

SC035439

Registered provider: Lancashire County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

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

Inspection dates: 19 to 20 July 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers requires improvement to be good

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 8 February 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- Young people enjoy positive relationships with staff based on trust and mutual respect.

- Young people are encouraged to share their views and opinions. Staff take time to understand the things that are important to them.
- Staff understand the importance of education and ensure that young people receive individualised support to achieve their targets.
- Staff monitor young people's health and ensure that any concerns are addressed.
- Staff have worked positively with some young people to assist them in learning about how to keep themselves safe.
- From their starting points, there is a demonstrable reduction in young people's risk-taking behaviour, such as being missing from home.
- Staff help young people to develop safe behaviours. Staff have skills in de-escalating potentially volatile situations, which result in a low number of crisis situations.
- There is a low staff turnover, which means young people receive their care from a stable and consistent staff team.
- Staff receive a good level of support and training, which helps ensure that they have the appropriate skills and knowledge to provide safe and effective care.

The children's home's areas for development:

- The standard of risk assessment is variable. Young people's risk assessments do not always contain up-to-date information and do not provide a clear picture of risk or how it should be managed.
- The risks associated with admitting new young people to the home are not always fully considered. On one occasion, a young person has been admitted with very little information known about his needs.
- Relationships between young people have not always been managed in a way that protects young people from bullying.
- Support provided to young people to prepare for independence is not always underpinned by clear care planning.
- Young people's placement plans do not always provide a clear picture of their day-to-day needs or routines.
- One-to-one work with young people such as key-worker sessions is inconsistent and is not always provided in line with their care plans.

- Systems to monitor quality and safety across the home are not consistently used in an effective manner. This results in some shortfalls not being identified and missed opportunities to identify areas for improvement.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
08/02/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
27/07/2016	Full	Good
09/02/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
28/10/2015	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 within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
12: The protection of children standard The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular the standard requires the registered person to 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 the child; ((iv) manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other. (Regulation 12(2)(a)) In particular, risk assessments, including those in relation to bullying, must be factual, up to date and contain sufficient information, including strategies to manage risks.	18/08/2017
13: The leadership and management standard The registered person must— (2)(f) understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home; (h) use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13(2)(f)(h))	18/08/2017
14: The care planning standard The care planning standard is that the registered person must ensure—	18/08/2017

(2) (a) that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home's statement of purpose.

(Regulation 14(2)(a))

Recommendations

- Children must be consulted regularly on their views about the home's care, to inform and support continued improvement in the quality of care provided. ('Guide to the children's home's regulations including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.11)

Specifically, ensure that young people have the opportunity to participate in young people's meetings on a regular basis.

- Staff must help each child to prepare for any moves from the home, whether they are returning home, or moving to another placement or adult care, or to live independently. This includes supporting the child to develop emotional and mental resilience to cope without the home's support and, where the child is moving to live independently, practical skills such as cooking, housework, budgeting and personal self-care. ('Guide to the children's home's regulations including the quality standards', page 17, paragraph 3.27)

Specifically, that written plans should outline young people's needs, and detail how young people are being prepared for independence.

- Ensure that medicines are administered and in line with a medically approved protocol. ('Guide to the children's home's regulations including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.15)

In particular, controlled medication should be recorded using a legally compliant bound book, in line with the home's medication policy.

- Children's home staff should take every step to make sure that individual children and young people are not subject to discrimination, marginalisation or bullying from their peers by virtue of their gender, religion, ethnicity, cultural and linguistic background, sexual identity, mental health, disability or for any other reason. ('Guide to the children's home's regulations including the quality standards', page 16, paragraph 3.12)

- Children should have access to a computer and the internet to support their education and learning, unless there are specific safeguarding reasons why this

would be inappropriate. In such cases, the home should consider whether and how it can support the child to access a computer and the internet safely. ('Guide to the children's home's regulations including the quality standards', page 29, paragraph 5.19)

- Ensure that all children's case records are kept up to date. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The young people who currently live in this home are all making very good progress in a number of areas. They speak extremely highly of the staff and the registered manager and express contentment with the care and support they receive. A young person commented, 'I like being here. There are lots of good things about living here, but I think the best thing is the staff.'

Young people's family members and their social workers feel that staff understand young people's needs and ensure that they are met. Two family members commented that, in their belief, the care and support provided to their loved ones had led to extremely positive progress in their behaviours. One commented, 'She has come on such a long way since she moved there. I am so grateful for what they have done for her.'

There have been variable outcomes for young people who have recently left the home. Two young people's departures from the home were not planned. Their placements ended abruptly due to serious incidents that occurred. Prior to their placements ending, both young people had been making good progress and were engaging well at the home.

Another two young people have left the home in planned moves towards independence. Positive work was carried out with both young people to assist them in preparing for their moves. Staff from the home were involved in identifying accommodation for the young people and helping them to prepare their homes to move into. Both young people continue to make good progress and maintain contact with staff at the home. This demonstrates that young people value their relationships with staff.

