

1251073

Registered provider: Manchester City Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is an adolescent support service provided by the local authority. It provides short stays for up to four children and emergency placements for one child at weekends and bank holidays. In addition, the service provides intensive, time-limited support to children on the edge of care. This includes planned day visits for children and outreach support for their families.

The manager registered with Ofsted in February 2017.

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.

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 February 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 6 February 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/02/2020	Full	Outstanding
14/11/2018	Full	Outstanding
18/01/2018	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
01/09/2017	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children receive highly individualised and excellent quality support. The staff and managers consistently exceed the standards of good care. Children make substantial and sustained progress from their individual starting points and they flourish. Children's quality of life and future opportunities are enhanced because of their experiences at the home.

The experienced, dedicated and skilled staff forge strong relationships with children. Interactions between the children and staff are extremely positive and are filled with high regard and genuine compassion. This approach is modelled consistently by the managers. Consequently, children develop the sense of security and stability that they need to make progress and thrive.

The home provides effective 'edge-of-care' interventions such as planned short stays, day visits and outreach support in addition to other specialist interventions. The home provides family group conferences, therapeutic and psychological support and AIM assessments. This assessment framework is designed to help practitioners consider relevant targets for intervention in addition to quantifying risk and levels of supervision. Staff provide intensive work with the aim of empowering families to stay together.

Children and families who use the service do so on a voluntary basis. From the very beginning of support packages, families are willing to engage with the service to bring about change and improvement in their lives and in the life of their child. One parent said: 'It's absolutely amazing. I can't praise the staff enough. I was at the point of not knowing what to do. I was in crisis and they changed that.'

The children enjoy a diverse and wide range of meaningful activities. The staff are committed to furthering children's social experiences. Planned holidays, horse riding, weekend stays and a range of local activities help to widen children's experiences of the world around them and give them opportunities that they have not had previously. The staff find local clubs for the children that relate to their interests and hobbies. These opportunities broaden children's social interactions and develop their confidence and self-esteem.

During the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, the dedicated managers and staff carried on as normal and continued to deliver highly effective interventions. Children continued to benefit from planned weekend stays, emergency respite and individual care packages. Family group conferences continued virtually, with the manager providing mobile phones to families who did not have access to appropriate devices. Continued provision of outreach services and support ensured that the families stayed together.

The home is welcoming, spacious and vibrant. A thoughtful approach to the decor and layout of the home's interior creates a calm and nurturing environment. The home is appropriately secured at night. However, locks on bathroom doors can restrict children's access. This restriction does not reflect the family values of the home. At the time of inspection, the manager took action to address this.

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

Bespoke care packages are planned and expertly delivered in a highly effective way. The implementation of robust risk assessments and exceptional safeguarding practices actively ensure that children are safer. The managers and staff have a comprehensive understanding of the children and their families' needs. Outstanding effective and skilful support from staff enables families to stay together.

Children are actively encouraged to think about their safety. The staff use creative one-to-one sessions with children to improve their understanding of risk. Innovative practice engages the children in activities and discussions. The home employs adolescent support workers, a speech and language therapist, family group conference workers, outreach workers, a mental health practitioner and a psychologist to ensure that children and their families receive the right help and support. The staff work closely with social workers to identify and address risks. Partnership working ensures that children benefit from highly effective interventions, using the vast amount of expertise and experience of staff based at the home.

Children are involved in deciding ways to de-escalate situations and find creative ways to understand and manage their emotions. Staff encourage positive behaviour through positive role modelling and providing clear boundaries about what is safe and acceptable. There has been one physical intervention since the last inspection. This incident was proportionate, well recorded and was subject to good managerial oversight. One parent said: 'The staff positively role modelled to, and built a connection with, my child. Mentoring sessions helped my child to understand how to regulate their behaviour.'

The managers and staff work in close partnership with complex-safeguarding teams, the youth justice service, police and other agencies to ensure that the risks posed to children are being managed appropriately. Staff develop an excellent understanding of the specific needs and emerging vulnerabilities of children and their families and take action to address them. Working relationships with external professionals are strong and effective, resulting in positive outcomes for children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

A highly dynamic, experienced and creative registered manager is supported by an equally dynamic management team. The management team and the staff have extremely high aspirations for the children. The impact on the children and their families is profound. The children's lives are enriched because of the time spent with staff, at the home and in the community.

Highly effective training equips staff well to meet the children's needs and to update their knowledge and skills continuously. The staff implement this knowledge in their daily practice. Most staff are trained in family group conferencing as well as being trained and skilled to undertake specialist assessments with children who present with sexually harmful behaviours. With the introduction of a psychologist, a speech and language therapist and a mental health worker, the overall support package offered to children and their families is second to none.

Staff value the managers' commitment, skills and knowledge. The ethos of the home stems from the management team and results in the staff having high aspirations for the children. The staff are passionate and enthusiastic about their work. They are proud of the difference that they make to children's lives. One staff member said: 'It is the most amazing place that I have ever worked'. Another staff member said: 'I feel happy to come to work, knowing that I make a difference.'

The managers know staff's strengths and the areas in which they need support to develop. Staff receive regular supervisions and performance management reviews. Staff say that they feel well supported and valued by the manager. They enjoy working at the home. This helps to provide children with a positive atmosphere.

Safe recruitment processes are comprehensively carried out to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children. The staff receive a thorough induction which includes a range of training and shadow shifts with experienced staff. Good induction, support and training help staff to meet children's needs and provide continuity of care.

The manager recognises that there are shortfalls in independent monitoring visits. The independent visitor's reports do not demonstrate an impartial judgment of the quality of the home's care. Despite the challenges from the manager to improve the quality and level of scrutiny, the independent visitor's reports have not improved.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that just as in a family home, children should be able to access all shared areas of their home unless there are specific reasons why this would not meet a child's needs. Limits on privacy and access may only be put in place to safeguard each child in the home. In particular, ensure that the locks on the bathroom doors are changed so that bathrooms are accessible at all times. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.10)
- The registered person should ensure that the individual appointed to carry out visits to the home as an independent person makes a rigorous and impartial assessment of the home's arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children in the home's care. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.5)

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: 1251073

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Manchester City Council

Registered provider address: Town Hall Extension, Albert Square, Manchester
M60 2LA

Responsible individual: Sean McKendrick

Registered manager: Valerie Jenkinson

Inspector

Rachel Watkinson, Social Care Inspector

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