

SC035477

Registered provider: Lancashire County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is operated by a local authority and can provide care for up to six young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 26 to 27 June 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 12 January 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: declined in effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection

At the interim inspection on 12 January 2017 four compliance notices and a restriction of accommodation notice were issued. Monitoring inspections took place on 24 February 2017 and 5 April 2017. All compliance notices were met and the restriction of accommodation was lifted.

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- Managers and staff understand young people's complex needs well. They work creatively and diligently to meet these needs.
- Young people make progress relative to their starting points.
- Staff help young people to stay in touch with those people who are important to them. They reassure young people and ensure that contact arrangements are as safe as possible.
- Staff manage transitions well. This enables young people to move into and on from the home in a planned and positive way.
- A robust response to safeguarding concerns and challenging behaviour protects young people and promotes their welfare.
- Managers and staff review young people's care plans regularly. This enables them to measure progress and identify areas where young people need continued support. As a result, young people benefit from individualised care.
- Effective leadership motivates staff and creates a positive ethos in the home. This generates an environment where young people feel safe and cared for.
- Managers promote reflective practice and constructively challenge staff when necessary. As a result, staff understand their role and responsibility in keeping young people safe.
- Staff say that they are well supported and benefit from regular supervision.
- Effective partnership working promotes young people's safety and welfare. Partner agencies speak highly of the service and the care that staff provide to young people. They can see the positive impact that this has on young people's progress.

The children's home's areas for development:

- Ensure that young people have the opportunity to speak to someone independent of the home, when they return from being missing or absent without authorisation. Furthermore, escalate concerns with the responsible authority when it fails to carry out timely return home interviews.
- Complete a workforce development plan to record the ongoing training and development needs of staff.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/01/2017	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
06/09/2016	Full	Requires improvement
18/05/2016	Full	Inadequate
07/03/2016	Interim	Declined in effectiveness

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

Recommendations

- Ensure that when a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority must provide an opportunity for the child to have an independent return interview. Homes should take account of the information provided by such interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect each child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)

In particular, the registered person should ensure that return home interviews are requested of the responsible authority and when these are not carried out, they should escalate their concerns about this accordingly.

- Ensure the registered person completes a workforce development plan. The plan should detail the experience and qualifications of staff currently working in the home and any further training required for those staff, to enable the delivery of the home's Statement of Purpose. The plan should be updated to include any new training and qualifications completed by staff, and used to record the ongoing training and professional needs of staff - including the home's manager. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Staff get to know young people well. They understand their highly complex needs and provide individualised care. Staff are consistent in their approach. This helps young people know what to expect and provides them with some stability. Because they receive good standards of care young people begin to develop positive relationships with staff. An emotional health practitioner said: 'The staff have managed X's needs well to date. X is showing an increasing willingness to allow staff to care for him and keep him as safe as they can.'

Young people can identify the staff that they get on well with. Managers use these positive relationships to organise key aspects of young people's care. For example, the manager arranged for a particular member of staff to take a young person to the dentist. This yielded positive results; the young person had a check-up and received some necessary treatment. Attending the dentist was something that the young person found difficult to do before. Positive relationships enable young people to make progress in different aspects of their development.

Young people report that they like living in the home because they feel listened to by staff. This shows that young people have a voice, and that this voice is heard. Young people contribute to the day-to-day running of the home. For example, they have input into what food they eat and what activities they like to do. Individual key-work sessions provide opportunities for staff to talk with young people about their plans and progress, as well as any areas causing concern. Good communication enables young people to influence their care.

Staff understand that it is important for young people to stay in touch with their families. They manage this sensitively and staff work hard to engage birth families. A psychologist said: '[Staff] have gone above and beyond in supporting X and encouraging mum to be a safe part of X's life.' This shows that staff promote contact for young people that is as safe and positive as possible.

Young people receive bespoke education support. This enables them to make progress from their starting points. A young person sat some exams recently. This is a huge achievement for him. His tutor said: 'Back in September I would not have believed it [that X would have sat an exam]. He wouldn't write anything down and now he does.' Highly resistant young people are changing their attitude towards education. For example, when a young person arrived he said he did not need education. Now he is asking staff 'what can I do?' As a result, the education champion at the home is working with the young person and education partners to look at post-16 options. Good education support helps young people to progress their learning and develop aspirations.

Well-managed transitions enable young people to have a positive and planned experience when they move into and on from the home. For example, an independent reviewing officer made positive comments about how well staff helped one young person

to move on. They said: 'Dedication from staff has assured that X has been well supported during his transition.' Young people have the opportunity to visit before they move in, to see their new home and to meet the staff. A revamped welcome booklet provides a colourful guide to the home and helps young people know what to expect when they arrive.

Young people choose to spend time in the community with their friends. Staff encourage young people's participation in other leisure activities and this has had some success. Young people enjoy trips to laser quest and Blackpool pleasure beach. Going clothes shopping is also a particular favourite! As a result of their leisure opportunities, young people have some fun times. Staff create memory boxes and photo albums for young people. These capture significant events and positive experiences in a format that young people can take with them, when they move on.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Arrangements to protect young people are robust. Managers and staff respond to safeguarding concerns promptly and follow procedures. Managers and staff work collaboratively with partner agencies. A multi-agency approach to risk ensures that there is a coordinated response. This helps to protect young people and others.

