

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	14/07/2015
Unique reference number	SC035439
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	Mr Paul McIntyre
Registered manager	Mrs Joan Osgood
Inspector	Ms Jackie Line

Inspection date	24/04/2015
Previous inspection judgement	N/A – Monitoring visit
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Inadequate
There are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded. Young people's care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.	
how well children and young people are helped and protected	Inadequate
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Inadequate

SC035439

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is inadequate because:

- A young person is subject to harassment by another resident. A lack of effective action by staff means that her privacy is not protected, particularly at night, and her well-being is not safeguarded.
- Risks relating to some young people leaving the home and returning under the influence of drugs are not clearly identified or robustly responded to by staff.
- Young people are at an increasing risk of significant harm because of their drug taking behaviour. Leaders and managers have not escalated concerns sufficiently in light of this.
- Other serious safeguarding concerns have not been acted upon promptly, leaving young people vulnerable and at risk of harm. For example, there is no recorded evidence of actions taken to protect young people when it became known they were arranging to meet persons unknown within a vehicle.
- The experiences and progress of young people have been hampered by high levels of disruption in the home.
- The home is operating outside of its Statement of Purpose with respect to emergency and planned admissions. An absence of procedures, a failure to review risks, and a failure to take account of already challenging circumstances in the home, means that young people are not adequately protected and their needs are not prioritised.
- Poor care planning has resulted in the Registered Manager admitting a young person to the home without a clear understanding of their history, needs, and presenting behaviours. Consequently, at the point of admission it was not clear whether his needs could be met safely, alongside other young people already living in the home.
- One young person is not in full-time education because of exclusion. Staff have not challenged the alternative provision in place which is inadequate. Furthermore, they have not implemented structure, routine and support to help him overcome his difficulties. This is impacting on the young person's

outcomes and future life chances.

- This inspection identified shortfalls in staff training. For example, not all staff have received bullying training, most staff have not received drug awareness training since 2003, if at all, and only three staff have completed e-safety training. This means that staff are not equipped with up to date knowledge and skills to safely manage and meet the needs of young people.
- Monitoring systems in place are not sufficiently robust to identify shortfalls highlighted in this inspection. They do not inform the home's development plan and as such, the strengths and vulnerabilities of the home's function are not clearly understood and addressed.

The children's home strengths

- A stable staff team remain highly committed amidst challenges presented by young people. They demonstrate flexibility and resilience, helping to provide a continuity of care to young people.
- Staff benefit from regular supervision which they describe as helpful; and say they feel supported in their role.
- Young people have developed positive relationships with staff over time. Key worker relationships are particularly helpful, and are reported to be central in helping some young people make measureable progress.
- Young people can identify trusted adults to talk to about their concerns; they are aware of the complaints procedure and have used this to good effect to voice their disquiet about the disruptive behaviours of others.
- Some young people have been supported to maintain school placements and have sat their GCSEs despite presenting challenging behaviours at home.
- Staff encourage young people to engage in constructive activities in the community. As a result, some young people access a range of sporting and recreational activities that they enjoy.

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
5: Engaging with the wider system to ensure children's needs are met In order to meet the engaging with the wider system standard, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff - (b) seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child's needs, specifically in relation to helping young people return to full-time education.	30/09/2015
5: Engaging with the wider system to ensure children's needs are met In order to meet the engaging with the wider system standard, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff - c) if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans, specifically in relation to escalating concerns where there are significant risks to young people's safety and well-being.	20/08/2015
8: The education standard In order to meet the education standard the registered person must: (2)(a)(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.	30/09/2015
11: The positive relationships standard In order to meet the positive relationships standard the registered person must ensure that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on - (a) mutual respect and trust; (b) an understanding of acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the	20/08/2015

registered person to ensure - (a) that staff- (vii) help each child to develop the understanding and skills to recognise or withdraw from a damaging, exploitative or harmful relationship.	
12: The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standard the registered person must ensure - (2)(a) that staff - (i) assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to a child; (iv) manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other; (vi) take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; (b) that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm.*	20/08/2015
13: The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard the registered person must enable, inspire and lead a culture in relation to the children's home that – (1)(b) promotes their welfare (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to - (a) lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose; (c) ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child.*	20/08/2015
14: The care planning standard In order to meet the care planning standard, the registered person must ensure that children - (1)(a) receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and (b) have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure - (b) that arrangements are in place to - (i) ensure the effective induction of each child into the home; (ii) manage and review the placement of each child in the home.*	20/08/2015

