

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC035477
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	Jacqueline Laura Bumford
Date of last inspection	19/03/2014

Inspection date	02/07/2014
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

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

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	adequate
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This service provides good outcomes for young people in a home where they say they feel safe. Based on their starting points young people are making good progress, particularly in education and preparation for independence. However, the health needs of some young people are not fully promoted and this is an area for development.

Young people enjoy positive relationships with a stable and committed staff team. Placing authorities and families report positively about communication with the home and this collaborative working safeguards young people's welfare.

Young people respond well to positive reinforcement and this encourages appropriate behaviour and improved levels of participation. Some approaches to managing young people's behaviour are not agreed by placing authorities and as a result, do not take account of the individual needs of young people living in the home.

The home generally provides a pleasant environment for young people to live in. However, some areas in the home would benefit from redecoration.

The manager has addressed the one recommendation made at the last inspection.

Quality assurance monitoring takes place regularly but does not always identify shortfalls in the service. This limits the progress the home has made between inspections.

There are two requirements and six recommendations made as a result of this inspection.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This children's residential unit is operated by a local authority and provides care for up to six young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The unit takes emergency placements. Services have also been developed to support young people in need who are registered as refugees.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
19/03/2014	Interim	good progress
07/10/2013	Full	adequate
11/03/2013	Interim	satisfactory progress
13/12/2012	Full	adequate

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

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
12A (2001)	ensure that there is co-operation with the child's placing authority in agreeing and signing the plan for the child's placement prepared in accordance with the provisions in regulation 9 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 (Regulation 12A (1))	15/08/2014
30 (2001)	ensure that the registered person shall notify, without delay, the persons indicated, in respect of the events listed in Schedule 5 (Regulation 30(1)).	15/08/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure that children's safety and welfare is promoted in the home; in particular the frequency of checks on the home's fire alarm system increase in line with home's procedures and are recorded appropriately (NMS 4.1)
- ensure children have prompt access to doctors and other health professionals when the need arises and health records stored in the home are reviewed and updated accordingly (NMS 6.4)
- ensure the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated (NMS 10.3)
- ensure physical restrictions on normal movement within the home are not used unless this is necessary to safeguard children and promote their welfare and development. Such measures are only used where agreed with the responsible authority and, if appropriate, the parents. Such restrictions for one child do not impose similar restrictions on other children; in relation to the locking of internal doors to communal areas within the home (NMS 10.4)
- ensure there are clear and effective procedures for monitoring the activities of the home; in relation to the arrangements for visits by an independent person (NMS 21.1)
- ensure the registered manager takes action to address any issues of concern they identify or which is raised with them (NMS 21.9).

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Young people living in the home are making good progress. One young person said: 'Everything's improved for me since I have been here'. Prior to living at the home some young people have experienced significant disruption in their lives and worry they will have another change of placement. Their behaviour sometimes reflects this uncertainty. Staff make it clear they are committed to helping them and as a result young people begin to feel more secure and make progress.

Young people's attendance at school and participation in alternative education programmes is excellent. Young people are making good progress with their education and are developing skills that will increase their chances of obtaining employment in the future. One parent said: 'I am pleased with the fact my daughter attends school without fail, has done extremely well, worked hard and got lots of certificates'.

Young people living in the home are helped to prepare for independence. Young people work through a programme of skills and tasks, which has been developed to help equip them with the basic skills they will require. As a result young people have successfully made the transition to independent living.

Young people's behaviour and presentation improves as a result of living in the home. A youth offending worker said one young person 'has improved in his attitude and has seemed to come out of himself'. Young people have matured since living at the home and this has a positive impact on their lives. One social worker said: 'She has improved mental health and relationships have developed with family'.

Young people maintain contact with people that are important to them and significant in their lives. Young people exercise choice in terms of who they wish to see and arrangements are provided in line with their individual plans.

Quality of care **adequate**

Staff demonstrate a commitment to the young people and say that team morale is good. Young people generally enjoy good relationships with staff and they develop particularly positive relationships with their key workers. Young people said, 'I love my key worker' and 'My key worker is the best'. Consequently, young people develop and maintain trusting relationships with staff.

Staff seek the views of young people through house meetings and informal consultation. As a result, young people have some influence over the running of the

home. Most young people say they feel listened to and their wishes are acted upon. Young people know how to complain and have access to external advocates. There has only been one complaint made by a young person since the last inspection. This was investigated and concluded to the satisfaction of the young person involved.

