

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC035439
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	Joan Osgood
Date of last inspection	27/03/2014

Inspection date	05/12/2014
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

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

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	outstanding
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This service has a significant positive impact on the lives of young people. Young people are making excellent progress from their starting points, particularly in respect of their education, independence skills and relationships with their families.

One of the real strengths of the home is the warm, nurturing and homely environment created by the manager and staff. Young people develop exceptional relationships with staff. This enables young people to develop and sustain positive attachments to significant adults in their lives. Because of this, young people develop emotional resilience, and build effective support networks.

Young people benefit from a range of positive experiences and new opportunities. As a result, young people learn new skills, develop different interests and broaden their horizons and aspirations. Staff are ambitious for young people, and they fully support them to realise and maximise their potential.

Extremely positive comments were received from a range of partners who support young people in their placements. Staff consistently receive high praise for their efforts, and for the quality of care they provide to young people. One social worker said: 'I can't speak highly enough of them; the home gets a big 'thumbs up' from me.' A parent commented: 'It's a brilliant place, and the way they look after the

children is fantastic.'

Such is the reputation of this home, some young people specifically asked their social workers to move here. This is because brothers and sisters or friends report positively on their experience of living at the home. Young people tell their social workers: 'I am glad I am here, and want to stay'. This is testimony to the effectiveness of this home.

Robust procedures are in place, and staff demonstrate an excellent understanding of safe working practice. Staff have clear expectations about group living so that young people feel safe in the home. Behaviour management is effective and as a result, risky and challenging behaviours diminish. Practice is underpinned by very strong leadership and management. The Registered Manager continually strives to improve the service, in order to secure the best outcomes for young people.

The home has an excellent history of compliance. No requirements or recommendations were set at the last inspection, and no complaints about the home have been received between inspections. This inspection has not raised any major concerns. Two recommendations have been made to support future development; one links to staff training, and the second relates to improvements in aspects of the home's decoration.

Full report

Information about this children's home

A local authority operates this children's home. This service is registered for up to six young people of either gender, aged between 11 and 17 years of age. The home cares for young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
27/03/2014	Interim	good progress
06/01/2014	Full	outstanding
21/01/2013	Interim	satisfactory progress
25/09/2012	Full	outstanding

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

Recommendations

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

- ensure staff receive sufficient training in first aid, specifically that all staff attend a refresher course in a more timely manner (NMS 6.7)
- ensure the home is well maintained and decorated throughout. (NMS 10.3)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **outstanding**

Young people experience consistency and stability. The standard of care young people receive provides them with a secure base, from which they thrive. Young people develop and sustain positive, reciprocal relationships with staff. As a result, young people develop a strong sense of their own identity, build resilience, and benefit from an improved sense of self. A young person who has recently left the home explained: 'I wouldn't be where I am today if it wasn't for them. I was in a bad way when I arrived, but I learned I didn't have to be like that. Staff have helped me to be a better person.'

Young people clearly enjoy living in this home, and report that they feel a strong sense of belonging. Young people clearly demonstrate their views by saying things like: 'This home feels like a family.'; 'Staff believe in me.'; 'It is just 'home' to me.'; 'The best thing is, it is just ordinary.', and 'this home is amazing and brilliant.'

Family contact can be complex, and staff work flexibly to support and facilitate arrangements. Young people, parents and social workers all acknowledge this. Young people's relationships with their families have improved significantly since coming to live at the home. As a result, some young people are more closely connected with their families, there are increased opportunities for them to return home, and they are more likely to benefit from ongoing family support as they move on to independence.

All young people engage in education, and make progress as a result of individual programmes of support. For some young people maintaining their education is a challenge. However, based on their starting points and taking account of their individual needs, young people are making tremendous strides forward. Examples of young people's progress include; reintegration into mainstream school, returning to college after a period in employment, and engaging in additional tutoring to improve their grades. Young people are motivated to achieve, and regularly complete revision and homework. This means they are investing in themselves, and have clear aspirations for their future. For example, one young person wants to become a mid-wife. Improved educational outcomes significantly enhance young people's life chances.

The culture and ethos of the home is to encourage young people to take responsibility for their actions, and learn to make informed decisions in preparation for independence. Young people are developing independence skills through well thought out in-house training programmes. Young people report they are able to confidently travel on public transport, can now cook, take responsibility for their own laundry, and are learning to manage money and prioritise spending. One parent acknowledged, 'my daughter is far more independent now.' Consequently, young

people are being well prepared for their future.

