

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	25/11/2015
Unique reference number	SC034953
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council
Registered person address	Northgate House, Northgate, Halifax, West Yorkshire, HX1 1UN

Responsible individual	Gary Pickles
Registered manager	Aaron McLoughlin
Inspector	Pauline Yates

Inspection date	25/11/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
how well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding

SC034953

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Young people living at the home make progress across various aspects of their lives and from very challenging starting points begin to make better choices.
- Young people receive unfailing and effective support from staff to enable them to make positive decisions. Staff persevere with young people, offering good clear boundaries and expectations.
- The home offers good levels of consistency and structure. Young people are nurtured and over time adhere to the routines which are in place. Through good levels of care risk of custody, welfare secure and child sexual exploitation diminish.
- Staff manage well the reality of older teenagers exercising choice and develop dialogue and trust with young people. They listen to young people and are good at pre-empting and recognising triggers for behaviours that might be harmful for themselves or others.
- Young people become more resilient and learn to manage their emotions. When incidents do occur staff deal with these in a way that provides insight and learning for the young person. This approach facilitates self-reflection and insight.
- Leadership and management is strong, focused on the needs of young people and very committed. High quality evaluation drives many of the current and future plans for the home. Reflection and problem solving is a key component of the care provided. This area of practice is judged as outstanding.
- Areas for improvement are identified. These do not currently impact upon the welfare of young people.

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

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 (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
When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the independent person – (a) if they consent, to interview in private such of the children, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as the independent person requires; (4) The independent person must produce a report about a visit ("the independent person's report") which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether- (a) children are effectively safeguarded; and (b) the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being. (Regulation 44 (2) (a) (4) (a) (b))	31/12/2015

Recommendations

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

- For children's homes to be nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of their children, they will in most cases, be homely, domestic environments. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 15 paragraph 3.9) In particular repair and refurbishment of the bathroom and toilet areas.
- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 62 paragraph 14.4) With particular reference to the recording in daily diaries being purposeful and evaluative in nature.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This children's home is operated by the local authority. It provides care and accommodation for up to five young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
02/02/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
08/08/2014	Full	Good
18/12/2013	Interim	Good Progress
30/05/2013	Full	Adequate

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	good
Young people's starting points are characterised by frequent incidents of missing from home and high levels of aggression and intimidation. They have previously refused to accept boundaries were at high risk of child sexual exploitation and did not engage with education. These factors made them at high risk of being placed in custody or secured for their own safety. Their previous life experiences have compromised their abilities to manage their emotional responses. Across all of these challenges, young people make good progress. For some, this progress has been such that plans for return back into the family home are being formulated. One social worker said, 'X came here with 33 police reports, high risk of child sexual abuse, excessive drug use and violence. We can honestly say that the commitment that the staff have demonstrated has brought us to the point whereby we are looking to return her back home.' Through the determined refusal not to give up on young people and ensure better futures for them, staff secure their trust. As a result of these reliable relationships, young people learn to negotiate disappointment, frustration and develop appropriate responses. The structure and boundaries provided bring order and predictability and in doing so, a home which feels emotionally safe. Young people's feelings and perspectives are important to the staff. Staff provide good levels of dialogue and structured listening experiences. Through these, young people learn to appropriately express themselves and grow in self-awareness. Young people begin to invest in the home. For example, incidents of intimidating behaviour cease and any damage is more a result of emotional distress than wilful intent. Flagrant disregard of rules such as smoking in bedrooms ceases. Young people assist to repair any damage and show remorse for their actions. A Youth Offending Team (YOT) worker commenting upon a young person's progress said, 'His ability to manage himself has improved because of the boundaries - and he knows what is expected of him.' A social worker commented, 'From where he was I do feel that he has made progress, for example on one occasion he sat with me for 40 minutes and that for him is amazing.' All young people have identified education and all engage with the services provided. Attendance for some young people can vary, however given their starting points, all continue to make progress. For some young people, regular attendance has been achieved despite long periods of non-attendance prior to	

living at the home.

The staff work hard to motivate young people through reward and positive reinforcement. Young people enjoy a wide range of weekly activities and through progress in individual areas they can chose bigger rewards or activities. For example, it had been recently agreed that one young person, due to his commitment to school, can have a helicopter ride.

Young people's identity and diversity is respected and appropriately supported by staff. As a result, some young people have become more confident and assured in their sexuality. This exploration of identity is indicative of the level of trust which young people have developed with staff.

Staff are active in ensuring young people stay in contact with those that are important to them. For example, one young person expressed to staff a wish to see their parent, who they had not had contact with for 15 years. This wish was represented to the social worker and contact was safely established.

