

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC034851
Inspector	Jacqueline Malcolm
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council
Registered person address	Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council PO Box 39 ROCHDALE Lancashire OL16 1LQ
Responsible individual	Paul Marshall
Registered manager	Sandra Ellen Coe
Date of last inspection	31/01/2014

Inspection date	17/06/2014
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Previous inspection	inadequate progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	adequate
Outcomes for children and young people	adequate
Quality of care	adequate
Keeping children and young people safe	adequate
Leadership and management	adequate

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	adequate
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The home received an interim inspection in January 2014 and was judged to be making inadequate progress. Since then the manager has taken appropriate steps to improve the handling of allegations, which safeguards young people and staff who may be involved in this process in the future.

Although young people generally enjoy life at this home and are settled, in recent months relationships between some young people and members of staff have been strained. This has negatively impacted on staff morale and some inconsistent and less vigilant practices have developed. The manager has been addressing the issues with the staff team prior to and during the inspection, and signs of improvement are evident.

Young people say they are safe and know who to talk to if they have any issues or concerns. They are cared for in line with their individual plans, which are regularly reviewed. This ensures that young people's care needs continue to be met. Young people benefit from good health support and they are well informed about the health risks related to their behaviours. However, not all of the young people choose to change their behaviours, which may impact on their future health outcomes. Some young people enjoy excellent school attendance and they are making good educational progress. However, this is not the case for all young people who are not

in education or employment. This is despite the support and encouragement from the home and other professionals to help young people to improve their life chances through education and work placements.

Overall, the home is well managed by a qualified and experienced Registered Manager who knows the young people well. Major strengths of this home include the stability of the experienced and competent staff team, who enjoy strong partnerships with other professionals and young people's families. A professional stakeholder said, 'staff have been very supportive to the young people and have communicated very well with me'. There is a lot of good practice demonstrated at this home, delivered by a staff team who have invested in the young people and care about them. However their good practice has not been sufficient to secure good outcomes for all young people, although the home does demonstrates capacity for improvement.

Requirements and recommendations are raised to help the home address shortfalls in relation to: management monitoring, behaviour management, risk management, consultation with young people and stakeholders, the quality of young people's records, the implementation of the home's written development plan and updating the home's Statement of Purpose. Although these shortfalls do not have a significant impact on young people's safety or welfare, they still have some effect on the quality of care afforded them.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home provides care and support for five young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is managed by the local authority.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
31/01/2014	Interim	inadequate progress
11/07/2013	Full	good
27/02/2013	Interim	good progress
18/09/2012	Full	good

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

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
4 (2001)	ensure that the Statement of Purpose contains the necessary information. In particular a description of the children's homes approach to the surveillance and monitoring of children accommodated there (Regulation 4]	31/07/2014
11 (2001)	promote and make proper provision for the safeguarding and welfare of children accommodated there; specifically implement robust risk assessments to ensure young people's continued protection (Regulation 11(1)(a))	31/07/2014
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, restraint or discipline in a children's home, a written record is made in a volume kept for	31/07/2014

	the purpose of which shall include the effectiveness and any consequence of the use of the measure (Regulation 17B(3)(f))	
32 (2001)	ensure that adequate precautions are taken against the risk of fire. Specifically obtain written agreement from the fire and rescue service to confirm that the locks on the external doors do not pose a fire risk (Regulation 32(1)(a))	31/07/2014
34 (2001)	establish and maintain a system for improving the quality of care provided in the children's home; the system referred to in paragraph (1) shall provide for consultation with children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities. (Regulation 34(1)(b) and (3))	31/07/2014

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that children develop and practice skills to build and maintain positive relationships, be assertive and resolve conflicts positively (NMS 3.5)
- ensure that all sanctions and rewards are clear, reasonable and fair and are understood by all staff and children (NMS 3.8)
- ensure that where sanctions are used, children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records kept by the home (NMS 3.18)
- implement the homes reviewed development plan (NMS 15.2)
- ensure visits of the home carried out under Regulation 33 include relevant checks set out in regulations and guidance. Specifically ensure that the reports demonstrate that the visitor is satisfied that the home has an effective approach to behaviour management (NMS 21.7)
- ensure there is a system in place to monitor the quality and adequacy of record keeping and take action when needed. This specifically relates to all records relating to young people. (NMS 22.1)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **adequate**

Young people experience mixed outcomes at this home. For some, their progress is dependent on their emotional stability and willingness to engage with staff. This results in strong attachments, which helps them to understand their histories and get involved in their future plans. Some young people show signs of disengagement, which makes them more vulnerable to risky situations.