Young people participate in activities in the home and in the wider community. They say they particularly like group activities, and all get involved in planning different events. Young people reported that they really enjoyed a recent Halloween event, they are all set for a trip to the Christmas markets, and excitement is building about a forthcoming football event between staff and young people. Young people have their say about what they want to do, they learn to compromise, and develop organisational skills as they make their preparations. Moreover, this approach engenders bonding between each other and with staff, through fun and creative opportunities.

Some young people also participate in regular activities such as football, cadets, ice-skating and swimming. As a result, young people develop new skills, and build confidence and self-esteem. A sports coach commented on the progress of one young person stating: 'There has been an improvement in attitude and behaviour, they have become a more focused team player, they encourage fellow members' effort within the team, and they have a really positive impact upon the club.' This clearly demonstrates young people make significant progress, impacting on their ability to make a positive contribution in the wider community.

Quality of care

outstanding

Young people receive an outstanding quality of care. A committed and highly enthusiastic staff team place the well-being of young people at the heart of all they do. All young people say they get on well with staff and consistently report that 'staff care' about them. Moreover, young people say, 'staff are fun to be around', 'they are always there', and 'they listen.' Consequently, young people develop excellent relationships with staff, in a home that closely replicates a nurturing family situation.

Relationships between staff and young people are based on mutual respect and trust. This enables young people to make progress in all aspects of their development. An IRO reports on the progress of a young person: 'It was so nice to see them back to their 'old self', cheeky and excitable – it has been a few reviews since I have seen them this happy and confident. I have no doubt that staff have played a major role in this, I am pleased education is back on track and contact appears to be going very well.'

Keyworkers play a significant role in young people's lives. One parent commented on the difference her son's keyworker has made. They said: 'He feels he can trust him, and this has helped him build his relationship with his family again.' Regular key worker sessions enable young people to reflect on areas of difficulty and progress. As a result, they learn to take responsibility, develop different coping strategies and move forward.

Staff are excellent advocates for young people, particularly in terms of education. Where young people face challenges they readily meet with teachers and other education professionals to determine the best way forward. A social worker said: 'I am really pleased with the consistent efforts made to try to resolve the education issues, and the fact that the staff, and the manager in particular, advocate for young people. I can only commend them for this. In fact, I can't praise them enough.' Education is a high priority for staff. Young people know staff 'fight their corner', and in turn understand what is expected of them. This approach motivates young people, and they subsequently make progress in line with their individual needs.

Consultation and on-going communication is integral to constructive relationships between staff and young people. Regular consultation meetings provide young people with opportunities to have their say. Young people report that such meetings have a focus on how they can improve their environment. This has led to young people becoming involved in a new recycling initiative. This demonstrates that young people are clearly involved in decision making to do with the day to day running of the home.

Healthy lifestyles are promoted. Medication is stored safely and records are maintained on the administration of medication. Young people are all registered with relevant health professionals, and they are well supported to attend routine and specialist appointments. As a result, young people enjoy good health and their physical and emotional health needs are well met.

Staff are aware of young people's assessed needs. Consistently well written placement plans outline how these will be met. This means young people receive highly individualised care that meets their specific needs. Young people confirm they are involved in their care planning, and attend their reviews. As a result, young people actively participate in discussions and decision making about their future.

Staff demonstrate a clear understanding of young people's identity and cultural needs. This includes enabling them to discuss sensitive issues such as sexuality, and provide young people with appropriate levels of support and advice. Staff are adept at helping young people to feel good about themselves, accepting and valuing them for who they are. This reinforces a positive sense of identity in individual young people, and promotes acceptance within the wider group.

Staff work hard to maintain a homely environment for young people. It is clean and well presented. The home is in need of refurbishment, and a clear plan is in place for this to commence early in the New Year. This will significantly enhance the physical environment, and is being eagerly anticipated by staff and young people alike.

There are lots of photographs on display in the home reflecting young people's positive experiences. Young people are also involved in compiling their own photo albums. This means that young people have a record that reflects their progress, development and achievements, over the course of their time in the home.

Keeping children and young people safe outstanding

Young people say they feel safe and are safe living in this home. They confirm they can talk to adults about their worries. One young person said: 'When I am upset there is always someone to talk to.' Appropriate information about the complaints procedure is available to young people who understand how to make a complaint if they wish to do so. Young people rarely complain, and there have been no complaints between inspections. There is clear access to information about children's rights, and one young person said: 'I know all about it, but have never needed it.' Access to this information ensures young people's safety and welfare is promoted.