Staff act in young people's interests and advocate on their behalf in order for them to have access to specialist services. Previous services and assessments which were outstanding are pursued by the staff and this ensures that areas of need are fully understood.

Young people are encouraged to engage with their care plans and they are supported to attend their reviews. One Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) commented, 'It has taken a lot of hard work and dedication and she has actually sat in a room with myself, her mum and gran and it was quite nice.' Improvements to individual records is been driven by the need to make them more user friendly and meaningful to young people. The recording in daily diaries however remains highly descriptive and low in evaluation and analysis.

Overall young people benefit from living in a well maintained and homely environment. However there are areas that would benefit from refurbishment, such as the bathrooms and toilets.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
Young people are much safer compared from their starting points. Some young people previously at risk of child sexual exploitation are no longer considered so. Incidents of missing from home reduce, drug abuse for some young people ceases	

altogether and violence and aggression reduces significantly.

One practice manager commented, 'When I read the files from where she was and where she is now we wouldn't have been looking at this – she was more for secure – she was out of control. They have gone beyond my expectations.' A social worker commented, 'He feels safe there and he knows where his base line is and what the boundaries are. He has been given positive role models. Through keep repeating the boundaries he has internalised these. The staff have taken the right approach with him.'

Staff have a good understanding of each young person's vulnerabilities, risks and strengths. Despite the initial resistance, and in some cases high levels of challenge by young people, staff do not give up. Their firm and consistent approach, offers young people a reliable reference point to begin to improve their responses.

This understanding is complimented by updated and regularly reviewed risk assessments that staff adhere to. Behaviour management plans are meaningful and individualised and seek to pre-empt and avoid, rather than solely manage incidents.

When young people do go missing the staff are active in searching for them and liaising with other agencies in order to improve future action plans and risk assessments. When absent, young people often stay in contact with staff. One YOT worker commented, 'Communication has been superb. Any incident we are informed, they attend all meetings and I think communication is second to none.' These views were also shared by other professionals involved such as social workers and IRO's.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
Leadership and management is excellent, proactive and forward thinking. The manager has been registered at the home since 2013 and demonstrates a consistent approach to improving the outcomes for young people. He places the welfare of the young people at the centre of the home's practice and ensures that the care offered is of a very high standard. He has met the requirement and recommendations made at the previous inspection. In respect of these, all incidents of physical restraint are recorded in a good level of detail that offers insight into the legitimacy of the restraint. Risk assessments are appropriately updated and behaviour management strategies are fair and not punitive in nature.	

The manager seeks to ensure that the staff work as a team and that young people's previous life experiences are fully understood and appreciated. In order to embed the newly introduced model of care, the manager has negotiated and secured bi-monthly reflective supervision between the staff group and the local authority therapeutic team.

This process facilitates open discussion about the progress of the young people; refreshes and reviews current approaches and, considers new insights generated by that discussion. This process is valued by the staff and offers time-protected group reflection. As a result staff feel confident in the care they offer young people.

The manager is an ambitious and confident leader. There are good levels of formal and informal staff supervision in place and he maintains robust overview of the progress that young people make. He demonstrates a high level of insight into the needs of young people and is very effective in communicating these to the staff.

His commitment to listening to young people has led to the introduction of group conferences, organised for the young people and staff. These have been chaired by young people and are powerful in facilitating their voices being heard. They have resulted in open and honest dialogue and have contributed to the subsequent reduction of incidences. In addition they have led also to a newly agreed behaviour expectations contract for both staff and young people.

Other improvements include newly introduced working rotas. These rotas offer greater consistency for the young people, for as the manager commented, 'The same members of staff see them to bed at night, as those who woke them that morning.' The newly established senior roles provide stability for staff, management overview and team working. Repeating and predictable staff rotas, create even greater levels of stability for the young people.

The manager has also streamlined documentation and minimised repetition. This reduces the burden of paperwork for the staff and offers greater time for staff to be available to the young people. In the process of reviewing documents the manager has sought for them to become more meaningful to the young people and less adult-orientated. Newly devised care plans are focused, explicit in outcomes and purposeful. Young people engage with these documents and are encouraged to comment and seek ownership. Newly introduced behaviour management plans improve clarity of risk and are highly individualised for each young person.

Alongside broader management overview of care, the manager has introduced key-working practice standards. These standards ensure that individual work with young people are comprehensive and thorough in their approach. The key-working documents are regularly audited by the manager. They offer key guidance to staff

and detailed insight to the manager of progress of young people.

The quality assurance systems developed by the manager are robust and extremely comprehensive. However, the current independent visitor's reports are variable in quality and do not always meet regulations.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place, however, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, 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 who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This 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 Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the *Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards*.

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