

SC034922

Registered provider: Rochdale Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The children's home is owned and run by a local authority. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 24 to 25 July 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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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: 30 March 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home requires improvement to be good because

- Young people are involved in high levels of missing from care episodes. This places them at risk. Return home interviews for young people are requested but are often irregular.
- Despite their best efforts, staff are unable to prevent young people from engaging in risk-taking behaviour. When young people are away from the home, they regularly take risks with cannabis use, and some are involved in criminal activity.
- Some young people choose not to engage in the home. Their day-to-day routines are unpredictable.
- Young people's progress is variable. While some are making progress, others are reluctant to engage in new experiences or activities.
- Some young people have made measurable progress and successfully moved on from the home. This has not been the case for one young person.
- Young people's care plans are not consistently completed. There are weaknesses in the quality of these records.
- Engagement in education or training opportunities is limited for most young people.
- Young people do not have a consistently healthy or nutritious diet.
- The management team has not submitted the home's statement of purpose to Ofsted, as required by regulation.

The children's home's strengths

- The young people have trusting relationships with the staff. These relationships allow them to explore their risks, experiences and identity in a non-judgemental setting. This generally enables the staff to manage young people's behaviour well.
- The staff are imaginative and have created alternative ways to seek young people's views or opinions in relation to the quality of care that they receive.
- A strong safeguarding culture supported by procedures understood by the staff helps to keep young people safe.
- When young people go missing, the staff are persistent in their attempts to contact and locate them.
- Staff ensure that young people maintain regular and positive contact with their families. They provide young people with practical and emotional support to sustain these relationships.
- The managers and the staff work in close collaboration with a range of other

professionals and parents in order to meet the needs of the young people.

- The leadership and staff are strong and they continue to be responsive to the challenges and are committed to the needs of the young people.
- Staff receive good levels of training and support. These arrangements enhance their skills and allow them to reflect on their own emotions.
- The home is well maintained, homely and welcoming for young people.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
30/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
20/09/2016	Full	Good
31/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
22/09/2015	Full	Good

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 with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
8: The education standard The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— (a) that staff— (i) help each child to achieve the child's education and training targets, as recorded in the child's relevant plans; (ii) support each child's learning and development, including helping the child to develop independent study skills and, where appropriate, helping the child to complete independent study; (iii) understand the barriers to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child to overcome any such barriers; (iv) help each child to understand the importance and value of education, learning, training and employment; (v) promote opportunities for each child to learn informally; (vi) maintain regular contact with each child's education and training provider, including engaging with the provider and the placing authority to support the child's education and training and to maximise the child's achievement; (vii) raise any need for further assessment or specialist provision in relation to a child with the child's education or training provider and the child's placing authority;	08/09/2017

(viii) help a child who is excluded from school, or who is of compulsory school age but not attending school, to access educational and training support throughout the period of exclusion or non-attendance and to return to school as soon as possible; (ix) help each child who is above compulsory school age to participate in further education, training or employment and to prepare for future care, education or employment; (x) help each child to attend education or training in accordance with the expectations in the child's relevant plans; and (b) that each child has access to appropriate equipment, facilities and resources to support the child's learning. (Regulation 8(1)(2)(a)(b))	
16: Statement of purpose The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ('the statement of purpose') which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1. The registered person must provide a copy of the statement of purpose to HMCI. (Regulation 16(1)(2))	31/08/2017

Recommendations

- When a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority must provide an opportunity for the child to have an independent return home interview. Homes should take account of information provided by such interviews when assessing and putting arrangements in place to protect each child. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)
- Regulations 35– 39 detail the records that must be kept in children's homes. All children's case records (regulation 36) must be kept up to date and stored securely while they remain in the home. Ensure accurate, consistent and evaluative record-keeping. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)

Inspection judgements

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

Young people have built trusting relationships with the managers and staff in the home. The staff are committed to ensuring that the risks, lack of engagement and experiences of individual young people are explored and improved. Young people listen and respond to the staff, although progress is slow due to the amount of time that they are away from the home. Observations of positive interactions were seen between the staff and the young people and between young people themselves. Collectively, the young people told the inspector that they feel that staff listen to them and that they know how to complain. They and the staff said that the home is very settled.

Young people are supported by staff to develop positive self-esteem and a positive sense of identity. Issues of diversity, including gender identity, religion and culture are managed very well. A key ethos of the home is supporting the young people to overcome previous experiences of trauma and multiple placement moves and to build their emotional resilience. While this has been consistently good practice in the past, this work has been a challenge to progress as most of the young people display unpredictable behaviour and their day-to-day routines are disordered.