Staff ensure that all young people are registered with appropriate health care services on admission to the home. Staff have had success in encouraging some young people to attend for appointments, when in the past they have been reluctant to do so. Health plans are in place for most young people. However, they are not regularly reviewed and updated. As a result, the health needs of some young people are not fully promoted.

Placement plans clearly outline the individual needs of young people. Young people routinely attend review meetings giving them input into progress and planning. There is a lack of evidence that placement plans are signed and dated by all parties. Consequently, it is not always clear what responsibilities and decisions are delegated to staff and where further consent needs to be obtained.

Staff employ incentives for young people to encourage participation. This is effective and has resulted in improved attendance in education. Young people benefit from structure and routine and enjoy a range of leisure activities.

The home has developed sound relationships with partner agencies. Professionals and families report good communication with staff at the home and say they are regularly kept up to date with young people's progress and achievements. This collaboration demonstrates that people are working together to safeguard and promote young people's well-being.

The home is a large domestic property. Young people have the opportunity to personalise their rooms and one young person said, 'we can put our own things in our room and make it our own'. Most communal rooms are homely and comfortable. However, not all areas of the property are well maintained. There is a proposed plan for refurbishment to be completed later in the year. However, at the time of inspection, some fabric and furnishings in parts of the house did not encourage young people to use all rooms in the home for leisure activities and relaxation.

Keeping children and young people safe adequate

Young people say they feel safe living in the home. Young people are aware of the dangers and vulnerabilities that they face. Regular key worker sessions enable young people to express themselves and reflect on areas of difficulty or progress. Young people access external services to help with some aspects of their behaviour where necessary. As a result, risky behaviours have reduced and young people's welfare is safeguarded.

Young people do not often go missing from the home and the number of missing episodes has reduced since the last inspection. One social worker said: 'Missing from home incidents have reduced and therefore risks associated with child sexual exploitation have decreased'. When young people do go missing, records demonstrate that staff take prompt action, to secure their safe return.

Staff have worked hard to address problems within the immediate area, which previously had a negative impact on young people living in the home. Systems are now in place to address issues promptly and effectively. Neighbours report 'significant improvements in the immediate area' following actions taken by the home. Consequently, young people benefit from living in a safer environment.

Staff ensure that all visitors to the home are checked and monitored. All staff are trained in safeguarding and fully understand their own role and that of other agencies in keeping young people safe.

Young people are positively praised and rewarded for appropriate behaviour by staff in the home. This is good practice because it builds upon young people's self-esteem and ensures that negative behaviour does not become the only focus of attention. However, staff lock communal rooms in the home in order to manage behaviour at particular times of the day. There is no recorded evidence indicating this has been agreed by placing authorities, or that this practice is evaluated and reviewed. This approach does not enable young people to develop skills and coping strategies to help them modify and improve their behaviour. Furthermore, the individual needs and progress of young people living in the home are not accounted for.

A range of health and safety checks are completed in the home. However, the frequency and recording of some checks are not in line with the home's procedures. This means that problems are not identified and responded to quickly and this places children at risk. Young people are supported to understand what to do in the event of a fire in the home and participate with staff in regular fire evacuation drills. This ensures young people know the action to take in the event of an emergency.

Leadership and management

adequate

The registered manager has been in post since 2001 and she is appropriately qualified. Staff confirm the manager is approachable, listens to their ideas and is supportive. The home has benefitted from the recent appointment of two experienced assistant managers. This ensures the home employs a sufficient number of staff to meet the needs of young people. They also provide additional support and guidance to the team and to the care of young people.

Significant events are not always reviewed by the manager and as a result, incidents have not been reported consistently to the appropriate authorities in line with regulation. This compromises the safety of young people.

The recommendation made at the last inspection has been met. Internal and external monitoring of the home takes place regularly. However, this process has failed to highlight shortfalls identified during this inspection for example, young people needing access to medical treatment. Where issues are raised these are not addressed quickly. As a result, monitoring is not robust to provide a sufficient review of the quality of care. This limits the progress that the home has been able to achieve since the last inspection.

Staff receive regular supervision and describe this as 'helpful', assisting them in their work with young people. Appraisals take place annually and include the views of young people. Staff have access to a range of training and this demonstrates a commitment to the professional development of staff working in the home.

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.