

# SC360599

Registered provider: Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

This local authority children's home is registered to provide care for up to four children. The home's statement of purpose states that it provides care for children who, for various reasons, are unable to live with their own families.

The previous registered manager resigned her post in July 2021. A manager has been appointed and is in the process of registering with Ofsted.

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 10 February 2021 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

### Inspection dates: 13 and 15 December 2021

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account** **requires improvement to be good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **requires improvement to be good**

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:** 4 March 2020

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>Inspection type</b>	<b>Inspection judgement</b>
04/03/2020	Full	Good
29/01/2019	Full	Good
25/09/2017	Full	Good
29/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness

## Inspection judgements

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

Children enjoy stable and predictable care. Staff work hard to establish good routines for children. This supports children's health and participation in the daily life of the home.

Children are supported to value the role that education plays in their lives. Staff are persistent in their encouragement of children to attend school and achieve. Most children have good school attendance. Those who struggle to engage daily are offered continuous support from the staff. From their starting points, all children have made progress in this area of their lives.

Staff establish clear and consistent boundaries for children. These boundaries contribute to children's sense of safety and well-being. Over time, children learn how to manage their emotions. On the whole, staff respond appropriately to children's infringements of rules. However, this is not always consistent. On occasion, staff actions have contributed to a situation escalating and a child having to be restrained.

Children enjoy a range of activities that staff provide. These include visiting parks, playing football, swimming, visiting arcades and going for rides on their bikes.

Children have access to specialist input, such as play therapy and the local authority's psychological services. A social worker considered that staff had been instrumental in one child accessing these services, when previously he had always refused. These services have been used to good effect in helping one child to enjoy a family wedding. An independent reviewing officer commented: 'They spent a long time preparing him and, as a result, he had a wonderful day. It was meticulously planned.'

The independent visitor identified that the home has required extensive redecoration and repair for over six months. This was only beginning to be addressed at the time of the inspection. As a result, some children's bedrooms are poorly decorated and have broken furniture and holes in the plasterwork. Many doors are scuffed and plasterwork in the sitting room is damaged.

Some children struggle with maintaining their bedrooms. One child's bedroom floor was strewn with large drawers and the contents laid out on the floor. There was no identifiable plan as to how staff were going to overcome the child's resistance to addressing this. This is despite this having been identified by staff as an ongoing issue.

Staff consult with children about menu planning and activities they would like to do. However, outside of statutory reviews, children do not contribute regularly to their

care plans or setting their goals. There is no mechanism for capturing this in a child-friendly way.

Staff do not routinely record their individual work with children. This significantly limits managerial oversight, opportunities to improve the care that is offered and review its effect on children. The work is not planned in a focused and proactive manner.

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

Overall, children are helped to become safer and there is regular liaison with social workers and specialist agencies. This liaison assists staff to formulate appropriate responses to the risks that children may face. All professionals consulted felt that children were safe living at the home. Children also said that they felt safe.

Staff understand children's individual vulnerabilities and demonstrate good insight into their previous life experiences. Children have learned to trust staff and begun to share their worries and concerns with staff.

All professionals spoken to considered that staff work hard to establish trusting relationships with children. They considered that these relationships have supported children to navigate the emotional turmoil that can result from care proceedings and family life events.

When children go missing from home, generally, staff respond appropriately. They go looking for children, try to establish their whereabouts, search for them and report them as missing to the police. However, staff practice is not always consistent. For example, in one incident, staff were not proactive in dissuading a child from leaving the home. In another incident, it is not clear why staff returned to the home without the children once they had been located. Children's risk assessments in these instances had not been followed and managerial evaluation of the incidents did not address these issues.

An allegation made against a member of staff was not referred to the designated officer for consideration, nor notified to Ofsted. In addition, the child was spoken to about the allegation by a member of staff about whom the allegation was made. The child's social worker was consulted, as was the child's therapist. Managers present at the time of the inspection took steps to address these omissions.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good**

Since the monitoring visit in March 2021, the previous manager resigned her registration and a new manager has been appointed. The new manager was not available during this inspection.

Due to periods of sickness, and COVID-19-related absences, managerial oversight of the home has weakened. As a result, monitoring systems have not been maintained. There has not been suitable review or evaluation of staff recordings. For example, some incidents were only recorded in 'diary sheets' and not on the expected 'incident forms'. This reduces social worker and managerial insight into children's risks.

Managers are unable to offer an overview or analysis of important areas affecting children's lives. For example, the number of incidents of going missing from home, restraints, sanctions, direct-work sessions, allegations and complaints lacked oversight. Managers recognise this weakness. In response, they have recently developed the means of collecting this information.

Managers have not ensured that the home is maintained and repaired in a timely way. As a result, this does not provide children with an environment that is comfortable, welcoming and homely.

Some serious incidents or allegations have not been notified to Ofsted within a reasonable timescale, or been referred to the designated officer. Some responses to children have not received appropriate managerial scrutiny, challenge or evaluation.

Staff feel well supported by managers and colleagues. This support is formal and informal. Staff receive supervision and regularly meet as a team. These meetings provide staff with opportunities to discuss children's progress and plans. Staff are also guided in their work through regular discussions with the local authority's psychologist.

Staff supervision is well recorded and there is evidence of good practice, such as staff being encouraged to reflect on their relationships with children.

## What does the children’s home need to do to improve? Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person 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 must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if—</p> <p>there is an allegation of abuse against the home or person working there. (Regulation 40 (4)(c))</p>	31 January 2022
<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—</p> <p>ensure that staff—</p> <p>provide to children living in the home the physical necessities they need in order to live there comfortably. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(vii))</p> <p>This specifically relates to the prompt repair of damage to the home, and that the home environment is maintained to a good and welcoming standard.</p>	31 January 2022
<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—</p> <p>helps children to fulfil their potential; and</p> <p>promotes their welfare.</p>	31 January 2022

<p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home;</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)(f)(h))</p> <p>This specifically relates to embedding managerial monitoring systems, capturing children’s progress effectively and an ongoing review of their progress.</p>	
<p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <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>are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home’s child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(vii))</p> <p>This specifically relates to staff following the advice and steps laid out in children’s missing from home risk assessments and staff clearly recording their actions when children go missing from home. This also refers to staff clearly recording incidents in line with managerial expectations and established systems.</p>	<p>31 January 2022</p>
<p>Subject to paragraph (6), the registered person must establish a procedure for considering complaints made by or on behalf of children.</p> <p>In particular, the procedures must provide that no person who is the subject of a complaint takes any part in its consideration or investigation, except at the informal</p>	<p>31 January 2022</p>

<p>resolution stage if the registered person considers it appropriate.</p> <p>The registered person must ensure that a record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of any investigation. (Regulation 39 (1) (2) (3))</p>	
<p>The registered person must ensure that—</p> <p>within 24 hours of the use of the measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes—</p> <p>details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure; and</p> <p>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)(v)(c))</p> <p>This specifically refers to the manager’s evaluation of events leading up to the incident and ensuring that children are given the opportunity to discuss the incident with the manager or designated person.</p>	<p>31 January 2022</p>

## Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children take an active and ongoing role in developing their plans and goals. The plans should be written in a way that is easily accessible and meaningful for the child. ('Guide to the children’s homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.11)
- The registered person should ensure that up-to-date records are kept regarding work carried out with children and how this contributes to their overall plan and progress. ('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:** SC360599

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

**Registered provider address:** Town Hall, King William Street, Blackburn BB1 7DY

**Responsible individual:** Judith Fennell

**Registered manager:** Post vacant

## Inspector

Pauline Yates, Social Care Inspector

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