

## Children's homes inspection – Full

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|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Inspection date</b>             | <b>18 May 2016</b>                                                      |
| <b>Unique reference number</b>     | <b>SC035477</b>                                                         |
| <b>Type of inspection</b>          | <b>Full</b>                                                             |
| <b>Provision subtype</b>           | <b>Children's home</b>                                                  |
| <b>Registered provider</b>         | <b>Lancashire County Council</b>                                        |
| <b>Registered provider address</b> | <b>Lancashire County Council<br/>P O Box 78<br/>Preston<br/>PR1 8XJ</b> |
| <b>Responsible individual</b>      | <b>Paul McIntyre</b>                                                    |
| <b>Registered manager</b>          | <b>Jacqueline Bumford</b>                                               |
| <b>Inspector</b>                   | <b>Jackie Line</b>                                                      |

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| <b>Inspection date</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                | <b>7 March 2016</b>              |
| <b>Previous inspection judgement</b>                                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>Declined in effectiveness</b> |
| <b>Enforcement action since last inspection</b>                                                                                                                                                                       | <b>None</b>                      |
| <b>This inspection</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                  |
| <b>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</b>                                                                                                                       | <b>Inadequate</b>                |
| There are serious and widespread failures that mean young people are not protected, and their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded. Young people's care and experiences are poor, and they are not making progress. |                                  |
| <b>How well children and young people are helped and protected</b>                                                                                                                                                    | <b>Inadequate</b>                |
| <b>The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers</b>                                                                                                                                                           | <b>Inadequate</b>                |

**SC035477**

## **Summary of findings**

### **The children's home provision is inadequate because:**

- Young people and staff have, on occasion, been assaulted by residents and/or subjected to intimidation. This compromises their safety and welfare.
- Staff do not sufficiently identify, understand nor manage risk. This does not protect young people from harm or promote their welfare. For example, staff do not always follow the strategies outlined in risk assessments, and they do not review and update these documents promptly to take account of new information.
- Behaviour management is poor. Staff and managers do not implement clear boundaries to help young people understand the consequences of their behaviour on themselves and others. Consequently, young people are not learning to modify their behaviour.
- High levels of disruption during the day and at night hamper all young people's progress and damage their experience of living in the home.
- Two out of three young people have exceptionally low school attendance. Staff do not provide structure, routine or support to help them overcome their difficulties. Furthermore, personal education plans are not completed or reviewed in a timely way. Failure by staff to promote young people's education fully is impacting on their learning and future life chances.
- Poor pathway plans mean that young people are not receiving the right support to prepare for their transition to independence.
- The home environment is stark and lacks a homely feel. A failure by managers and staff to maintain a suitable physical environment does not benefit young people or make them feel valued.
- This inspection identified shortfalls in staff training. For example, most staff have not received counter-bullying or e-safety training, and the annual refresher course on the safe administration of medication is overdue. As a result, staff are not equipped with up-to-date knowledge and skills to manage and meet the needs of young people safely.
- An absence of team meetings and irregular supervision do not allow staff to reflect individually and collectively on their performance. Furthermore, this means that staff receive insufficient support to develop and improve their practice in caring for young people.
- Leaders and managers fail to engage the partner agencies effectively and

consistently. This does not protect young people or promote their welfare.

- The home operates outside of its statement of purpose. As a result, managers and staff do not help young people to aspire to their full potential.
- Poor-quality monitoring means that serious shortfalls in the standards of care afforded to young people are not promptly identified and addressed.

## **The children's home strengths**

- Managers and staff work effectively with a specialist team to understand and minimise the risk of child sexual exploitation for one young person.
- Staff encourage young people to engage in some constructive activities. As a result, young people access leisure 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 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

| Requirement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Due date     |
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| <p>5: Engaging with the wider system to ensure children's needs are met</p> <p>In order to meet the quality standard, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff—</p> <p>(a) seek to involve each child's placing authority effectively in the child's care, in accordance with the child's relevant plans.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | 24 June 2016 |
| <p>8: The education standard*</p> <p>In order to meet the education standard, the registered person must ensure—</p> <p>(2)(a) that staff—</p> <p>(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.</p> <p>In particular, that plans are reviewed and implemented without delay and, when young people are not in school, routines in the home facilitate constructive educational activity.</p>                                                                                                                                                                           | 24 June 2016 |
| <p>11: The positive relationships standard*</p> <p>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—</p> <p>(1)(b) an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and</p> <p>(c) positive responses to other children and adults.</p> <p>(2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>(a) that staff—</p> <p>(iii) encourage each child to take responsibility for the child's behaviour, in accordance with the child's age and understanding;</p> <p>(vii) help each child to develop the understanding and skills to recognise or withdraw from a damaging, exploitative or harmful relationship.</p> | 24 June 2016 |

