

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC035428
Inspector	Jackie Line
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Lancashire County Council
Registered person address	PO Box 78 County Hall Fishergate Preston PR1 8XJ
Responsible individual	Brendan Francis Lee
Registered manager	Karen Margaret Banks
Date of last inspection	28/01/2014

Inspection date	18/12/2014
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

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

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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The home provides an excellent environment for young people to enjoy their short stays. Staff are dedicated and enthusiastic, and they develop very positive relationships with young people. Young people are well supported and as a result, they make significant progress relative to their starting points. Staff are aspirational for young people, and disability is not seen as a barrier to enjoying a full and active lifestyle. Young people flourish, and their outcomes are outstanding.

Young people's individual needs are clearly identified in detailed plans. Their progress is reviewed and well evidenced. The home is successful in promoting young people's inclusion and participation. Young people contribute to their plans, and have input into the care they receive. As a result, young people accessing this service know their views are important, and that they are valued.

Young people indicate they are safe and happy when they stay in the home. They also say they have lots of fun. Young people enjoy a range of social opportunities and consequently, engage in new experiences and learn new skills.

Parents and professionals provide positive views about the quality of care provided, and the progress achieved by young people. This reflects the excellent relationships and working partnerships established by staff. Moreover, it means confidence in the

service provided to young people is high.

This inspection has identified some areas for improvement. As a result, one requirement and three recommendations have been made. This is to ensure staff employed on a casual basis receive supervision and have an annual appraisal; all appraisals take into account the views of young people; all staff participate in a fire evacuation drill, and records in the home are regularly reviewed for accuracy.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This is a children's home operated by a local authority. The service offers short-term care breaks for up to four children and young people with physical disabilities, young people with learning disabilities and young people with sensory impairment.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/01/2014	Interim	good progress
15/08/2013	Full	outstanding
16/01/2013	Interim	satisfactory progress
18/09/2012	Full	outstanding

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
27 (2001)	ensure that all staff receive appropriate supervision and appraisal, specifically that casual staff are included in this process (Regulation 27(4)(a))	30/01/2015

Recommendations

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

- ensure there is an emergency escape plan that all staff are familiar with, and have practiced so they know what to do in an emergency (NMS 10.9)

- ensure that the annual appraisal of all staff takes into account any views of children the service is providing for (NMS 19.6)
- ensure the manager regularly monitors all records kept in the home to ensure compliance, and takes action to address any issues raised by this monitoring. (NMS 21.2)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **outstanding**

Young people thoroughly enjoy coming to this home for short breaks. They consistently report they look forward to their visits, and one young person summed it up when she said: 'It's fantastic every time here.' Young people develop excellent relationships with staff, and relish the opportunity to build friendships with peers. Young people say, 'The staff are brill, cool and smart.' In addition they comment on things they like to do, for example 'being able to chill and be with friends.' This means that young people benefit greatly from their positive experiences at the home.

Parents have confidence in the service, and in the care that staff provide to young people. One parent said: 'My daughter loves going, and really enjoys her time there. She loves all the staff, and they accommodate her so well. It's good for me knowing she is so happy.' As a result of their satisfaction in the service, parents say they are happy to talk to others who may be anxious about their children accessing short breaks. This means more families access the service, and are able to take a break having been reassured, and knowing their child is happy and safe.

Young people are afforded a wide range of activities and opportunities. A parent said, 'He has opportunities to do things that I can't do with him at home.' For example, activities include: Halloween and Christmas parties; trips to the leisure centre; baking; crafts; archery; climbing, and a highly successful camping trip. Young people have also been involved in organising a tea party to raise money for charity. As a result, young people participate in interests that provide them with a huge sense of enjoyment. Moreover, such experiences enable young people to build confidence, learn new skills and develop a sense of achievement.