It is evident that positive work is carried out with young people to help them prepare for independence. However, this work is not always underpinned by clear care planning. Some written plans lack detail in terms of young people's individual strengths and needs, and the support they require to succeed in an independent setting. This could lead to shortfalls in the support they receive and mean that they are not adequately prepared in all aspects of their transition to adulthood. As such, a recommendation is made to review and improve planning in relation to young people's transitions to ensure that all young people receive a good level of support.

Young people describe very positive relationships with staff and refer to them in terms such as 'caring', 'kind' and 'lovely'. One young person said, 'They all really love me. And I love them.' Staff and young people interact in a naturally warm manner. It is apparent that staff take time to understand young people and the things that are important to them. This helps young people to feel secure and supports their emotional well-being.

Records provide some examples of very good quality direct work carried out with young people, for example one-to-one key-worker sessions. In some examples, it is evident that valuable discussion has taken place, during which young people have been encouraged to share their thoughts and wishes. However, staff do not consistently address all areas identified in young people's care plans through one-to-one work. For example, several young people's care plans state that regular key-worker sessions will take place in relation to specified areas but there is no evidence these have been carried out. This could lead to important opportunities to support young people in areas that matter to them being missed.

It is evident that staff support young people to share their views and opinions about things that are important to them. Young people are encouraged to be involved in the running of the home, for instance by being asked to make decisions about everyday matters such as menus and activities. However, records show that young people's meetings are not carried out on a consistent basis. It is recommended that young people's meetings are re-instated so that young people have increased opportunity to share their views and opinions.

Staff support young people to maintain important relationships. Arrangements are in place to support young people, in both a practical and emotional sense, to engage in contact with family members. Staff described how they had worked closely with one young person to repair some strained relationships with family members to good effect. Young people's positive friendships are encouraged and facilitated. Supporting young people to maintain valued relationships promotes their emotional well-being.

Young people are making good progress with their education. They consistently achieve good attendance and are attaining their agreed targets. One young person plans to go to university and confirmed that staff constantly encourage her to work towards this goal. Staff have worked closely with external professionals to help secure a college placement for another young person, which is in line with his individual needs. Staff communicate effectively with education professionals to ensure that each young person receives the appropriate support to meet their individual needs. One young person was recently at risk of losing his placement but, following proactive intervention from the registered manager, his placement was saved.

Staff have a good understanding of young people's health needs. Young people's care plans describe their routine healthcare and detail any specific health conditions. Health concerns are identified and addressed. For example, it was identified that one young person, who is underweight, has a very low appetite. This has been raised with health-care professionals, who have worked with staff to support the young person in improving their diet and gaining weight. A family member expressed the view that they were very pleased with this outcome.

Young people's medication is carefully managed. All staff who administer young people's

medicines receive training, which is periodically updated. Arrangements for the safe storage and recording of medicines are generally appropriate. However, a suitable controlled drugs register is not in place. A recommendation was made with regard to this issue at the home's previous inspection and is repeated in this report. It is important that controlled drugs are managed in accordance with legal requirements and the organisation's own policy.

Young people are provided with the opportunity to take part in a wide range of activities. Their personal interests are supported and their talents are recognised and encouraged. However, information in some young people's care plans about their hobbies and valued activities could be expanded on, to help ensure that they have regular opportunity to enjoy and achieve. One young person described a number of hobbies they regularly take part in, including musical theatre and fire cadets. She said, 'I love keeping busy. I have a very full timetable!' It was noted during the inspection that young people do not currently have access to their own computer. The registered manager advised that young people were enabled to use office computers should they need to. However, a computer should be made available solely for the use of young people. A recommendation has been made in relation to this matter.

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

Young people say that they feel safe at the home and confirm that they are able to talk with staff about any worries they have. There has been a notable reduction in all young people's risky behaviours, such as being missing from home. This demonstrates that the support they receive helps to keep them safe.

There are examples of very positive work carried out with young people, which has assisted them to learn about how to keep themselves safer. Staff at the home arranged for an external organisation to carry out some educational work around safe relationships with one young person, which she engaged in very positively. She commented that she was now so knowledgeable about this area that she taught her friends at school about it.

Positive work has also been carried out with a young person who was identified at the point of his admission as being at high risk of involvement with anti-social and offending behaviour. Staff from the home have supported the young person in partnership with police officers from the Early Intervention Team, with very positive results. An officer from the team spoke very highly of the support provided by staff and confirmed that the young person's behaviour had greatly improved.

There are a range of risk assessments in place for each young person, which are designed to identify risks to their safety and well-being. However, the quality of risk assessments is variable. A number of young people's risk assessments do not fully reflect their individual circumstances. In some cases, there has been failure to update young people's risk assessments, when new information, which would change the level of risk, is known. As a result, risk management plans are not consistently effective, and staff do not have all the necessary information to help them maintain young people's safety and

well-being. A requirement has been made in relation to this matter.