Education outcomes for young people are varied. One young person attends college regularly and enjoys the praise and rewards he receives. However, other young people cannot reach their potential due to poor school attendance. Incentive and support plans put in place by staff are having no impact, as some young people are consistently refusing to attend school. Their lack of engagement in the home is preventing their progress. Although arrangements for education have been made and agreed by the young people during meetings, with the education authorities and the virtual head, the start of the school summer break means that the impact of these arrangements cannot yet be judged for progress.

The records for young people are generally very well presented and detailed. Some young people's placement plans are not consistently completed. While most contain accurate information about education, one young person's plan in relation to education was lacking depth.

As the young people refuse to engage in key worker sessions or attend house meetings, the staff have used creative alternative arrangements to capture the views, wishes and feelings of the young people, such as creating individual journal files for them. Informal discussions with young people often take place in the evening when the young people return to the home. The staff record the young people's moods and comments in these journal files. Pictures and quotations are evident and show the stages that the young people are making towards progress, particularly since they came to live in the home.

Staff continue to make arrangements for the young people to experience new activities and provide them with opportunities to try new things. However, the young people are

often reluctant to turn up or refuse to go on planned outings, and prefer to be with their friends.

Young people have good access to healthcare. They are registered with local health services and attend appointments when needed. They also have access to mental health services, such as healthy young minds (formerly child and adolescent mental health service), to identify and support their psychological needs. Young people's dietary needs are catered for, and there is always fresh nutritious food available to them when they return to the home. However, as the young people spend a lot of time away from the home, their nutritional intake is not always known.

Medication procedures are thorough and ensure that all medication is accounted for. Staff sign and date the medication records at each shift handover. Staff have received training on the safe storage, administration and disposal of medication.

There are a number of professional and supportive agencies available to the young people, to help them overcome patterns of negative behaviour. A previous resident of this home achieved very good outcomes in all areas of their life. On leaving, they were equipped emotionally and practically to succeed in adulthood. This young person telephoned the home during the inspection. He told the inspector:

- 'The staff are brilliant, I'm not just saying that. They really helped me to change my life around. It didn't happen overnight and I was no angel, but I got where I needed to be.'
- 'Thanks to them [the staff] I am really sorted now and getting on with my life.'
- 'I really miss living in the home, but I am doing alright for myself.'

The young people currently at the home only intermittently engage with professionals, such as from the youth offending service, who can help them to reduce their risk-taking behaviours. As a result, some have breached their youth offending orders, which puts them at risk of being criminalised further. This reduces their prospects of success in adult life.

A social work team manager, social workers and a parent told the inspector that, regardless of some of the challenges and risks that some young people bring, staff are very attentive to their needs. Over time, they all feel that young people will settle and make good progress in the home. They said.

- 'Staff are committed to reducing the risks of young people. They engage with them very well and keep me regularly updated.' [Team manager]
- 'Although progress is slow, but in comparison to his last placements, he is much more stable and settled.' [Social worker]
- 'I am confident that together we have identified an education provision that he will engage with and enjoy.' [Social worker]
- The staff are wonderful here. They know my son well and do their best in what is often a difficult situation. They always keep me informed and we are all working together to steer him away from negative influences and improve his attitude.'

[Parent]

Staff facilitate and assist with family contact. They follow detailed contact plans, which helps to ensure that contact between young people and families is well managed for all involved.

The full refurbishment of the home is complete. This provides young people with a home that is well maintained, welcoming and homely.

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

Young people told the inspector that they always feel safe, listened to and well cared for by the staff. The staff are trained and are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities. There have not been any significant safeguarding incidents in relation to child sexual exploitation, online safety or radicalisation, and no allegations against staff or referrals to the local children's safeguarding board. The staff maintain close scrutiny of group dynamics to ensure that any conflicts are dealt with and resolved quickly.

Improvements have been made following the last inspection, for example, in relation to young people smoking in their bedrooms. This is no longer an issue as those young people who smoke do this outside of the home. Literature and constant reminders are given to the young people about how smoking can impact on their health.

The impact of bullying has been worked through with the young people, and records have been revised and incidents have stopped. Young people told the inspector that they do not feel bullied or intimidated in the home. Young people's risk assessments have been strengthened with clear and updated risks identified, including strategies for staff to follow.

