

# 1278968

Registered provider: Lancashire County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

A local authority operates this children's home. It provides a short-break service for up to four children and young people to stay at the home at any one time. It is an 'edge of care' service designed to offer short-term intensive support to young people and their families. The staff team also provides outreach support, both within and away from the home.

The registered manager has managed the home since it was registered in May 2018.

**Inspection date:** 18 November 2019

**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:** 27 February 2019

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement |
|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| 27/02/2019      | Full            | Good                 |

## What does the children's home need to do to improve?

### Recommendations

- Ensure that staff continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements to protect them. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)
- Ensure that the registered person actively seeks independent scrutiny of the home and makes best use of information from independent and internal monitoring to ensure continuous improvement. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)
- As set out in regulations 31-33, the registered person is responsible for maintaining good employment practice. They must ensure that the 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)

### Inspection judgements

#### Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

This is an 'edge of care' service offering short-term, intensive support packages to young people and their families. The aim is to prevent young people from coming into care. Initially, a 12-week support package is agreed, with specific target areas identified at a planning meeting prior to the home's involvement. This may include areas such as improving family relationships or keeping safe. The service also works intensively with young people's parents and offers a parenting course, alongside the work with the young people. Inspectors received positive feedback about this during the inspection, with parents reporting that this had helped them approach things differently at home. One parent commented in feedback taken by the home, 'I can't thank this service enough for all the help we have received. I am so grateful to [name of staff member] for everything that she has done.'

Short-break planning is effective. Staff work collaboratively with young people, their parents or carers, and social workers to agree an individualised plan. The home is open three nights a week for overnight stays, and a maximum of four young people stay at the same time. Their plans differ, with some young people staying regularly, while others stay only occasionally. During the week, staff carry out outreach work. This may be in the family home, in the community or within the home. This is dependent on circumstance and geography, as the home serves a wide geographical area.

The home is warm and welcoming and well resourced. Young people can access musical

instruments, craft activities and board games during their stay. The home also provides clothes and toiletries for young people, and all bedrooms have en-suite facilities. Young people discuss what they want to do when they arrive at the home and help staff with shopping and cooking meals.

Young people have an enjoyable time when they stay, and report that the team's involvement has made a positive difference. Examples of their positive comments include:

- 'I had a nice chilled weekend.'
- 'Staff are amazing and helpful.'
- 'Thank you for the head space and understanding my issues.'
- 'Staff here have had a huge impact on my life and helped me face my daily struggles.'

Staff are enthusiastic about the work they do. They are making a positive difference to young people's lives. Staff are nurturing and have a good understanding of the pertinent issues for each young person. They provide young people with a safe space for reflection and a positive experience, and help young people learn more effective ways of dealing with their problems. As a result, young people are better able to cope when they are away from the home.

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

Staff prioritise young people's safety and welfare. They know young people well and can dynamically assess any change in their presentation. They work closely with young people's parents and social workers to share issues of concern. These close working relationships ensure that information is not lost, and that the young people are safeguarded.

Risk assessments show that staff assess a range of risks associated with each young person's behaviour. However, these could be further improved. Additional detail, such as the type of self-injurious behaviour that a young person has been known to engage in, and greater clarity on the strategies staff should employ to manage the risk, would make these documents more effective. To date, this has not had a detrimental effect on young people's welfare, but it has the potential to do so.

Young people rarely go missing during their short-break visits, as they enjoy the time they spend here. There have only been two incidents since the last inspection. On the occasions that they do go missing, staff follow clear missing-from-home protocols. This includes actively looking for the young person and swiftly reporting the incident to the police, parents and social worker.

Staff manage young people's behaviour well. Staff are skilled in de-escalating challenging situations when they arise and, as a result, physical restraint has not been necessary. Staff are skilled at quickly developing trusting relationships with young people. These

trusting relationships enable young people to confide in staff and accept their guidance and support.

Staff receive training on a range of safeguarding matters, such as child sexual exploitation and internet safety. This enables them to be alert to these issues and equips them with the skills to carry out work with young people about how to keep themselves safe.

Staff recruitment processes are generally sound. However, gaps in employment histories are not always identified and explored, to ensure the integrity of those employed.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

The registered manager is appropriately qualified and experienced. He is passionate about the service and obtaining positive outcomes for young people. He leads a team of dedicated and enthusiastic staff, who he is immensely proud of.

The service employs enough staff to provide good-quality care. This enables young people to engage in activities and have individual time during their stays, if they need this.

Staff have access to a wide range of training opportunities, ensuring that they are equipped with the skills to meet the challenges presented by young people. Staff feel well supported and supervision is reflective. However, sometimes meeting records are not signed or dated, making it difficult to confirm their regularity. This issue, along with similar recording omissions such as the time that fire drills have taken place, have not been picked up prior to this inspection, demonstrating that the manager's internal monitoring could be strengthened. A recommendation is made to support this.

The manager's liaison with other professionals is good and he will challenge social work decision-making if he feels that this is required. Social workers speak positively about staff communication and the impact the service has on young people. One social worker commented, 'The home provides an amazing service to young people that is extremely reliable.'

The manager routinely seeks feedback from everyone involved with the home and uses this to help shape the development of the service. Young people recently requested that additional weighted blankets be available in the home, as they found these comforting, and there was a huge demand for the two that the service already had. Two additional blankets were swiftly purchased, demonstrating that young people's views are taken into consideration and acted on, wherever possible.

The registered manager has a development plan which includes priorities for staff and young people. He is eager to introduce new ideas and initiatives. The service has slowly grown since it was registered and is currently running at full capacity, providing a valuable alternative to young people coming into care. Evaluation undertaken by the local authority confirms the positive impact of the service on outcomes for young people.

## **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 differences 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:** 1278968

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

**Registered provider:** Lancashire County Council

**Registered provider address:** PO Box 78, County Hall, Fishergate, Preston PR1 8XJ

**Responsible individual:** Michael Nunn

**Registered manager:** Steven Searle

## Inspectors

Mandy Williams, social care inspector

Marina Tully, social care inspector

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