Young people are making excellent progress relative to their age and level of ability. For example, young people are developing social skills, learning to manage their personal care, becoming more patient, and learning to adapt when things don't go according to plan. A member of staff reports, 'The progress of the young people is fantastic. One young person would not do anything, they now set the table and help with small tasks.' In addition parents said, 'We didn't know they were capable of doing that; they don't do that at home; it is amazing.' Young people learn new skills through a variety of ways. For example, many young people achieve accredited awards through the Gateway Programme. These are linked to individual needs and plans, and as a result, young people are supported to maximise their potential.

Young people prepare well for their transition to adulthood. Bespoke packages of support are in place. For example, young people complete their own transition passport. This includes helpful information about their communication and support needs; their favourite things, and how best to involve them in decision making and agreements. This means that future support services are well informed by young

people about their needs, wishes and feelings. Furthermore, young people complete work books to prepare them for moving into adulthood. This enables them to understand what happens next, and young people comment that the work 'has all been helpful. Young people are clearly involved in transition planning, and consequently are very well prepared for the next stage in their lives.

Quality of care

good

Young people receive a high standard of care from a stable and dedicated staff team. Young people, parents, and social workers are consistently positive about staff and the care they provide. A social worker said, 'The staff genuinely care about the young people, and enjoy their role with them.' Photographs on display in the home reflect the fun that young people have. Furthermore, they portray the warmth and affection reciprocated between staff and young people.

Placement planning is robust, and staff place young people at the heart of all they do. Admissions to the home are well thought out. Staff carefully assess young people's needs and compatibility with other young people visiting the home. Staff are very flexible and accommodating. They recognise what is going on for young people and respond to this appropriately. This approach benefits young people and their families because it helps to ensure all young people get the most out of their stay.

Staff prepare short break plans in conjunction with parents and social work staff. These documents provide a range of information such as young people's likes and dislikes, interests, routines, as well as different models of care that each young person responds the best to. As a result, young people benefit from individualised programmes of support that effectively promotes their welfare.

Staff are well versed in, and are able to adopt, different communication styles in order to meet the individual needs of young people. Consequently, young people are well supported and encouraged to express themselves. A parent said, 'They use every method to understand my daughter. They are very patient and ensure they understand her needs and wants,' The use of iPads is a welcome addition to the home. This has further enhanced young people's ability to communicate their wishes and feelings.

Consultation with young people is good. Young people report, 'Staff ask me what I want to do.' It is clear that young people are included in discussions and decision making about activity plans. Furthermore, staff work creatively with young people to ensure their views are heard in respect of care planning. For example, where young people struggle to attend meetings in person, staff and young people create video messages about what they think of the home. These messages are then relayed in review meetings. Consequently, young people have a voice, informing parents and social workers what they think about their short stays.

Staff support young people with their education by having them ready for school, and by attending education reviews. Likewise, staff maintain good links with school staff and parents, and this ensures continuity of support. Healthy lifestyles are promoted, and staff receive training to ensure they can appropriately care for young people with specific health and medical needs.

The home environment is warm and welcoming, and young people benefit from a homely and pleasant atmosphere during their stays. Young people have requested more outdoor play equipment; there are some limitations on space which prevents further development in this area. Young people are aware of plans to move the service to a purpose built facility next year. This will allow their request to be acted upon more easily.

Young people are being kept abreast of developments in relation to the planned move. They have been to visit the site where the new building will be situated. Staff are taking photographs, and a project is underway with young people to chart the progress of the development. This means that young people are actively involved, and are being well prepared for this transition.

Keeping children and young people safe good

The overall arrangements to protect and safeguard young people are good. Young people indicate that they feel safe and well cared for. Staff are well trained in safeguarding. As a result, they are alert to signs and symptoms of abuse, and know what to do should they have concerns about the welfare and safety of a young person. This helps to protect young people and keep them safe.

Young people are protected through a range of risk assessments, which are implemented and reviewed. Information contained in some young people's risk assessments is not particularly clear. This is because it does not always provide a context to the identified risk. To date this has not compromised the safety and welfare of young people. Risk assessments are currently being reviewed by the Registered Manager, and this shortfall will be addressed as part of this process.