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| <p>12: The protection of children standard*</p> <p>In order to meet the protection of children standard, the registered person must ensure—</p> <p>(2)(a) that staff—</p> <p>(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;*</p> <p>(d) that the premises used for the purpose of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <p>24 June 2016</p> |
| <p>13: The leadership and management standard*</p> <p>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—</p> <p>(1)(a) helps children aspire to fulfil their potential;* and</p> <p>(b) promotes their welfare.*</p> <p>(2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>(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;*</p> <p>(c) ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child;</p> <p>(2)(h) use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.*</p> | <p>24 June 2016</p> |
| <p>44: Independent person: visits and reports</p> <p>Ensure the independent person produces a report about a visit ("the independent person's report") which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether—</p> <p>(a) children are effectively safeguarded; and</p> <p>(b) the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being.</p> <p>In particular, that the independent person's report accurately reflects events in the home, taking account of safeguarding events and issues that have arisen (Regulation 44(4)(a)(b)).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <p>29 July 2016</p> |

\* 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, as the home will have a day to day understanding of young people's capabilities and needs, staff should actively seek to make the fullest contribution to the pathway planning process, working with other relevant persons ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', page 17, paragraph 3.28).
- Ensure the children's guide is age appropriate, provided in an accessible format and explained to each child to make sure they understand it ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 24, paragraph, 4.21).
- Ensure that where children have specific health needs, they are supported to manage this subject to their age and understanding.  
In particular, where young people have refused dental treatment, work is undertaken to help them overcome their difficulty and access the treatment required ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 34, paragraph 7.10).
- Ensure that recruitment, supervision, and performance management of staff safeguards children and minimises potential risks to them ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1).

## Full report

### Information about this children's home

This children's home is operated by a local authority and provides care for up to six young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home takes emergency placements.

### Recent inspection history

| Inspection date  | Inspection type | Inspection judgement   |
|------------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| 7 March 2016     | Interim         | Declined effectiveness |
| 13 January 2016  | Full            | Good                   |
| 17 February 2015 | Interim         | Improved effectiveness |
| 2 July 2014      | Full            | Adequate               |

## Inspection judgements

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| <b>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>Inadequate</b> |
| <p>Young people's progress and experiences are mostly poor, and this gives rise to serious concerns about their welfare. Some young people present behaviours that place themselves, other young people and sometimes staff at risk of harm. Examples include physical assault, an alleged sexual assault, and intimidating and threatening behaviour towards staff and other residents. As a result, young people have been arrested on suspicion of committing offences and have been the subject of a criminal investigation. Because their behaviour cannot be managed safely, two young people have moved on from the home in an emergency and without clear plans in place. One young person had to move out of the home temporarily, because her social worker felt that it was unsafe for her to remain there. This compromised contact with her mother and the relationship that she was developing with her. It interrupted her education, because she missed eight days of school. Furthermore, she went missing during this time and placed herself at risk of significant harm.</p> <p>Levels of disruption in the home are currently high. Two young people regularly create disturbances that continue into the early hours of the morning. This includes causing damage, playing loud music, going into each other's rooms, smoking cannabis and cigarettes, and leaving the home for periods of time during the night. Such behaviour is impacting on their health and welfare, as well as that of others. One young person told the inspector that she is sometimes able to sleep through the noise, but at other times it keeps her awake. As a result, living with and occasionally witnessing this behaviour is compromising her well-being and affecting her experience of living in the home.</p> <p>An unsettled home environment impacts negatively on the quality of relationships between staff and young people. The inspector observed some young people being dismissive of staff and unresponsive to requests made of them. Staff describe being at an impasse with young people, who are becoming increasingly disengaged. An inability to work through challenging and difficult times means that staff are unable to maintain the positive relationships that they previously had with young people. Consequently, young people do not benefit from trusted and secure relationships with the adults caring for them.</p> <p>Education outcomes for two out of three young people residing at the home are poor. At the time of the last inspection on 7 March 2016 they had worryingly low school attendance of 25% and 26%. This now stands at 4% and 5%, meaning</p> |                   |

their already low attendance has deteriorated further. Poor school attendance seriously impacts on young people's learning, and is likely to affect their future life chances. When refusing education, the young people do not engage in purposeful activity; neither do the routines and structures at home support this. Insufficient action to address these concerns means that staff and managers are not helping young people to overcome their difficulties, increase their motivation or rebuild their confidence to facilitate a return to school.

