

SC035969

Registered provider: Liverpool City Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority children's home provides short breaks for up to seven children with physical and/or learning disabilities at any one time.

The registered manager has been absent from work since 2019.

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 March 2023

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: 14 March 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/03/2022	Full	Good
05/12/2019	Full	Good
09/08/2018	Full	Outstanding
10/05/2017	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The short-break service provides good-quality care for children who have complex needs and disabilities.

Careful matching is in place. This ensures that children enjoy their stay. The manager and staff place emphasis on good-quality planned introductions. The children complete a series of tea visits, and staff complete detailed observations before their first overnight stay. Staff form close links with parents and specialist services. As a result, important information is shared from the beginning to promote good outcomes. This is a key strength of the home. One professional said, 'Staff take their time to get to know the children, and this is done at the child's pace, taking into consideration their anxieties and individualised needs.'

Children are reliant on staff to understand their needs. They are actively encouraged to express their views about their day-to-day choices using their own preferred communication method. For example, their preferences about activities and meal choices are made using Makaton and picture exchange. Children develop warm and trusting relationships with the staff, who are attentive and skilled in understanding what children are expressing.

The home is maintained to an excellent standard. This is evident in the decor and good-quality furniture, which create a homely and relaxed environment. One parent said, 'It is like home from home for my child. He loves coming.' Children have access to a range of specialist equipment that they require to meet their needs. Children's experiences are evidenced by photos of them taking part in a range of activities alongside pictures of the staff team. This provides children with a good visual aid and gives them a sense of belonging. Recently, the staff have been making good use of activities provided in the community through the Liverpool's SEND.

Children's cultural identity is promoted. Their diverse needs are celebrated in the home and include bespoke gift packages given to families in observance of Eid. Additionally, there is a library of resources to help children understand their own cultural needs. Furthermore, when children require special food due to religious beliefs, this is also fully supported by staff. This helps children develop their understanding of their identity.

Managers and staff regularly take part in children's review meetings. They work hard to develop good partnership links. The manager has requested an up-to-date copy of all the children's local authority plans. However, the manager has not continued to escalate her request for this information. As a result, staff are not fully informed of all the additional support required for each child.

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

Staff receive training in safeguarding that is specific to particular to children's disabilities. Safeguarding practice is effective and the use of one-to-one staff support significantly minimises the risk of harm . Additionally, staff have a clear understanding of children's needs, vulnerabilities and the potential risks they may be exposed to. Staff understand how to report and respond well to all safeguarding concerns.

Medication processes in the home are safe. There are clear procedures for the booking in and administration of medications. There is safe storage in place for all medicines, including controlled drugs. All staff are suitably trained, and the manager ensures that all staff complete a series of competency checks. As a result, staff are skilled in understanding medication processes thoroughly.

Recruitment procedures are safe and effective. All staff are checked before starting work in the home. These background checks ensure that only suitable adults are employed to work with children in the home.

Staff try to understand the triggers for children's behaviour when they become distressed or upset. One parent said, 'Staff are great at providing us with strategies to help solve particular problems.' Children benefit from the consistent boundaries that staff provide. Staff are effective in de-escalating situations as they arise. Consequently, the use of restraint is very minimal. Incident and restraint records are clear and detailed, and there is evidence of management oversight.

Fire practices in the home are safe. Each child has a personal emergency evacuation plan that provides staff with details of the support a child requires in the event of a fire. All staff are suitably trained in fire awareness, and children regularly take part in fire evacuations.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager has been absent from the home for several years. The responsible individual accepted that there has been a long delay in formalising the management arrangements. There is an acting manager currently in place. She has submitted her application to become registered.

The acting manager is well supported by a senior practitioner. Together, they have brought strong leadership to the home, and they lead by example. Both are committed and passionate. They are ambitious for children, and strive to achieve the best outcomes for all.

Staff spoke warmly about the manager; one staff member said, 'The manager is so supportive, caring and child-centred. This gives us a real sense of pride and motivation to do the work we do.' Staff say that the manager's new open-door approach means they feel listened to and that their opinions are welcomed and valued. As a result, morale in the team has improved and is good.

Good-quality risk assessments, missing-from-care protocols and fire procedures are all in place. Staff are aware of children's known risks and how to support children to stay safe. The manager recognised work that could be undertaken to strengthen documentation in the home and ensure that all these documents are dated and signed. A recommendation has been put in place to address this.

Staff benefit from reflective and detailed supervision and annual appraisals. Handovers are thorough and well organised. These provide staff with opportunities for good information-sharing and planning. New staff receive a detailed induction and complete a range of mandatory training. All staff have completed various training courses to meet the needs of the children.

Feedback from parents and professionals is positive. Parents spoke about how the service is a 'lifeline.' This enables families to take a break and for the children to make new friends in a safe environment. One professional said, 'Staff go above and beyond to ensure that families are supported, especially during difficult times.'

The manager monitors the quality of care that children receive and values the recommendations made by the independent person. The manager understands the strengths and areas for development. As a result, she has planned a series of upcoming development days. This will help explore ways to review the service and provide staff with training refreshers and an opportunity for staff to share good practice and improve outcomes for children. However, the manager should ensure that she completes a workforce development plan. This should contain arrangements for supervision, induction and managing poor performance. A recommendation has been made to address this.

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>In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff—</p> <p>seek to involve each child’s placing authority effectively in the child’s care, in accordance with the child’s relevant plans;</p> <p>seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child’s needs;</p> <p>if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority’s or a relevant person’s performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child’s needs are met in accordance with the child’s relevant plans. (Regulation 5 (a)(b)(c))</p> <p>This specifically relates to ensuring that all children’s educational, health and care plans are in place and that the manager escalates and challenges local authorities appropriately.</p>	<p>28 April 2023</p>

Recommendations

- The registered person should have a workforce development plan which can fulfil the workforce related requirements of regulation 16, schedule 1 (paragraphs 19 and 20). The plan should be updated to include any new training and qualifications completed by staff while working in the home and used to record their ongoing training and continuing professional development. (‘Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards’, page 53, paragraph 10.8)
- The registered person should ensure that children’s case records (regulation 36) are kept up to date and stored securely while they remain in the home. Be clear about distinguishing between high, medium and low risk within children’s risk assessment and when a child is missing. Additionally, ensure that all documents are signed. (‘Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards’, page 62, paragraph 14.3)

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: SC035969

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Liverpool City Council

Registered provider address: Director of Children and Young Persons Services,
5th Floor, Cunard Building, Water Street, Liverpool L3 1AH

Responsible individual: Stuart Williams

Registered manager: Michael Nagle

Inspector

Judith Birchall, Social Care Inspector

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