Behaviour management is excellent and based on the needs of young people. Good staffing levels mean that young people receive the support and supervision they need to feel safe. Likewise, staff fully understand the triggers that contribute to young people becoming upset or frustrated, and they use agreed strategies to promote young people's behaviour. Therefore, the need for physical intervention is rare. There has been one occasion where this has been necessary between inspections. Records reflect this situation was well managed, and the young person appropriately supported. There have been no missing episodes and no sanctions imposed, since the last inspection. This means that young people stay in an environment that adopts a non-punitive culture, where their rights and individual differences are fully respected.

A range of health and safety monitoring is in place to ensure young people live in a physically safe environment. All young people participate in fire drills, and have their own individualised fire escape plan. The inspection identified that staff have undertaken fire safety training. However, not all staff have participated in a fire drill, and this means that some staff are not practiced in the fire evacuation procedure. This compromises their ability to respond confidently in the event of such an emergency, and this in turn compromises young people's safety

Young people benefit from a stable and experienced staff team. Recruitment practice is robust, ensuring that only suitable people are employed to work with young people. Longer-term staff are also re-checked every three years. No concerns were identified within the home's recruitment procedures. Good practice also ensures the vetting of visitors to safeguard young people.

Staff develop effective working relationships with partner agencies. Professionals and families report good communication with staff, and say they are regularly kept up to date with young people's progress. This collaborative approach ensures transparency, and demonstrates that people are working together to safeguard young people and promote their well-being. One parent said: 'I feel I could approach any member of staff about any concern, and also them to me. We have an honest relationship where communication is key.'

Leadership and management

good

The home is effectively and efficiently managed. The Registered Manager has been in post since 2003, and she holds a suitable management qualification. Staff spoken with during the inspection confirmed the manager is approachable and supportive. The Registered Manager is highly motivated, and as a result staff remain enthusiastic about their work with young people. She has the respect of staff, professionals and parents, and this inspires trust and confidence in the service.

There is a clear vision for the service and how this should be run. The home meets the aims and objectives set out in the statement of purpose. The children's guide introduces young people to the home, and is available in a variety of formats to meet the different communication needs of young people. This ensures that young people are provided with a clear and accessible overview of the home.

Change management is high on the agenda because of the planned transition to a new facility, due to open next year. The manager is leading the team and young people effectively through this period of change. She is achieving this by bringing young people and staff together through a series of events to help plan for the future. As a result, young people and staff are positive about the changes ahead, and are looking forward to the benefits this will bring.

External monitoring of the home takes place monthly to ensure the evaluation of the home's performance. This is effective, and takes account of the views of young people, parents and social workers. This quality monitoring process identified a non-critical medication error that occurred between inspections. The Registered Manager's response was robust, and appropriate action was taken. As a result, a new procedure has been introduced and staff are additionally vigilant. Procedures have been reviewed and arrangements for the administration of medication are sufficiently robust. The matter has been resolved to the satisfaction of all concerned. This demonstrates that the manager takes prompt action to address issues that arise.

Young people's records are mostly good. They are generally well written and informative. Not all records are dated correctly, and some information lacks context and clarity. The Registered Manager does have additional responsibilities that take her away from the home sometimes. Although she is readily available to staff and young people, demands on her time mean that she is not sufficiently reviewing all records to identify and address shortfalls. This is an area identified for improvement.

Staff receive mandatory training, together with additional specialist courses. As a result, staff are equipped with the necessary skills to meet the individual and often complex needs of young people. A member of staff said: 'Training is very valuable to help me to provide a better service, and helps promote and exceed my skills'.

This inspection identified that permanent staff receive regular supervision and a bi-annual review of their performance. However, appraisals do not take account of the views of young people. In addition, staff employed on a casual basis do not receive supervision or an appraisal. Consequently, the progress and performance of some staff is not formally reviewed, to aid their professional development. This is highlighted as an area for improvement.

No requirements or recommendations were set at the last inspection; no complaints about the service have been received, and the home has an excellent history of compliance.

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.