

Children's home inspection – Full

Inspection date	24/11/2016
Unique reference number	SC037657
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Registered provider address	Municipal Buildings, Cherryfield Drive, Liverpool L32 1TX
Responsible individual	Ruth France
Registered manager	Mark Ford
Inspector	Marina Tully

Inspection date	24/11/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained effectiveness
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's provision is good because:

- Young people benefit from consistent care and clear boundaries provided by an experienced and competent staff team. Staff know young people well, understand their needs and work hard to nurture warm, trusting relationships in the home.
- Staff refuse to give up on young people and when challenges arise, they work with other professionals to overcome any barriers to young people's achievements. As a result, young people make good progress from their starting points, in most areas of their development.
- Placement stability is enabling young people to continue to live in their home area in close proximity to their family. This is helping them to have regular contact with their family and friends, and thus sustain a genuine sense of belonging.
- Safeguarding practice is a particular strength of the home. Staff are extremely vigilant and are alert to all potential danger. Staff work collaboratively with other safeguarding professionals and this is helping to keep young people safe in their home and community.
- A caring and competent registered manager leads the home effectively. He understands the service's strengths and areas for development and demonstrates enthusiasm and capacity to make continued improvements within the home.
- The areas for improvement are around staff's recordings and the registered manager's monitoring of these records, sending information to Ofsted and staff training.
- Additionally, the home could further support young people's education by providing structured activities to young people when they are unable or refuse to attend school.

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 within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
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. This is with particular regard to monitoring the home's records.	13/01/2017
The registered person must notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16 (3)(b))	13/01/2017
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if a child protection enquiry involving a child is instigated; or concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry). (Regulation 40 (4)(d)(i)(ii)) This is with particular regard to notifying Ofsted of all serious safeguarding concerns and outcomes of any child protection investigation.	13/01/2017

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further, the service should take account of the following recommendations:

- Ensure that when children placed in the home are not participating in education, the child is supported to sustain or regain their confidence in education and be engaged in suitable structured activities ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 28, paragraph 5.15).
- Ensure that staff can access appropriate resources to support their training needs ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11). This is with particular regard to all staff

refreshing their mandatory training within the given timescales.

- Ensure that all staff record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes from fact, opinion and third-party information. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4).

Full report

Information about this children's home

This local authority children's home provides care and accommodation for three young people with emotional and/or behavioural needs.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
03/02/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
07/07/2015	Full	Good
11/02/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
08/10/2014	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
Young people make good progress from their starting points in most areas of their lives. They benefit from consistent care and support provided by a committed and experienced team. Placement stability is a strength of the service. Staff stick by young people through difficult times and refuse to give up when challenges arise. As a result, young people are provided with stability and are enabled to remain living in their home area near to their family and friends. This is supporting young people to keep in touch with people who are important to them. This supports their development of a positive self-identity. Staff nurture positive relationships with young people. They respond to young people in a warm, calm and caring manner. Young people and staff were observed sharing memories about their recent holiday and discussing incentives to encourage positive behaviour. A young person's comments demonstrate the trusting relationships that staff have achieved, 'I get along with most of them (the team), they're not like staff.' However, staff's recording of information about young people and their behaviour does not always reflect the same degree of warmth. While, some staff's recordings demonstrate an understanding and empathy of young people's needs and behaviour on occasions, some staff have not recorded information objectively nor distinguished between fact and personal opinion. Not only is this unhelpful to young people when they read these records, it can also undermine their positive relationships with staff. Young people are linked to a range of specialist support services to ensure that their physical and emotional health are promoted effectively. For example, young people benefit from therapeutic input from the child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS). When young people struggle to attend these appointments, staff are creative at finding ways to get them to engage. For example, appointments have been made at the home and at young people's schools. Additionally, staff have worked directly with CAMHS therapists and learned new strategies for supporting young people with their emotions and past trauma. This is supporting young people to strengthen their emotional resilience and manage difficult feelings. This, in turn, is helping them to keep themselves safe. Staff have aspirations for the young people in their care and strive to encourage young people to attend school and achieve to the best of their ability. One young person has achieved two GCSEs at grade C a year earlier than expected. Education professionals speak highly of staff's efforts and support. One headteacher commented, 'Staff are doing all they can to support [name of young person] in school. They have a plan in place to try to encourage her to attend and offer her	

incentives and rewards.’ In addition, the home is working in partnership with schools, the attendance officer and virtual headteacher to address all barriers to young people’s learning. Furthermore, they are challenging other professionals to prevent any drift in young people’s educational plans. However, staff are not ensuring that when young people are not participating in education they are provided with suitable structured activities to sustain a good routine and continue to learn.