Managers work diligently with staff to monitor and manage risk. Risk assessments contain detailed information about all known risks, and set out guidance for staff. Staff review risk assessments regularly and update them so that information is current. This helps staff to safeguard young people.

Young people living in the home have histories of putting themselves and others at risk through their behaviour. They continue to engage in risky behaviour such as going missing from home or being absent without permission. Staff work hard to get to know who young people spend time with outside of the home, and where they like to go. As a result, when young people do go missing the staff know who to contact and where to look. Furthermore, they have key information to share with the police. The staff's vigilance and due diligence have been invaluable. They have helped staff to identify new risks and to work out how to manage these. This approach safeguards young people's welfare and that of other people.

An independent reviewing officer said: 'X is always going to be a challenging young person to care for. What reduces risk is the hard work staff are putting in. Risks are better understood and managed and some risks have reduced'.

When young people return from being missing, they do not always have a return home interview. As a result, they do not have the opportunity to talk with someone independent of the home about why they went missing, and what happened while they were away. This is an area that is identified for improvement.

One complaint has been raised with the home. The manager dealt with this well and the matter was resolved. During the inspection the manager wrote a letter to the

complainant with the mutually agreed outcome. This now concludes the matter.

The manager reviews serious incidents that do occur to learn lessons and prevent reoccurrence. In doing so he holds people to account, and this helps to protect young people.

Managers and staff take a considered and balanced approach to behaviour management. They use incentive schemes, positive reward and praise to promote positive behaviour. As a result, negative behaviour does not become the sole focus of attention. When young people do present challenging behaviour, any consequence imposed is proportionate. For example, when a young person kicked the house car and dented it, he worked with staff to repair it, rather than pay reparation. A restorative approach helps young people to understand that their behaviour has consequences.

Young people present challenging and aggressive behaviour towards others. Staff manage this extremely well. There have only been four incidents involving restraint. This shows that staff use de-escalation techniques effectively. An independent reviewing officer said: 'I have observed staff dealing with a serious incident from X. I was impressed with their calm and patient approach.' Incident reports contain detailed information and provide a clear account of what happened. Young people have the opportunity to talk about what happened with someone who was not involved in the incident. This gives them the chance to raise any concerns.

Staff carry out regular health and safety checks. When necessary, extra measures have been put in place to minimise risk of harm. As a result, young people live in a safe physical environment.

Robust recruitment practice prevents unsuitable people from being able to work with young people.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Since the last inspection a new permanent manager has been appointed. He has been in post since March 2017 and has applied to register with Ofsted. He is suitably experienced. He has a level 5 certificate in leadership and management and so is appropriately qualified.

The home benefits from excellent leadership. The manager has high expectations of himself and his team, and has significantly improved standards of care. He is inspirational and has aspirations for the young people he cares for. The manager is committed to helping young people to have positive experiences and to make progress. He is dedicated to supporting young people to stay safe. The home meets the aims and objectives set out in the statement of purpose.

The new manager has made an immediate impact on staff. Staff report that they are well supported. They receive regular supervision and clear guidance from the manager. Staff report that this enables them to work with young people consistently and

confidently. A member of staff said: '[The new manager] is 100% supportive, 100% honest and 100% on it.'

The manager promotes reflective practice and challenges staff when necessary. This enables staff to learn from the difficult situations that happen, and to develop their practice. It also improves young people's experiences, outcomes and safety.

Staff enjoy a range of training opportunities. The team receives specialist support from an emotional health worker who visits the team monthly. Staff can articulate how this helps them to provide good care to young people. They say that they now understand the impact of children's early life experiences on their development. The specialist support also enables them to recognise the reasons that underpin young people's behaviour. One member of staff describes this support as 'invaluable'. The manager seeks to develop the staff in different ways. He has arranged for them to visit other children's homes run by the authority to see the good practice models used there. This shows that the manager is keen to incorporate different ways of working, which will help to improve young people's experiences.

The manager has reviewed the training needs for the team and for individuals. He has clear ideas about how to take these forward. However, these ideas are not yet formulated into a workforce development plan. A recommendation is raised to address this. This will ensure that all training is scheduled in and progressed.

The manager does track young people's progress and he takes action when he has concerns about their welfare. He attends regular review meetings with partner agencies to look at what is happening, and what next steps need to be taken to support young people.

Internal and external monitoring practices are robust. The manager invites scrutiny and is transparent. This promotes young people's welfare. The manager uses monitoring to identify and act on areas for improvement. As a result, he has a good understanding of the strengths and needs of the service. This informs his development plans. All the requirements and recommendations raised at the last inspection have been met. This shows that managers learn from inspection to improve the quality of care afforded to young people.

The manager notifies Ofsted and other relevant people of significant events that occur. As a result, people are kept well informed and this promotes young people's safety and welfare.

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 differences 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. Wherever 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, 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: SC035477

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Lancashire County Council

Registered provider address: PO Box 78, Preston PR1 8XJ

Responsible individual: Paul McIntyre

Registered manager: Post vacant/Michael Nunn

Inspector(s)

Jackie Line, social care inspector

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