

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	28/10/2015
Unique reference number	SC035439
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Lancashire County Council
Responsible individual	Paul McIntyre
Registered manager	Joan Osgood
Inspector	Jackie Line

Inspection date	14/07/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Inadequate
Enforcement action since last inspection	The home was subject to four compliance notices, and a restriction of accommodation notice following the last inspection. Two further inspection visits have been carried out to monitor compliance and all notices are deemed to have been met. The restriction of accommodation was lifted following a monitoring visit on 21 September 2015.
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
how well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement

SC035439

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Commitment from the Registered Manager sets the culture for the home which is safe, supportive, and resilient.
- Staff genuinely care, and they work hard to develop positive relationships with young people based on mutual respect and trust. This enables young people to make progress in different aspects of their lives including their emotional development and behaviour.
- Staff are strong advocates for young people. They ensure they are listened to and that their wishes and feelings are taken into account in care planning and decision making.
- Young people are well supported to maintain contact with those who are important to them. In some cases young people are developing relationships with their parents, who they have not had contact with for some time. This is being managed sensitively and in consultation with the placing authority.
- Young people say they feel safe and are safe living in this home. Improvement between inspections means that risks are now clearly identified and managed.
- Instances of young people being involved in risky behaviour such as criminality, missing, drug use, and self-harm are low or reducing.
- A restorative approach to behaviour management means young people are supported to understand the impact of negative behaviour on themselves and others, and they are afforded the opportunity to learn from their mistakes.
- A review of admissions procedures means clear processes and impact risk assessments are in place to identify whether young people's needs can be met safely.
- Improved internal monitoring systems are now more robust. Shortfalls are identified and addressed meaning good standards of care are once again being afforded to young people.
- Young people benefit from a stable and committed staff team who are well

supported through regular supervision and training. Investment in training between inspections means staff have updated their skills and knowledge to meet the needs of individual young people.

To continue to improve the home needs to:

- Make suitable arrangements to ensure external monitoring visits are carried out by a suitably independent person.
- Ensure the Registered Manager has a sufficient understanding of the education needs of young people to fully support them during periods of exclusion or non-attendance at school.
- Liaise effectively with education professionals to ensure young people receive appropriate full-time education provision, and escalate concerns where this is not resolved in a timely fashion.
- Provide better support to young people where necessary to help them maintain their bedrooms, and outline in individual placement plans how they are going to meet this identified need.

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.	30/11/2015
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.	30/11/2015
44: Independent person: visits and reports Ensure the registered person appoints an independent person who visits the home at least once a month (Regulation 44(1)).	31/12/2015

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that staff meet children's basic day to day needs and physical necessities in the way that a good parent would, recognising that many children in residential care have experienced environments where these needs have not been consistently met – doing so is an important aspect of demonstrating that the staff care for the child, and value them as an individual. Specifically in relation to supporting young people, where necessary, in maintaining their bedrooms and outlining in placement plans how they are going to meet this identified need (The guide to the quality standards, page 15, paragraph 3.7).

- Ensure the registered person themselves has a high level of understanding of the needs of the children in their care, specifically in relation to education and matters including but not limited to attainment, admissions, attendance, exclusion, and specialist provision (The guide to the quality standards, page 52, paragraph 10.5).

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
14/07/2015	Full	Inadequate
17/03/2015	Interim	sustained effectiveness
05/12/2014	Full	Outstanding
27/03/2014	Interim	Good Progress

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
Most young people are positive about their home and the care they receive. For example, young people say: 'It is ace living here', 'I am 9.5 out of ten in terms of being happy here', and 'all the staff are brilliant'. Such comments reflect the largely positive experiences young people have. A key strength is the quality of relationships between staff and young people. They clearly benefit from a dedicated, consistent, and experienced staff team who establish open and honest relationships with them. This fosters mutual respect and trust, and enables young people to develop reciprocal relationships with others. One professional reports on her observations when visiting the home: 'There is mutual respect and understanding of expectations, and it was a pleasure to witness a consistent team'. An independent reviewing officer says: 'I am happy when I hear children are placed here because I know they care for young people well'. Young people experience stable placements and make good progress in different aspects of their development including, confidence, social skills, behaviour, and resilience. One social worker comments: 'I can honestly say I think the home is fantastic, she is going from strength to strength with their support. She is really maturing now, and having known her for a long time this is really lovely to see'. Consultation and communication levels are high. Young people's views are heard, and staff advocate on their behalf where necessary. For example, one young person wants to live closer to his home area, and being away from there is causing him distress and anxiety. Staff and managers are liaising with the placing authority to make his views known, and are calling for a review of his situation and care plan. This means staff listen, and respond sensitively and appropriately to young people in their care. All young people are registered with relevant health professionals, and are supported to attend routine and specialist appointments. They are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles, and enjoy home cooked meals. Arrangements for managing medication are safe and effective. Consequently, young people's health needs are well met. Staff facilitate and support contact arrangements to ensure young people remain in touch with those who are important to them. Some young people are in the early stages of reconnecting with parents, this is being nurtured carefully allowing for	

steady progression from the first meeting to overnight stays. Good liaison with placing authorities and birth families means safe and positive contact is promoted.

The quality of relationships means that sometimes difficult and sensitive subjects are tackled with ease. For example, young people are well informed about sexual health matters, and are provided with appropriate guidance and support. As a result, young people are able to make informed choices about their lifestyle and relationships as they get older and progress towards adulthood.