However, there are more areas and considerations for further improvement before the home can be judged to be consistently good. There are clear strengths in some areas. The staff and the management team are very child focused. They firmly place the needs of the individual and the group of young people at the centre of their practice. This approach results in strong relationships that enable young people to make measurable progress and reduce risk. So far, although some young people's risk-taking behaviours are reducing, and their missing from home incidents decreasing, these issues continue to influence and have a negative impact on any progress that some young people make, and may lead to more criminalisation.

When young people are missing from the home, the staff are persistent in their attempts to find them. They look for them during shifts and drive around known areas after their shifts are completed. Young people have mobile phones provided to them on admission to the home, which allow them and staff to keep in touch and ensure that the young people are safe. The staff maintain links with families, the police and the young person throughout any missing from home incidents. The staff have established good working relationships with the local child sexual exploitation service, although child sexual

exploitation is not an issue or a concern of staff for the young people currently in residence.

Following the last inspection, there has been a high number of missing from home incidents. One young person persistently went missing and was reported as missing on 61 occasions, including for a duration of 19 consecutive days. Concerns in relation to the young person were escalated to Ofsted, local agencies charged with protecting young people and the media. The outcomes for this young person were poor as he continually breached his youth offending order and was consequently placed in secure accommodation.

Significant improvements are needed to the arrangements for the local authority to conduct return home interviews for young people. Records show that requests are made for a return home interview to the local authority on each occasion when a young person is missing from the home. These requests are not consistently being adequately responded to. This issue was also raised at the last inspection of the home.

Management of most behaviour is generally effective. Young people respond well and staff provide full explanations when staff cannot agree with the young person about a proposed course of action. There has been no use of restraint in the home since the last inspection. The last recorded physical intervention was in January 2017. Where there are concerns over cannabis use, staff act quickly to limit finance and to supervise spending. Staff make good use of restorative sanctions and de-escalation strategies, such as taking young people for a walk or a drive in the car when they are angry or upset. This helps to support good behaviour and stability in the home.

The management team and staff ensure that the home is well maintained and that any damage is swiftly reported and repaired. Regular maintenance checks are carried out and recorded, including fire and evacuation drills.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

An effective, appropriately qualified registered manager leads the home. She is on target to acquire her level 5 qualification in leadership and management. A qualified and experienced assistant manager supports her, and, together, they have a good understanding of the home's strengths and weaknesses. The management team is strong and it continues to be responsive to current challenges and committed to meet the needs and improve the outcomes for the young people. Staff spoken with confirmed that they feel very much supported and regularly reflect on their practices.

Staff undergo a rigorous selection process before taking up their positions. New staff recruited confirmed their recruitment process and have undergone all required checks. These practices ensure that inappropriate adults do not have access to young people. Probationary periods and shadowing experienced staff members ensure that new staff are fully aware of the home's policies and procedures and that they are confident in their roles.

The staff work extremely well together as a team and said that they are supported through effective induction, training, supervision, personal development reviews and team meetings. They are knowledgeable about the aims and objectives of the home. All of the staff who have been working with young people for over two years have completed the relevant level 3 qualification. New staff are enrolled onto this qualification. Staff access a comprehensive training programme that covers all aspects of the care and support required to meet the needs of the young people.

There is good use of the electronic management oversight tool (MOT), particularly when considering a new admission of a young person for the home. The MOT provides staff with access to information from within the children's services department. Pre-admission meetings, compatibility risk assessments and visits by young people before being accommodated are in place. The home does not take emergency admissions.

Systems to monitor and evaluate the quality of care provided are well utilised and lead to improvement. The reports from the independent person now include the ways in which young people are being effectively safeguarded. Internal monitoring is carried out, and staff have delegated tasks, which are overseen and monitored by the management team.

The management team has strong links to young people's social workers, the commissioning team, education and health professionals. They have also developed links with the local police. The community police officer periodically visits the home. There are pleasant relationships with the neighbours and the local community. The registered manager is not afraid to challenge services and requests meetings when she considers that young people require further support.

The registered manager recently updated the statement of purpose. However, she has not submitted this to Ofsted, as required by regulation. This does not directly affect the young people, but it does mean that Ofsted, as the regulator, does not have current information, particularly about staffing changes in the home.

The three requirements made at the last inspection have been met. These were specifically in relation to smoking, risk assessment and the independent person's report.

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 difference 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: SC034922

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council, Number One Riverside, Rochdale OL16 1XU

Responsible individual: Jill McGregor

Registered manager: Melanie Ambrose

Inspector

Mark Kersh, social care inspector

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