Information provided to young people clearly demonstrates that there is a zero tolerance approach to bullying. Young people understand that bullying can take different forms. There are rarely any incidents, but when issues do arise staff respond swiftly and effectively. Young people are reassured by this. They say they are confident to raise concerns with staff, knowing they will be addressed. This helps to keep young people safe.

Arrangements in place to protect young people are robust. Staff are diligent and demonstrate a full understanding of their role and responsibility to safeguard young people. Professionals and parents report high levels of communication between themselves and staff at the home. This collaborative approach means there is a confidence in the care provided to young people, and that staff are working well to ensure their safety. A parent said: 'I have no concerns, it is excellent there. They always keep me up to date.'

Behaviour management is excellent. Because young people and staff enjoy positive and respectful relationships with each other, discussion and negotiation are highly effective in addressing incidents of challenging behaviour. This is supported by good routines and clear boundaries. Consequently, there has been a reduction in challenging behaviour displayed by young people. Furthermore, only one sanction has been necessary between inspections, and there have been no incidents of physical intervention. Young people clearly learn to take responsibility for their actions, and as a result make better choices and decisions in respect of their behaviour and lifestyle.

Young people are at different stages of their journey. Individual risk assessments promote young people's safety and well-being. All young people are encouraged to take appropriate risks in line with their age and development. This helps to build their confidence and resilience. Through education and effective key working, young people are encouraged to be more responsible. This has been central to young people knowing how to keep themselves safe. As a result, risky behaviours have reduced. A young person said: 'I used to go out partying all the time, and drinking, but not now. I have learned and grown up.'

Young people do not go missing often. Indeed half of the young people have not been missing since coming to live at the home. Systems for dealing with young people who do go missing are well established. Risk assessments take account of young people's potential to go missing. Any incidents are reviewed, and strategy meetings have taken place when necessary to review risk levels and management plans. Young people have responded well to being involved in these discussions. Employing a different approach has led to a clear reduction in instances where young people go missing from home. This demonstrates effective working practices are in place to safeguard young people.

Health and safety checks are regularly undertaken ensuring young people and staff live and work in a safe environment. Young people participate in regular fire drills and can safely exit the home in the event of such an emergency.

Leadership and management

outstanding

The manager has worked at the home for twenty years. Following promotion she was registered with Ofsted in January 2011, and holds an appropriate management qualification. The Registered Manager brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to the role. She is well respected by professionals, staff, and young people who all hold her in very high regard. All confirm the manager is approachable, supportive, and an excellent advocate for young people. Highly effective leadership means that the organisation and management of the home is outstanding.

Young people benefit greatly from a very consistent and stable staff team. Staff morale is high; they are well motivated and maintain their enthusiasm. A dedicated and committed team effectively support young people, and help them to achieve their potential.

Staff supervision and appraisal takes place regularly. Staff report these processes provide an opportunity to reflect on their practice, consider their own developmental needs, and ensure oversight of all of their case records. As a result, staff continue to fully support young people, and ensure the highest standards of care are maintained.

Staff access a range of training courses, and they confirm they are supported to maintain high levels of professional development. This means that staff are equipped with the necessary skills to appropriately meet the needs of young people in their care. This inspection identified that not all staff have attended a First Aid refresher course, in a timely manner. However, this shortfall has not impacted negatively on the welfare of young people, and the manager took prompt action during the inspection to address this matter.

Records in the home are clear and accurate. They reflect the progress that young people have made during placement, and demonstrate the positive impact that high

standards of care have had on outcomes.

Internal and external monitoring of the home takes place regularly and is suitably robust. Effective quality monitoring enables excellent standards to be maintained. Staff and managers constantly strive to improve, and a member of staff said: 'We do not rest on our laurels. In staff meetings we look at how we can improve, the manager always keeps us on our toes, and we are committed to maintaining high standards.'

The home's development plan reflects a clear understanding of what the home does well, and areas for further development. Targets for development are realistic, and well considered. This ensures there is ongoing improvement and progress.

The aim of the home is very clear; 'to strive to empower young people and contribute to the process of developing young people into adults who are responsible and capable of contributing to wider society.' The ethos and culture established in the home is nurturing, and young people flourish in this environment. As a result, the home is clearly operating in accordance with its Statement of Purpose.

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.