16: Statement of purpose Ensure the registered person compiles in relation to the children's home a statement ("the statement of purpose") which covers matters listed in Schedule 1, specifically any criteria used for the admission of children to the home, including any policies and procedures to emergency admission (Regulation 16(1)).	20/08/2015
21: Privacy and access Ensure the registered person appropriately protects the privacy of children, particularly in respect of their own bedrooms (Regulation 21(a)).	20/08/2015
45: Review of quality of care ensure the registered person completes a quality of care review and establishes and maintains a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating: (a) the quality of care provided for children; (b) the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and (c) any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children (Regulation 45(2)(a)(b)(c)).	30/09/2015

*These requirements are subject to statutory requirement notice.

Recommendations

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

- ensure that just as in a family home, children should be able to access all shared areas of their home unless there are specific reasons why they would not meet a child's needs. Limits on privacy and access may only be put in place to safeguard each child in the home (regulation 21(c)(i)). Any decisions to limit a child's access to any area of the home and any modifications to the environment of the home, must only be made where this is intended to safeguard the child's welfare. All decisions should be informed by a rigorous assessment of that individual child's needs, be properly recorded and be kept under regular review (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 15 paragraphs 3.10)
- the registered person must appoint the independent person and is ultimately responsible for making sure that appointment does not give rise to a conflict of interest that would, or appear to, compromise the ability of that person to reach a rigorous and impartial judgement of the quality of that home's care (The Guide page 65, para. 15.6).

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
17/03/2015	CH - Interim	sustained effectiveness
05/12/2014	CH - Full	Outstanding
27/03/2014	CH - Interim	Good Progress
06/01/2014	CH - Full	Outstanding

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	inadequate
The progress and experiences for young people are variable, and for some they are poor. For example, some young people have been introduced to drug taking behaviour since arriving at the home, for others such risk taking behaviour has increased rather than decreased between inspections. There is an increased risk of criminality, because their behaviour has come to the attention of the police and the youth offending team. Staff recognise that one young person has a pattern of developing exploitative and harmful relationships with other residents, and careful consideration needs to be given to their support needs to help them safely manage future relationships. Without this, they and any other future child placed is at risk of harm. Finally, because their behaviour cannot be managed safely two young people have experienced unplanned endings to their placement. Consequently, outcomes for some young people are a significant concern. Other young people have made measureable progress, and staff and social workers report they have matured and developed in confidence. One social worker commented that the manner in which a young person is coping with current difficulties in the home is 'testimony to the progress he has made.' Another young person is presenting as less angry, and as a result there are fewer aggressive outbursts. One young person has moved on from the home to independence, having completed her studies at college. Levels of disruption in the home are currently high. Two young people regularly create disturbances that continue until the early hours of the morning. This includes causing damage, setting off fire alarms, playing loud music, running around, and smoking in the home. This behaviour is impacting on their health, well-being, progress and experience, and that of others. Young people not involved in the disturbances have complained to the manager about how unhappy they are at the level of disruption. Records also reflect that young people are tired in school, and events in the home are affecting their concentration and learning. Therefore, the overall experience and progress of young people is being hampered by high levels of disruption. Education outcomes for young people are mixed. Young people have been supported to maintain their school placement, and they have sat most of their GCSE's despite presenting very challenging behaviour at home. Staff facilitated additional tutoring to ensure they were well prepared for their exams. One young person is currently excluded from school and is in receipt of four hours home tuition per week. This does not represent adequate alternative provision. When he is not in education he does not engage in purposeful activity, and routines and	

structures at home do not support this. Furthermore, staff have not effectively engaged the virtual school to challenge the lack of provision. Therefore, insufficient action is being taken to address concerns and help this young person overcome his difficulties. Consequently, staff do not fully promote the importance of learning and education to all young people, and this will impact on their future life chances.