There have been some relationship difficulties between young people, which has led to one young person previously experiencing some bullying. This situation is now resolved as a result of changes in the group of young people who live at the home. However, records show there were significant shortfalls in the way the situation was managed. Incidents of bullying were not always logged, which meant they could not be properly monitored. Some direct work was carried out with young people but this was inconsistent. Bullying risk assessments were not reflective of the situation and, as a result, did not include strategies to enable staff to manage the situation in an effective and consistent way. This led to the young person not being adequately protected.

Young people do not go missing from this home on a frequent basis. This is despite some young people having a history of this behaviour prior to living at the home. When such incidents do occur, staff respond effectively by attempting to locate them and secure their safe return. Records demonstrate that staff notify the appropriate agencies about any missing young people in a timely manner. This helps to ensure that a well-co-ordinated plan is in place to safeguard the young person.

Staff have a clear understanding of safeguarding procedures and are able to describe confidently the correct actions to take in the event that a safeguarding concern is identified. Staff are fully aware of the roles of external agencies and reporting procedures. This helps to ensure that any safeguarding concerns are quickly investigated by the relevant professionals.

Staff demonstrate a good understanding of young people's emotional responses and work positively with young people to help them develop safe and appropriate behaviour. There is a system of positive reward in place which all young people respond well to. One young person was highly complimentary about this system. He said, 'I really like it. It makes you want to do good.'

Incidents rarely reach crisis point or require staff to intervene physically. This demonstrates the skills of staff to de-escalate potentially volatile situations. On occasions where such incidents do occur, detailed written reports are maintained and carefully monitored by the registered manager. However, one record viewed confirmed that staff involved in a physical intervention had not received a recorded de-brief. This is important as it provides staff with the opportunity to raise any concerns about the incident.

Staff are carefully recruited. Managers follow robust safer recruitment procedures, which include a number of background checks of previous employers. This reduces the risk of young people being in contact with individuals of unsuitable character.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The home is led by a suitably qualified and experienced registered manager. The registered manager demonstrates a child-focused approach and has positive relationships with young people, parents and external professionals. One professional described the registered manager as, 'extremely knowledgeable and professional' and a parent commented that she was always very approachable.

The registered manager is able to maintain positive relationships with external professionals while also having the ability to challenge external services in circumstances when young people's needs are not being met. A recent example of this was in relation to a young person's education placement. The registered manager pursued the matter vigorously until a positive outcome was achieved.

There have been a high number of young people leaving and being admitted to the home since the last inspection. This is due to a number of young people moving on to semi-independent placements in line with their care plans, although there have been two unplanned discharges. It is usual practice to complete an impact risk assessment prior to admitting any new young person to the home. The purpose of this is to assess any risks to the young person and those already living in the home. However, it was confirmed during the inspection that one young person had been admitted to the home without an impact risk assessment being carried out. It was ascertained that there was little information known about the young person and therefore it was not possible to assess the level of risk to those already living in the home. Admitting young people without adequate assessment and planning does not support the stability of the home and could potentially compromise young people's safety and well-being. A requirement has been made in relation to this matter.

Each young person has a placement plan in place, providing an overview of their day-to-day needs. However, the quality of the plans is variable. Some information within them was found to be out of date and, in some examples, they lack sufficient detail to assist staff in providing consistent care and support. A recommendation was made to improve the consistency and quality of recording during the last inspection and is repeated within this report.

The home has a low turnover of staff. This results in consistency for young people, as they receive their care from staff they are familiar with. Staff are well motivated and express pride in the home and the service young people receive. They report a good level of ongoing support and guidance and describe the management team as supportive and approachable. Staff describe a positive culture and confirm that they feel able to express their views and opinions. Staff meetings and individual supervision sessions take place regularly.

Staff benefit from a comprehensive training programme. This begins with a detailed induction and includes a variety of areas designed to enhance the knowledge and skills of staff. All staff are encouraged to complete nationally recognised qualifications in caring for young people. Currently, all the permanent team hold these qualifications. This helps to ensure that young people receive their care from staff who have the appropriate skills and knowledge.

There are systems in place to enable the registered manager to monitor quality and safety across the service. However, these are not consistently used in an effective way. Incidents are not always logged, which means that they cannot be properly monitored. For example, it was evident that a number of incidents of bullying had taken place over a specific period of time but there was no overview of these.

A number of monitoring systems, such as those in place for incidents of restraint, are not used effectively. This means that the opportunity to identify themes or trends is lost. Other aspects of internal monitoring were found to be carried out inconsistently. For

example, sanctions issued by staff are not always signed off by a manager to demonstrate that they have been reviewed.

Failures to identify shortfalls in areas such as risk assessment and care planning have been identified. This does not support safe practice and could result in young people not receiving the care and support they require.

A number of requirements have been made in this report. In addition, several recommendations have been repeated from the last inspection of the home. This further demonstrates that improvements to internal monitoring systems are required, so that shortfalls and areas for improvement can be quickly identified and addressed. A requirement is made in relation to this matter.

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. Whenever 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 and 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: SC035439

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Lancashire County Council, P O Box 78, Preston PR1 8XJ

Responsible individual: Paul McIntyre

Registered manager: Joan Osgood

Inspector

Marie Cordingley, social care inspector

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