Young people recently admitted to the home are welcomed and their introductions are well planned. They are able to visit prior to moving in, enabling them to meet with staff, other young people, and ask questions about what the home is like. Consequently, young people are consulted about what they think, whether or not they are happy to move here, and are involved in important decisions about their lives.

Education outcomes are mixed. Some young people are making good educational progress. For example, one young person has successfully made the transition to college and has blossomed on establishing a new peer group there. Another young person's attendance has increased, he is focused on attending college next year and working hard towards this. For others, engagement in education is a struggle, and they experience exclusions because of their behaviour in school. Not all young people are in receipt of appropriate full-time provision. This does not fully promote their learning, and will impact on their future life chances if not resolved quickly.

One young person is not receiving the appropriate help and support to maintain their bedroom. Although it is an identified need, sufficient information is not included in her placement plan about how to address this. Her bedroom, in its current state does not reflect that her individual needs are being met with regards to this aspect of her care.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
At the time of the last inspection the home was experiencing high levels of disruption. Staff and young people report things are now more settled and calm. Young people themselves confirm that it is 'much better', and 'quieter at night'. This demonstrates that staff and young people are able to work through difficult times, staff are able to stick with young people through challenges, and this helps to build trust and resilience. Staff spend time getting to know young people and this helps to keep them safe.	

They are alert to potential risks and respond appropriately when concerns arise. Risk assessments have been reviewed and updated meaning that risks are now clearly identified, understood and managed. Improved safeguarding practice means managers and staff understand their roles and responsibilities. As a result, young people say they feel safe and are safe living in this home.

Young people do not go missing often, with just four incidents since the last inspection. Records indicate that staff take appropriate action to secure young people's safe return. They are then afforded the opportunity to meet with their social worker to fully explore the reasons for going missing. When this is delayed staff take action to address this ensuring the safety and welfare of young people is promoted.

Where young people engage in drug taking behaviour they are accessing specialist support to help reduce this. Instances of a young person taking class A drugs and placing themselves at risk of significant harm have now ceased. This means they are now safer, and their health is improving.

A restorative approach to behaviour management means young people are supported to understand the impact of negative behaviour on themselves and others. Furthermore, they are afforded the opportunity to learn from their mistakes. For example, when a young person ran off from a take-away shop without paying for his food the police were called by the owner, however he was spoken to, apologised and made to pay thereby avoiding prosecution.

Young people are continually learning to manage their behaviour with the support of staff. Positive behaviour is promoted through incentives and consequences. Incidents of silly or challenging behaviour are dealt with in a measured way, and as a result they are learning about give and take. One social worker says: 'They talk things through with her, give her trust, treat her as a growing young person and give her flexibility, she has responded well to this'. Incidents of physical intervention are rare, when they do occur they are low-level, well managed, recorded and evaluated. This ensures such practice is safe.

Staff support young people to take age appropriate risks necessary for their continual development. They are entrusted to travel independently, to spend time with their friends, and participate in activities in the community. Boundaries are in place, and staff keep in touch with young people when they are away from the home, to check on their welfare. As a result, young people are enabled to have appropriate freedoms without compromising their safety.

Health and safety checks are carried out routinely creating a safe physical environment. Fire procedures are clear, and equipment is tested and serviced regularly. Young people new to the home have participated in a fire evacuation drill, and therefore know what to do in the event of such an emergency.

Swift action was taken during the inspection to address a shortfall in the recruitment and selection of staff. The inspector identified on one personnel file that although two references had been sourced and verified, these did not include the most recent employer. This was rectified immediately; the reference provided was positive and placed on file. A checklist was then devised to ensure robust practice is maintained moving forward.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement
The Registered Manager is experienced and suitably qualified holding a Registered Managers Award. She registered with Ofsted in January 2011. Internal monitoring systems are robust, and this ensures effective management oversight of records. Areas for improvement are identified and addressed, and this supports the continuous development of the home. External monitoring visits are not yet carried out by a suitably independent person. This does not meet regulation and undermines the effectiveness of these monitoring arrangements. This was a recommendation at the last inspection and is now raised as a requirement. The Registered Manager does not demonstrate a good enough understanding of the education needs of young people in her care. She has not engaged the wider system consistently or effectively to address a lack of suitable education provision for three young people. Furthermore, arrangements are still not in place to engage young people in purposeful activity when they are not in school. They are allowed to go out during school hours when excluded, and this is unacceptable. Concerns regarding education were raised at the last full inspection in July 2015 and two requirements were made. These are repeated, with a further recommendation for the manager to access training to increase her understanding of the issues. Adherence to these will be carefully monitored to ensure the education needs of young people are promoted without further delay. This shortfall contributes to the judgement of requires improvement in leadership and management. Admissions procedures have been reviewed, and clear processes are now in place. Improved practice means that young people are only placed following an assessment of risk and impact, on the individual child and others. As a result, the home is operating in accordance with its statement of purpose. Staff confirm they are well supported and receive supervision regularly; they have an annual appraisal which supports their development. All staff have a training plan for the coming year highlighting their individual needs. The Registered	

Manager has invested in a range of courses which staff have completed or are in the process of doing so. These include, drug awareness, e-safety, understanding the needs of children looked after, risk assessments, bullying, and sexual behaviour in adolescents. Consequently, staff are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to meet the individual needs of young people.

Appropriate systems are in place to notify Ofsted and other relevant persons of significant events that occur. Information contained in these notifications demonstrates that appropriate action is taken to safeguard young people, and strategies are put in place to minimise the risk of reoccurrence.

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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