Delays in completing and reviewing personal education plans, significantly undermines young people's educational progress. It signifies a lack of clear planning, and does not provide a framework to support young people's learning. Furthermore, staff, managers and teachers at school remain unaware of the results of a baseline assessment completed by one young person in December 2015, when he was being home tutored. Consequently, this information cannot be used to target any identified learning needs. These shortfalls reflect a failure to engage education partners and the placing authority in an effective and timely way. As a result, managers and staff are not fulfilling their responsibilities to promote young people's education.

One young person is making educational progress relative to her starting point. She now goes out to school, after a period of home tuition, and her attendance is steadily increasing. She is making friends and enjoys socialising with her peers. Moreover, she is making some academic progress. For example, she recently passed a functional skills maths test with flying colours, and is rightly proud of this achievement. The progress she has made is in spite of a temporary interruption to her education. This demonstrates resilience and, with staff support, an ability to bounce back from challenging times.

Young people develop some skills in line with their age and independence. For example, young people are able to use public transport, do their own laundry and cook simple meals for themselves. However, pathway plans lack a comprehensive assessment of young people's needs, together with a clear plan about how these needs will be met. Staff do not contribute sufficiently to this care planning process, and so do not adequately support young people's transition to independence.

Staff meet most young people's health needs. They ensure that all young people are registered with primary healthcare services. Some have access to mental health services, meaning that they receive specialist support to address their emotional needs. Staff persisted in helping one young person participate in his annual health assessment after he initially refused. They invited the nurse for looked after children to the home to meet with the young person to allay his fears and explain the process. As a result, he participated in a full review of his health needs. Because of a refusal to attend appointments, one young person still requires dental treatment. This has been outstanding since February 2016. A recommendation is raised to address this shortfall and to ensure that the good practice outlined above is applied consistently to benefit all young people's health

and well-being.

Young people enjoy access to some social and recreational opportunities. Examples include trips to the fair, cinema and a scarecrow festival, as well as to play and watch football. Consequently, young people have different opportunities to participate in enjoyable leisure activities.

Young people receive a guide to the home that includes some good messages about what they can expect. It contains useful contact numbers, should young people need to access children's rights or Ofsted. The document is lengthy and wordy, and some young people may struggle to understand it all fully. Furthermore, some references are unsuitable for younger children and may be off-putting for them. A recommendation is raised to review the young people's guide to ensure that it is accessible for different ages.

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| <b>How well children and young people are helped and protected</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <b>Inadequate</b> |
| <p>Safeguarding practice is not sufficiently robust to protect young people and keep them safe from harm.</p> <p>Staff have failed to act on concerns about a potential power imbalance between two young people. Despite an acknowledgement by staff that this is affecting a young person's well-being, there is little evidence that staff have addressed this. Consequently, staff do not fully support young people to develop the skills to be able to withdraw from difficult and potentially damaging relationships with their peers.</p> <p>Some young people present persistently challenging behaviour. Poor behaviour management compromises young people's progress, safety and welfare. Consequences are rarely used and incentive plans are ineffective. Furthermore, a lack of clear boundaries means that staff do not respond effectively to behaviour. As a result, young people are not being adequately supported to understand that their behaviour has consequences for both themselves and others. Neither are they learning to modify and improve their behaviour.</p> <p>Individual support plans are poor and not subject to regular review. They contain generic statements and so do not outline behaviours or strategies that are individual to each young person. Furthermore, they do not provide clear guidance for staff to follow. A failure to review plans contributes to the poor behaviour management practice that is operating in this home. This does not give young people a sense of security or a feeling of well-being.</p> <p>Risk assessments are weak. They are not routinely updated to account for new</p> |                   |

information, and so contain inaccuracies. For example, one young person's risk assessment deems him to be at low risk of going missing, despite a sharp increase in the number or times that he has been missing or absent in recent weeks. Consequently, it does not contain an up-to-date assessment of risk, the triggers for this change in behaviour, strategies to minimise risk or actions for staff to follow, should further incidents occur. A lack of clear and up-to-date information in risk assessments leaves young people vulnerable and at risk of harm.

The failure by staff to follow risk management plans compromises young people's safety. For example, on one occasion staff did not report a young person missing to the police for six hours. This is despite the risk assessment stipulating that this should be done within 30 minutes of losing contact with the young person, because they are deemed to be at high risk of sexual exploitation.

Staff ensure that young people have the opportunity to speak to someone independent of the home when they return from being missing. They are proactive in chasing up return interviews when there are delays in this process. However, staff do not follow up this good practice by taking account of information from these interviews. For example, one young person claimed that they had taken drugs and/or legal highs while missing from home. This information was not used to inform and update the risk assessment. Furthermore, managers and staff did not explore with the social worker why, on two occasions, a young person said that they did not want to return to the home. The record of the interview does not suggest that they were asked why not, and no reason was given for their comments. This does not demonstrate a robust response to a potential safeguarding concern, or that staff use information to identify and manage risks.

