

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	07/07/2015
Unique reference number	SC037657
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Registered person address	Municipal Buildings, Cherryfield Drive, LIVERPOOL, L32 1TX

Responsible individual	Paul Boyce
Registered manager	Mark Ford
Inspector	Marina Tully

Inspection date	07/07/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Good
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
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	Good

SC037657

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Young people make measurable progress because staff work persistently hard to improve their lives.
- Young people benefit from positive relationships with staff and each other. Everyone is respected and valued and results in a settled, stable homely environment.
- Excellent partnership working with schools, colleges, education support services and career advisors has led to improvements in young people's learning and achievements.
- Young people experience improved physical and emotional health. Staff have an in-depth understanding of their needs and ensure they receive support from a range of health services.
- Young people are listened to and their views are valued. They are well supported to attend their care-planning reviews and regular house meetings. As a result, they are meaningfully engaged in decision making about the home and their lives.
- Effective collaboration with safeguarding partners, including the police, youth offending service, drug and alcohol services and social workers is reducing risk and improving young people's behaviour.
- Staff are supported by a dedicated manager. He understands the strengths of his team and shows commitment and capacity for continued improvement. Staff are knowledgeable and skilled in their role. They receive regular professional supervision, on-going training and engage in regular team meetings; all of which promote good standards of care practice.
- There are some areas for improvement. The manager and staff do not adequately challenge the placing social worker to ensure young people are spoken to by a person independent from the home following all missing incidents. This hinders opportunities to reflect upon the incident and risks with the child and gather critical information. Missing from home records do not clearly reflect the actions taken by staff or appraise the episode to ensure that key information is documented. Monitoring systems set up for this service are failing to identify shortfalls in the some of the home's records.

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 to ensure children's needs are met standard the registered person must – (b) seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child's needs; (c) if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans. With particular regard to return interviews being consistently undertaken when young people return from being missing.	10/08/2015
13: The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard the registered person must- (2) (h) use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. With particular regard to monitoring young people's records, the home's signing in book and safeguarding notifications.	10/08/2015

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that clear records are kept detailing all individual incidents, and the action taken, when children go missing from the home (regulation 36 (schedule 3(14))). Evaluation of missing incidents should be undertaken to identify any gaps in training, skills or knowledge for staff or to record and retain evidence of what worked well. This evaluation should inform the review of the quality of care. (see paragraph 15.2). With particular regard to recording the action taken by staff when young people go missing and their assessment of the young person upon their return, including how staff welcomed them home.
(Guide to the Quality Standards, page 45, paragraph 9.31)
- Ensure that when a child is found after being missing from care, they must be offered an independent return interview. Independent return interviews provide an opportunity to uncover information that can help protect children from risk of going missing again, from risks they may have been exposed to while missing or from risk factors in their home.
(Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care, page 14, paragraph 31)

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home provides care and accommodation for three young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home is managed by the local authority.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/02/2015	CH - Interim	sustained effectiveness
08/10/2014	CH - Full	Good
10/02/2014	CH - Interim	Satisfactory Progress
13/06/2013	CH - Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	good
This home is making a noticeable difference to young people's lives. A young person said: 'I like all staff. They all have different personalities and I get on well with them all. They definitely care about me and take time to listen to me. Sometimes we have clashes but that is the real world. I can talk to them and they give me good advice.' Staff have high aspirations for those in their care. On the whole, young people make significant progress with their learning and development. For one young person school attendance has increased from 65% to 100%. This was achieved through excellent partnership working with her school, and the introduction of an appealing incentive scheme. Consideration is now being given to her sitting her art GCSE exam two years early as she is excelling in this subject. Barriers to learning, such as young people refusing to attend school, are relentlessly addressed. Staff work closely with other professionals including education support workers and career advisors to explore all options. This was reflected in a discussion with a career advisor who said: 'Staff address non-engagement well. They are realistic and understand where the young person is emotionally and give them good advice. All staff are very experienced and professional and are used to dealing with difficult situations.' As a result, all young people are in full-time school or have further education or vocational training plans in place. Progress is evident in all aspects of young people's health because staff are well informed of their individual needs. Consequently, they are physically fit and their general health is regularly reviewed. Staff ensure that young people's emotional well-being is thoroughly addressed. They work closely with therapeutic services, such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and independent counselling services. Furthermore, all staff have undertaken training in first aid which enables them to adeptly address any minor injuries that occur within the home. Staff work diligently to nurture warm, trusting relationships within the home. They show genuine interest in what young people like and do. Staff know young people well and have a good understanding of their needs and vulnerabilities. Interactions between staff and young people were consistently positive, warm and relaxed. During inspection young people were observed joking with staff, going out with them to get their nails painted and planning activities. Without doubt, young	

people are cared for, respected and treated as important individuals.

Young people benefit from meticulous care planning which involves a range of professionals to ensure that their needs are resourcefully assessed and met. Young people are actively involved in the making and reviewing of their plans. As a result, one young person has been asked if he would like to chair his child looked after (CLA) reviews. This demonstrates the degree of meaningful participation which is achieved through staff's consistent support.