Young people are involved in decision-making about their care. For example, staff support them to attend care planning meetings and the home holds weekly house meetings to seek young people’s views on their care. Furthermore, young people know how to make a complaint and receive independent advocacy support to help them with this when necessary. This is ensuring that young people have regular opportunities to voice their views and opinions and influence the decisions that affect their lives and future.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Young people’s safety is a priority in this home. Staff are vigilant and take immediate action when young people are in danger. Risk assessments are, in the main, comprehensive and provide clear guidance on what action staff must take to keep each young person safe. When young people go missing from home, staff follow agreed procedures to ensure that they are located and returned to their care quickly and safely. This is increasing young people’s safety and helping to reduce other high-risk behaviours, such as child sexual exploitation. A social worker confirmed this in her comments: ‘Staff go above and beyond when [young person’s name] goes missing. There is a trigger plan in place with the police and child sexual exploitation team and she is reported missing straight away, due to the high risk of sexual exploitation.’ Inter-agency working to safeguard young people is effective. The home is working collaboratively with all relevant agencies that have a duty to keep young people safe. In particular, staff work very closely with child sexual exploitation teams to ensure a coordinated approach to this serious safeguarding concern. As a result, young people are benefiting from targeted guidance and support that aims to help them understand their own vulnerabilities and learn how to keep themselves safe. Staff’s in-depth direct work with young people within the home is further enhancing young people’s safety.	

Staff are vigilant and understand the dangers linked to social media and mobile technology. The home has strategies in place to monitor young people's internet use, and when necessary they restrict young people's access to the internet in the home as a safeguarding measure. Although young people dislike this high level of supervision and protection, they understand that the rationale behind it is to keep them safe.

Staff encourage positive behaviour in the home through rewards, praise and suitable sanctions when needed. The home's behaviour management techniques are supporting young people to consider their behaviour and take responsibility for their actions. As a result, young people's behaviour is improving and the home is becoming a more settled and safer environment.

In the main, safeguarding concerns are reported to the relevant professionals, including social workers, police and specialist missing and sexual exploitation teams. This ensures a robust multi-agency response to child protection concerns. On occasions, Ofsted have not been informed or updated on serious child protection matters, and this has prevented the service regulator from evaluating the home's response to all serious safeguarding incidents.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
Young people benefit from living in a home that is managed effectively, and where their individual needs and vulnerabilities are understood and prioritised. The manager and staff establish trusting relationships with young people through consistent care and support. The staff team is stable and most members of staff have worked in the home for several years and are highly experienced. The recent recruitment of new staff from different backgrounds, including youth work and drug and alcohol services, is further enhancing the team's ability to meet young people's full range of needs. Staff are enthusiastic about their development and willingly engage in ongoing training, supervision and appraisals. They share their knowledge and experiences with each other daily, and with young people during individual key work sessions. This helps the home to promote a culture of continual learning as well as enhancing young people's welfare and safety. However, not all staff have completed refresher training on all mandatory courses, including first aid, within the required timescales. The service has established good networks and relationships with a range of	

agencies and professionals responsible for meeting the needs of young people. Staff work closely with teachers, education departments, social workers and health professionals, as well as specialist safeguarding teams. This effective joint working is ensuring that young people make continued progress and are safe.

Regular professional supervision and team meetings provide staff with opportunities to reflect on their practice, discuss young people's progress and identify any concerns or areas for development. The team members report that they feel valued, respected and well supported. The good standard of care provided in the home further demonstrates that the team is content, supported and guided effectively by the registered manager.

The home is clearly achieving its aims and objectives by providing young people with a good standard of care in a stable, safe, homely environment. Although the registered manager has kept the home's statement of purpose updated to reflect the changes in the service, such as new staff, he has not provided a copy to Ofsted as required. This has prevented the service regulator from monitoring and evaluating all recent changes made in the home.

The monthly independent monitoring of the home has improved. A regular person who has in-depth knowledge of children's residential care is now undertaking these visits. The visitor is routinely consulting with young people and, when appropriate, family members, to seek their views on the quality of care provided in the home. This monitoring is supporting the manager to identify areas of improvement by raising actions at each visit, which the manager swiftly addresses.

The manager's own monitoring system is not robust, as it does not identify all shortfalls in the home's or young people's individual records. For example, staff do not consistently sign or date records to demonstrate that they have read and understood the content, such as health plans and risk assessments. Similarly, the manager had not observed when staff had not been objective in their recording of young people's behaviour, nor had he identified the gaps in staff's mandatory training. The requirement in relation to shortfalls in the registered manager's monitoring system raised at the last inspection has therefore been repeated.

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 children looked after 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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