not alert to the potential signs of child criminal exploitation and the associated dangers. Protective measures are not in place to ensure that children use their mobile phone and electronic devices safely.

Poor communication between the manager and staff has led to inconsistent safeguarding practice. For example, the staff continued to lock the external doors to the home after it had been agreed with a child's social worker that this measure was no longer needed. The manager and staff are not ensuring that the child's safety plans are current, and are consistently implemented.

The home's day-to-day care is not arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe from harm. For example, the home's daily checks do not ensure that the children's bedrooms are free from potential hazards, such as broken furniture.

The staff do not implement the home's COVID-19 risk assessment consistently. This compromises the children's health and safety.

The manager is not assessing children's needs and vulnerabilities robustly before new children move into the home. Consequently, she is not assured that the staff have the knowledge, skills and expertise to protect the children and meet their needs.

The staff do not consistently undertake direct work with children when they have been at risk of significant harm, for example when they have been missing from care. Opportunities are being missed to help children to understand their vulnerabilities, and teach them how to keep safe.

The suitability of the home's location is not being rigorously assessed. The manager has not consulted with all relevant agencies to ensure that she has an updated understanding of the local area, and so can alert the staff team to any potential risks to the children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The registered manager has not been physically present at the home since March 2020. In her absence, the interim management arrangements have not been adequate. As a result, the children's experiences, progress and safety have been compromised and the aims and objectives, as set out in the home's statement of purpose, are not being achieved.

In October 2020, the home's registration conditions were varied. The number of children that could live at the home increased from two to three. There have not been any new permanent staff employed to work at the home since this change. Consequently, the number of permanent staff employed to work at the home is insufficient.

The registered manager has not ensured that staff work together as a team effectively. Insufficient staffing levels combined with inconsistent staff have had a negative impact on team working.

Additionally, the staff are not adequately supported or guided by the manager. Not all staff receive regular professional supervision or performance-related appraisals. These repeated shortfalls are undermining the staff's ability to provide a good enough standard of care and protection for the children.

The staff are not being provided with sufficient time and opportunities to share information and be brought up to date with any changes to the children's needs and

care plans. Poor communication between the staff is further hindering consistent practice with the children.

The registered manager does not have adequate oversight of the staff's training. Some essential refresher training is outstanding for all staff, such as first-aid and restraint training. The staff are not being provided with the knowledge, understanding and skills to care for the children safely.

The statement of purpose has not been kept updated. It does not explain the adjustments made in the home to meet the specific needs of a child, nor does it provide details of the relief staff who are employed to work in the home.

Internal and external monitoring systems are weak. The manager's monitoring and review reports do not include analysis or evaluations of her findings. The independent monitoring of the home lacks rigour. As a result, shortfalls in the care and protection provided for children are overlooked, which may place children at risk of harm.

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 quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who—</p> <p>understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children;</p> <p>use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to provide to children living in the home the physical necessities they need in order to live there comfortably. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(vii))</p> <p>This is in relation to ensuring that children have sufficient storage space in their bedrooms, and that broken furniture is swiftly replaced or repaired.</p>	8 August 2021
<p>The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff help a child who is excluded from school, or who is of compulsory school age but not attending school, to access educational and training support throughout the period of exclusion or non-attendance and to return to school as soon as possible. (Regulation 8 (1) (2)(a)(viii))</p> <p>This is in relation to ensuring that the children are provided with, and encouraged and supported to undertake, schoolwork when they are not attending school.</p>	8 August 2021
<p>*The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p>	8 August 2021

<p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>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;</p> <p>help each child to understand how to keep safe;</p> <p>have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm;</p> <p>take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child’s welfare;</p> <p>that the home’s day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm;</p> <p>that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child’s health. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(vi)(b)(d))</p>	
<p>*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.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>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;</p> <p>ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate;</p> <p>ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child;</p> <p>ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child;</p>	<p>8 August 2021</p>

<p>ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child;</p> <p>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(h))</p>	
<p>The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ("the statement of purpose") which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1. (Regulation 16 (1) (Schedule 1))</p> <p>This is in relation to providing information about how the home has been adapted to meet the needs of children who are subject to a deprivation of liberty order. This also relates to including the details of the relief staff in the statement of purpose.</p>	8 August 2021
<p>The registered person must ensure that—</p> <p>the privacy of children is appropriately protected;</p> <p>children can access all appropriate areas of the children's home's premises; and</p> <p>any limitation placed on a child's privacy or access to any area of the home's premises—</p> <p>is intended to safeguard each child accommodated in the home;</p> <p>is necessary and proportionate;</p> <p>is kept under review and, if necessary, revised; and</p> <p>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)(iv))</p> <p>This is in relation to the staff locking doors unnecessarily.</p>	8 August 2021
<p>The registered person must ensure that—</p> <p>at all times, at least one person on duty at the home has a suitable first aid qualification. (Regulation 31 (2)(a))</p>	8 August 2021
<p>The registered person must ensure that all employees—</p>	8 August 2021

<p>receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience; and</p> <p>have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (4)(a)(b))</p>	
<p>The independent person must produce a report about a visit ("the independent person's report") which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether—</p> <p>children are effectively safeguarded;</p> <p>and the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being. (Regulation 44 (4)(a)(b))</p> <p>This is in relation to ensuring that the independent person provides a rigorous assessment of the safeguarding practice and the quality of care provided.</p>	8 August 2021
<p>The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality of care review") at least once every 6 months.</p> <p>In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating—</p> <p>the quality of care provided for children;</p> <p>the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it;</p> <p>and any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. (Regulation 45 (1) (2)(a)(b)(c))</p> <p>This is in relation to ensuring that the manager's review evaluates the quality of care and the children's feedback.</p>	8 August 2021
<p>The registered person must review the appropriateness and suitability of the location of the premises used for the purposes of the children's home at least once in each calendar year taking into account the requirement in regulation 12 (2)(c) (the protection of children standard).</p>	8 August 2021

When conducting the review, the registered person must consult, and take into account the views of, each relevant person. (Regulation 46 (1) (2))	
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*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendation

- The registered person must ensure that all information about the children is recorded in a way that is non-stigmatising and is helpful to the child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

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: SC036304

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

Registered provider address: Town Hall, Oriel Road, Bootle, Merseyside L20 7AE

Responsible individual: Vicky Buchanan

Registered manager: Sally-Ann Edwards

Inspector

Marina Tully, Social Care Inspector

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