Incidents where young people go missing or are absent from home are increasing. Responses to this concerning pattern of behaviour are mixed. Managers and staff share information, and they work well with a specialist team supporting one young person at high risk of sexual exploitation. A multi-agency meeting is scheduled to discuss concerns relating to five missing episodes. However, a strategy meeting has not yet been requested for the two other young people who are increasingly absent or missing from the home. Consequently, staff and managers do not consistently involve the police to review intelligence, assess risk and formulate clear plans to minimise future occurrences for these young people. As a result, they are not always working effectively with partner agencies to reduce risk and promote young people's welfare.

Gaps in recruitment records highlight shortfalls in the recruitment and selection of staff. For example, the inspector found that one personnel file did not contain identity documents including a recent photograph. The failure to review personnel files prior to staff commencing work at the home neither promotes safe recruitment practice nor prevents unsuitable people having access to young people.

Inconsistent health and safety monitoring means that some issues are overlooked. For example, the manager remained unaware until during the inspection that the gas boiler was overdue for its annual service. Furthermore, she has not responded to three incidents whereby young people have accessed the roof. Not taking prompt and effective action to assess and manage this risk leaves young people at risk of harm.

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| <b>The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>Inadequate</b> |
| <p>The registered manager is suitably qualified and experienced. She has been in post since 2001, and holds level 5 and 6 awards in leadership and management.</p> <p>Leadership and management is poor, and this limits the capacity of the home to improve the quality of care provided to young people. The manager has not fully implemented the action plan submitted to Ofsted, following the 'declined effectiveness' judgement at the last inspection. As a result, none of the five requirements set at that inspection have been met, and further shortfalls have now been identified.</p> <p>The manager does not supervise all staff regularly. One member of staff received no supervision in March and April 2016, and another had just one supervision in a four-month period between January and April 2016. No team meetings have taken place since November 2015. Consequently, staff do not have sufficient opportunities, individually or collectively, to reflect on their performance. Furthermore, they do not receive the necessary guidance to develop their practice in caring for young people.</p> <p>Staff access a range of training and development opportunities, and they have completed mandatory courses. This inspection identified that some specific training needs have not been met. For example, not all staff have received training in bullying or e-safety, and the annual refresher course on the safe administration of medication is overdue. This means that staff are not fully equipped with the skills, knowledge and understanding to meet the needs of individual young people, and to promote their welfare.</p> <p>Weak internal monitoring systems do not support improvement, and have failed to identify the shortfalls highlighted at this inspection. For example, placement plans updated by key workers are not reviewed in a timely way by the manager, and this delays their dissemination to staff. Failure to scrutinise and review information means that opportunities are missed to listen to, and act upon, what young people say. Furthermore, the manager has not taken steps to assess why regular night-time disturbances continue. She has not reviewed the use of additional waking night staff in place since January 2016 or revised the approaches to behaviour</p> |                   |

management to bring about effective change. This does not promote young people's safety and well-being.

External monitoring does not help the home to improve. Although some reports reflect a more rigorous assessment of the home's function, others do not. For example, one report failed to report on a serious safeguarding concern that led to a young person temporarily moving out of the home for her own safety. Some reports also fail to highlight serious shortfalls in behaviour management and the risk that these pose to the welfare of young people.

The physical environment is stark. It lacks warmth and a homely feel. Young people's behaviour results in repeated damage to the home. For example, paintwork is marked, furniture is broken and graffiti is etched into some internal walls. The home is devoid of soft furnishings and fails to create a bright and pleasant environment in which young people can relax. Consequently, managers and staff are not maintaining or creating a positive home environment. This does not benefit young people or make them feel valued.

Leaders and managers do not always engage partner agencies consistently and effectively. This is in relation to addressing 'missing from home' concerns and education, and not progressing care plans quickly when it is identified that the home cannot meet young people's needs safely. A lack of collaborative working does not promote young people's welfare or support them to make progress.

The home is not operating in accordance with the aims and objectives outlined in the statement of purpose. The shortfalls in education, the underpinning ethos and philosophy, and the standard of accommodation provided to young people are inconsistent with what the home sets out to do. Operating outside of the statement of purpose means that managers and staff are not helping young people to aspire to fulfil their potential.

Six requirements are raised following this inspection, four of which are subject to compliance notices. Four requirements are also raised to improve standards.

## 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 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

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