All young people are registered with relevant health professionals, and are supported to attend routine and specialist appointments. Where appointments are outstanding, staff are in the process of chasing these up. As a result, their health and well-being is promoted. Staff have made links with a specialist service so that young people can access support to try and help them address their drug misuse. To date, levels of engagement have been sporadic, and drug use continues to represent a significant risk to two young people's health and safety.

Young people are cared for by a stable staff team who remain highly committed amidst challenges presented by young people. They demonstrate flexibility and resilience, helping to provide a continuity of care. Young people have developed positive relationships over time. Key worker relationships are particularly helpful and are reported to be central in helping some young people make the measureable progress they have.

Young people are provided with a range of social and recreational experiences. Examples include going to the gym, skydiving, trips to the beach, shopping, and cinema. Two young people play football on a regular basis for local teams. Young people are encouraged to maintain positive friendships within the community. They enjoy spending time with their friends, and have sleep overs from time to time. This means that most young people have different opportunities to socialise, and develop confidence.

Staff mostly work well with birth families, and arrangements are provided for in line with their individual plans. One young person is benefitting from an improved relationship with his birth mum, and enjoying extended contact with her. As a result he says: 'I haven't felt this good about myself for ages.' Another young person is being supported to get to know a family member he has not seen for some time. This demonstrates that young people are supported to keep in contact with people who are important to them. Some birth families are working against the advice of staff; this to the detriment of young people and placing them at risk of harm. Where this is the case further work needs to be undertaken to review arrangements to ensure they are safe.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	inadequate
Young people are not safe in this home. Some young people are engaging in drug taking behaviour; episodes are increasing in frequency and severity and as such they are at risk of significant harm. For example, on three occasions young people accessed the main roof when under the influence of illegal substances, and between 1 and 15 July 2015 there were four occasions when two young people required hospital treatment because of the impact taking drugs had on their health. Staff have failed to identify a concerning pattern of behaviour whereby some young people leave the home, sometimes for short periods, and return under the influence of drugs. Risk assessments regarding this are poor, and no clear plan is in place to provide guidance for staff. Consequently, there is little evidence that staff follow young people when they leave the home, or look around the local area in an attempt to interrupt their behaviour and minimise risk. Poor risk management practice has failed to keep young people safe, and this has exposed them to risk of harm. Staff and managers have not taken effective action to respond to potentially serious concerns about young people. For example, there is no record of what action was taken when a member of staff overheard young people arranging to meet someone in a car, or that this was followed up by the manager. This does not represent a robust response to a safeguarding concern, where young people would be meeting an unknown person within a vehicle. Young people are exposed to harassment from other residents. Staff have taken insufficient action to protect one young person, particularly at night. As a result, her privacy has not been respected, and this has impacted on her sense of well-being. Furthermore, young people new to the home have been subject to bullying and intimidation. For example, there are reports of name calling and young people being threatened with violence. As a result, the home does not provide a safe and consistently welcoming environment where young people are adequately protected. Staff lock some communal areas at night as a way of managing behaviour and minimising risks. There is no evidence that this practice is reviewed and evaluated. This particular approach does not enable young people to develop skills to help them modify and improve their behaviour. Furthermore, it gives the home an institutional feel. Staff do implement a system of praise and reward, as well as sanctions and consequences. This is helping some young people to learn that their behaviour impacts on themselves and others, and enables them to develop different coping strategies.	

Young people can identify trusted adults they can talk to about their concerns; they are aware of the complaints procedure and have used this to good effect to voice their disquiet about the disruptive behaviour of others.