Young people enjoy good physical health. They are registered with health care professionals and attend health appointments with appropriate support. This meets their holistic health needs. Young people understand the benefits of eating healthy, balanced meals and taking regular exercise. This helps them to stay healthy. Young people's good engagement with drug, alcohol and sexual health services helps them to understand the health risks associated with drug and alcohol misuse. They also have a good understanding of sexual health issues and how to protect themselves from the risk of sexually transmitted infections. However, young people do not always adhere to the professional advice given to them. This does not promote their long-term health outcomes.

Not all young people have made good educational progress from their starting points. This is despite the encouragement and praise given to them by staff and other professionals. Some young people are thriving in education and they enjoy excellent school attendance. However, other young people's educational attendance and progress has declined over time or they refuse to engage in work placements. This limits some young people's potential to achieve and hinders opportunities for them to improve their life chances.

Most young people enjoy meaningful activities in the community. This provides good opportunities for them to enjoy themselves away from the home. Examples include gym and sporting activities, trips away and engaging in creative activities. This helps to improve young people's social skills and integration, which enhances their confidence.

Young people's positive sense of identity is promoted by contact with family and significant others. Young people are appropriately advised about their contact with people who are not good for them. However, not all young people listen to staff advice and they continue to associate with some unsuitable people. This increases the risks associated with offending or anti-social behaviours.

Independence planning is dependent on young people's level of understanding and ability. This has resulted in them developing some life skills. For example, young people know how to clean, shop, make drinks, prepare and cook meals. However, not all young people are fully confident about their readiness for independence. This is an issue that staff are addressing with the placing authority to ensure that young people

experience a well-supported and safe transition into adulthood

Quality of care

adequate

Most young people say that the care and support that they receive from staff is very good 'all of the time' and 'most of the time'. A young person said: 'All of the staff are there all of the time to support you all the time and they give you a cuddle when you feel like that at times and they are there to listen to you as well.'

'Professionals are extremely complementary about staff and the support they provide to young people. A placing social worker commented that the good thing about the children's home is 'that they are there'.

Positive relationships formed between staff and most young people have nurtured some good attachments and stabilised the lives of young people over time. However, in recent months some young people's relationships with staff have come under strain. Contributing factors include an increase in some young people's challenging behaviours and disengagement due to the staff team's closer monitoring of their activities. This has impacted on the staff team's resilience and the effectiveness of some of their responses. For example, some inconsistent boundaries have led to the less robust implementation of behaviour management strategies. This has provided opportunities for some young people to engage in risky and anti-social behaviours, which has to some extent affected the group dynamics in the home. The home has sought consultation with professionals from the child and adolescent mental health team (CAMHS). A professional stakeholder said: 'They use CAMHS consultation well.'

Most young people feel that their wishes and feelings are actively sought and influence the running of the home. They say that this happens 'all' and 'most of the time'. Young people are involved in menu planning, activities and home improvements, including the decoration of their own bedrooms. On a wider level, young people have been consulted about the changes in the service. This gives them opportunities to influence the way that children's homes are operated. No complaints have been received about the home, but young people know how to use the home's complaints procedure.

Young people's care plans determine the level of care and support that they receive. Plans are regularly reviewed to ensure that young people's needs continue to be met by the home and provide appropriate safeguards. Young people's needs arising from their personal identity are positively addressed. This promotes equality and diversity and supports young people to embrace their identity with pride.

The sustained and strong partnerships between the home, education and health providers is one of the home's major strengths. This promotes high expectations that

help young people to get the best opportunities to improve their education and health outcomes. Staff actively promote young people's educational attendance and attainment in schools, college and work based placements. They go to great lengths to ensure that young people have opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills in order to improve their life chances. Some young people are well engaged in education and others have secured college placements. However, not all young people actively engage in education or employment, this is despite staff members best efforts to arrange relevant educational activities for them.

Young people's good engagement with health professionals increases their awareness about the associated health risks linked to their activities. This helps them to make lifestyle choices. Similarly the good communication between staff and health professionals, including health weekly drop ins at the home ensures that everyone is kept informed about young people's health needs.

Young people benefit from living in an attractive and well maintained home environment. The home is located close to good local facilities and transport routes. This enables young people to positively integrate into community life.

Keeping children and young people safe adequate

Young people say that they generally feel safe in this home. However, a recent incident involving the unauthorised admission of a visitor who was known to some young people has raised concerns about staff vigilance and security in the home. This incident was promptly addressed by leaders and the manager in close collaboration with social care and safeguarding professionals. Ofsted was also notified. The risk management measures taken, coupled with lessons learned and discussions with the young people involved has enhanced the safety and security levels in the home. This keeps everyone safe.