Transitions into and out of the home are carefully planned. Prior to a young person moving in a comprehensive compatibility assessment is carried out which considers all young people's needs. This ensures that needs are matched appropriately with staff and others living in the home. Staff provide excellent support to ensure transitions are successful. Furthermore, independent living is promoted on a daily basis. Young people are taught practical skills such as budgeting, cooking and shopping. Consequently, young people are being well prepared for their future lives.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
Detailed risk assessment and behaviour management plans provide staff with clear practical guidance on keeping young people safe. Young people are being helped and protected by a committed and experienced team. Staff receive on-going training on a range of safeguarding matters such as child sexual exploitation (CSE), e-safety and missing from home. This enables them to recognise risk and manage it well. Consequently, incidents of missing from home, CSE and self-harming are reducing for most young people. Staff follow missing from home procedures well. More serious incidents are escalated to multi-disciplinary strategy meetings, this ensures all relevant safeguarding professionals are working collaboratively to assess and minimise risk. Staff have a good understanding of the associated risks of missing, such as CSE, offending behaviour and substance misuse. A shortfall was in the recording of missing incidents. Records do not clearly reflect the action taken by staff while young people are missing or when they return home. Furthermore, return interviews are not being routinely undertaken. This prevents young people from having the opportunity to speak to an independent person following each missing episode. Positive behaviour is encouraged through clear and consistent boundaries, praise	

and agreed incentives. Sanctions are rare and staff evaluate the impact of measures used. Young people are constantly commended for making good progress with their behaviour which is definitely improving. This is down to young people being well supported in learning how to manage their emotions in a safer way.

Effective and important partnerships between the home, police and other safeguarding professionals further enhance young people's safety and welfare. Staff have a good understanding of their own and other professionals' safeguarding responsibilities and know who to turn to for further guidance and support. The professionals consulted during this inspection consistently praised staffs safeguarding practice. A police officer said: 'Staff are proactive. They are very knowledgeable and skilled at dealing with episodes of missing and CSE. For some young people the level of concern has considerably reduced.'

Young people know how to make a complaint and are not afraid to do so. Complaints are handled fairly and resolved quickly. Staff encourage young people to voice their grievances no matter how small which shows them that their views are important. All outcomes and decisions are fed back to young people in good time, this prevents the problem from escalating.

The home provides a safe environment for young people to live in. A range of health and safety checks are completed to prevent potential hazards. Young people and staff take part in regular fire drills to ensure they know how to evacuate the home swiftly and safely in the event of a fire.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
Young people benefit from living in an efficiently managed home. The manager has been registered with Ofsted since 2007; he is suitably qualified, experienced and a reflective leader. Staff and other stakeholders speak extremely highly of his leadership skills. The manager is committed to continued development and welcomes independent scrutiny of the service. He ensures that actions raised during inspection and independent monitoring visits are quickly addressed. The previous requirements and recommendations made at the last inspection have been met. The service now benefits from a more robust approach to pre-placement matching with the introduction of detailed impact risk assessments. Staff are alert to the signs of on-line abuse as they have all received e-safety training, and first aid. This makes the home a safer place to live. There have been noticeable improvements in young	

people's behaviour. Staff consistently review the effectiveness of sanctions. And, appealing reward schemes are encouraging young people to engage and manage their emotions and behaviour in a positive way.

The manager and the senior residential worker have good leadership qualities. They demonstrate commitment to those in their care and have good oversight of day-to-day running of the home. The manager is readily accessible to staff and young people for consultation, advice and support. He has a 'hands on' approach which enables him to evaluate staff practice and quickly address issues or concerns as and when they arise. This ensures that young people's interests and welfare are at the very heart of the home.

Staff receive regular supervision, which enables them to analyse their practice and recognise their own strengths and identify areas for development. Staff are mutually supportive and have the ability to reflect and learn from incidents and each other. They use team meetings well to review young people's progress and to update plans accordingly. They avoid complacency and are proactive in looking for new ideas and ways of working to improve young people's outcomes. This was the view of all professionals consulted with at the inspection. In particular, a therapist from CAMHS said: 'staff provide young people with good support and seek guidance and advice as and when necessary. They have my number and know they can call me anytime. We worked together developing a risk management plan which they fully adhered to and followed'. These positive working relationships enhance partnership working and the team's professional development, which in turn maximises young people's progress.

The manager ensures that staffing levels are sufficient and reflect young people's needs and interests. For example, there is a good mix of male and female staff within the team and as one young person stated, 'they all have different personalities'. This ensures young people have a good choice of staff to turn to for guidance, advice, support and recreation.

The home has a development plan in place which is being effectively implemented. The plan reflects the service and has realistic objectives for the coming year. The Statement of Purpose is being reviewed to reflect the recent changes in The Children's Home's Regulations 2015. This document provides good detail of the ethos, aims and objectives of the home which are clearly embedded in staff's practice.

Although young people's records are individualised, well organised and clearly reflect young people's needs and vulnerabilities; not all care plans and risk assessments are signed by staff, young people or other relevant parties. They therefore do not demonstrate that everyone is in agreement and working towards the same goals and outcomes. Additionally, notifications of significant events often lack detail and evaluation of risk and do not fully reflect staff's, or other relevant professionals intervention. This makes it difficult to assess and evaluate the home's

response to serious incidents and concerns. These shortfalls do not reflect the quality of care and protection afforded to young people living in this home. Rather, they are recording issues which the home's monitoring system is failing to pick up.

The manager is a strong leader and is a good role model and advocate for young people and staff. He is not afraid to challenge and on many occasions he has done so effectively. Such as, ensuring care plan meetings and reviews are taking place within the set timescales, ensuring he has autonomy in placement decisions and pushing for funding for specific staff training. However, he has not robustly challenged the placing authority when they fail to carry out missing from home return interviews. Young people are not being routinely offered the chance to speak to their social workers about the risk or reasons for going missing. Furthermore, this weakens the opportunity to uncover information and explore strategies, with the young person, to prevent 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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