Health and safety checks are carried out routinely. Action has now been taken to prevent young people accessing the main roof. Young people are supported to understand what to do in the event of a fire in the home and they participate in regular fire drills with staff. Personal emergency evacuation plans have been introduced to meet the specific needs of individual young people where required. The home environment has benefitted from refurbishment, and a programme of works is now complete. Recent damage to the home has been repaired quickly. Consequently, the physical environment is safe.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	inadequate
The Registered Manager is experienced and suitably qualified holding a Registered Manager's Award. She has been registered with Ofsted since January 2011. Young people are at risk from poor placement planning. The inspector found no procedures relating to emergency admissions, and young people have been admitted to the home without a sufficient review of risk. Despite clear evidence of the home being in a period of crisis with some young people presenting chaotic, unpredictable, unsafe and disruptive behaviour, four young people were admitted to the home on an emergency basis during this time. Introductions for a planned admission are also underway. Decisions to place young people in these circumstances means that their needs are not prioritised, and they are exposed to a risk of harm. One young person was admitted amidst a scene of disruption and challenging behaviour, and as a result did not have a positive experience of being welcomed to the home. Care planning meetings have not taken place for another young person, despite their being specific concerns for his welfare at the point of placement. Decision making in relation to admissions is poor and this does not adequately protect young people's safety and well-being. The Statement of Purpose contains the following information: 'Referrals for admission are discussed with the Registered Manager. All referrals follow a social worker's assessment. Emergency admissions may occur if the home has a vacancy. In all cases the planning and assessment process will incorporate the assessment of risk and the impact of making a placement on the individual child and the home as a whole. The residential service aims to be inclusive. However, where there is an unacceptable risk and this cannot be managed through the assessment and	

care planning process, or would mean the needs of the other residents could not be met, a placement will not be offered.' Given the shortfalls identified in this inspection in relation to admissions practice, the home is not acting in accordance with its Statement of Purpose. This means the registered person is not promoting and protecting the welfare of young people.

Monitoring systems in place are not sufficiently robust to identify shortfalls, and they provide no evaluation as to the impact of the quality of care provided. Furthermore, they do not take account of young people's views about their experiences of living in the home. Quality assurance monitoring does not inform the home's development plan and as such, the strengths and vulnerabilities of the home's function are not clearly understood and addressed. As a result, previously high standards of care have not been maintained.

The authority is currently reviewing its arrangements to ensure those who carry out external monitoring functions are suitably independent of the home in accordance with new regulations. It is recommended that this review is concluded in a timely manner so that the authority can be confident it meets regulatory requirements in respect of independent visits to the home.

Staff say that managers are accessible and supportive, and that they receive supervision regularly. Records demonstrate that all staff benefit from an annual appraisal of their performance. This inspection identified that specific training needs have not been met. For example, only three staff have completed training on e-safety, not all staff have completed bullying training, and most staff have not received drug awareness training since 2003, if at all. This means that staff are not equipped with up to date knowledge and skills to meet the needs of individual young people and keep them safe.

Staff and managers have engaged partner agencies, and strategy meetings have been held in respect of concerning behaviours from two young people. It is Ofsted's opinion that the placing authority has been remiss in its responsibilities, and delays in care planning have compounded an already difficult situation in the home. In light of this, it is also Ofsted's view that the Registered Manager has not sufficiently escalated her concerns about poor practice within the authority, particularly given the high levels of risk and serious safeguarding concerns in the home. This does not demonstrate good enough leadership and management practice.

The Registered Manager has not taken sufficient steps to address all requirements and recommendations raised at a previous inspection. Improvements are noted in the reporting of significant events to Ofsted; new systems enable information to be shared with relevant people more readily. Furthermore, return interviews now take place when young people have been missing from home. However, monitoring systems have not sufficiently improved, young people who have been excluded from school do not access appropriate levels of alternative provision, and they are

not sufficiently supported and enabled to resume full-time education. This demonstrates a lack of commitment to improving practice and maintaining good enough standards of care.

Nine requirements and two recommendations have been raised as a result of this inspection. Three requirements are subject to compliance action. This is to ensure that failings are addressed to maintain young people's welfare and safety. Furthermore, a restriction of accommodation notice has been issued for a period of six weeks. This will allow time to reduce or eliminate the risk of harm to young people, allow for staff and young people to experience a period of stability, and for leaders and managers to take sufficient steps to review admissions procedures and safeguarding practice.

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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