Young people confidently confirm that they can identify an adult who they would talk to if they felt unsafe. Staff are alert to child sexual exploitation and bullying behaviours and act on them when detected or raised with them. Young people who have experienced bullying confirm that the actions taken by staff and themselves minimise incidents. Professionals express no concerns about young people's safety and welfare. A social worker commented that the home provides 'nowhere safer' for a young person to live.

Although young people recognise that staff respond to them in protective ways because they want to safeguard them, this makes them take a negative view of some staff. One professional said: 'Young people do not get on with every member of staff but recognise that even the ones they don't like very much still try their best to improve their outcomes. Some young people's challenging behaviours are inconsistently managed. For example, some incidents have not resulted in a consequence. This does not give young people a consistent and clear message that

helps them to take responsibility to improve their behaviour. When sanctions have been imposed for poor behaviour some have been excessive, which lacks proportion and fairness. The sanction records do not make clear the effectiveness of the measure used and young people's views are not routinely recorded. This does not confirm young people's thoughts about sanctions or help the manager to monitor if the sanctions imposed improve behaviour.

Good safeguarding arrangements ensure that young people who go missing from home return quickly. Staff know the local area very well. They actively discourage young people from leaving the home through discussion and without the need for physical intervention and will search for young people when they go missing or have unauthorised absences. Young people are encouraged to keep in contact with staff on their mobile phones to let them know they are safe. Local police protocols for missing from care events are followed as appropriate. The effective communication between the home, social care professionals and the local community police service promotes young people's safety.

Not all young people's individual risk assessments robustly detail how all of their risky behaviours will be minimised. This specifically relates to young people at risk of child sexual exploitation. The manager is in the process of remedying these shortfalls to ensure a stronger and consistent recording system that supports the current practice.

Young people are protected by the required health and safety checks that are frequently carried out in the home. This includes checks on fire equipment which ensures that everyone knows how to safely evacuate the building in the event of a fire. However, the home's current fire risk assessment has not been formally endorsed by the fire and rescue service to confirm that the improved security does not pose a fire risk.

The recruitment system ensures that staff are carefully selected and vetted before starting work in the home. This protects young people from having unsuitable adults caring for them.

Leadership and management

adequate

Overall, the home is well managed by a Registered Manager who has been registered at this home with Ofsted since 2011. She is suitably qualified and very experienced and skilled in managing and delivering services to young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The Manager is supported by a competent staff team who can meet young people's needs. A professional stakeholder said: 'The manager and staff at this home are very caring and considerate of the children's needs.'

At the last inspection in January 2014 the home was judged to be making inadequate progress. Since then the manager and staff team have taken positive steps to address the majority of the shortfalls raised at that time. This demonstrates that the

home has capacity to improve.

Young people are well cared for by a sufficient number of well-established, qualified and caring staff. Staff confirm that they feel supported by the manager and by other support mechanisms, such as team meetings. Staff said, 'we are like a family' and 'my manager is supportive and is always there to listen and advise.' In recent months, staff morale has been affected following a period of challenging behaviours in the home. This has impacted on the effectiveness of team work, which has led to some inconsistent boundaries and less robust practice. The manager is addressing these issues with the staff team, which demonstrates their commitment to increase team motivation and get back on track.

The manager is aware of most of the homes strengths and weaknesses and is reviewing the annual development plan. This enables the home to focus on the improvement agenda. Internal and independent monitoring on behalf of the provider identifies the homes strengths and weaknesses. However the system is not consistently robust. For example, Regulation 33 visit reports do not identify the weaknesses with respect to the home's approach to behaviour management issues. This has led to missed chances to promptly improve practice. Similarly, internal monitoring has not quickly recognised opportunities to ensure consistent behaviour management, and improve sanction records and risk assessments to support existing safeguarding practices. This has impacted on the quality of young people's otherwise suitable records. The outcomes of consultation with young people and stakeholders about the standard of care in the home have not been reported on during internal monitoring. This does not enable the home to show how their views impact on service improvements and does not help Ofsted to form a view about young people's progress.

The home's Statement of Purpose has been reviewed to meet the new regulations. However, it has not been updated to include the use of the surveillance device on the external doors. This does not ensure that stakeholders are fully informed about all of the services provided in the home. Professionals rate the home highly and confirm good communication with the staff team. A professional stakeholder said: 'Partnership work has been really good. No complaints.'

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.