

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	09/11/2016
Unique reference number	SC039673
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Lancashire County Council
Registered person address	PO Box 78, County Hall, Fishergate, Preston, PR1 8XJ

Responsible individual	Paul McIntyre
Registered manager	Gwyneth Monk
Inspector	Jackie Line

Previous inspection date	26/01/2016
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	Outstanding
The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the home contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help, protection and care.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding

SC039673

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is outstanding because:

- Creative and meaningful ways of consulting with young people ensure that they have a clear voice in the day-to-day running of the home, and in more complex decisions about their lives.
- Young people develop excellent relationships with staff, who are highly motivated, committed, warm and caring.
- Exceptional leadership forges an ethos and culture that is resilient, supportive and innovative.
- Managers and staff continually strive to improve the care provided to young people, and to help them achieve positive outcomes.
- Staff develop excellent working relationships with young people's families. This benefits young people because their relationships with people who are important to them improve over time.
- Managers create an open and transparent culture where staff and young people feel able to express their views and raise concerns, confident in the knowledge that they will be listened to.
- Professional practice consistently exceeds the standard of good. Managers disseminate new initiatives to other homes within the authority as examples of good practice.
- Improvements in the delivery of key working, and in the management of self-harm, impact positively on young people. They gain a better understanding of themselves and their feelings, which results in reduced incidents of self-harm.
- Young people make some significant progress from their starting points in different aspects of their development.
- Highly collaborative working with partner agencies and families protects young people from harm.
- Young people enjoy different opportunities that broaden their horizons and experiences.

To continue to improve, the home needs to:

- Ensure that relevant plans reflect the reasons why young people are not in full-time education, where this is agreed and deemed to be in their best interest.

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

Recommendations

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

Ensure that all children's case records are kept up to date. In particular, where being in full-time education is not in a child's best interests, the reasons for this should be clearly outlined in the child's relevant plans. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)

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 of either gender aged from 11 to 17 years, with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
26/01/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
27/05/2015	Full	Outstanding
03/03/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
11/12/2014	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Outstanding
Young people enjoy a range of different activities and opportunities that enrich their experiences. For example, this year young people chose two different types of holiday – a city break to London and a cottage in the Lake District. They loved both. Young people gained new skills in riding the Segway, they developed confidence, and had fun sightseeing around the capital. Photos reflect that a fun and adventure-filled time was had by all! One young person commented that the activities and holidays are the best things about living in the home. Some young people help out in their local communities, and make a positive contribution that benefits themselves and others. For example, every week they deliver and serve home-made food to people who access a homeless charity. One young person told the inspector, 'I like doing this, I like helping people and it makes me feel good.' Another young person successfully completed a citizenship award during the summer holidays, giving them a real sense of achievement. Managers continue to develop ways to help young people learn valuable lessons, and to prepare them for their futures. For example, in getting ready for their holidays a new savings initiative was introduced. Young people could earn reward cards that they could then exchange for cash when on holiday. They also stopped having takeaways, putting the money towards the holiday fund instead. Such initiatives teach young people the value of money, the importance of being able to save up, and that in life people make sacrifices to afford such things as holidays. Helping to organise an 'independence roadshow' reflects that managers and staff create different ways of engaging young people. The event enabled young people to find out about local services, and to hear first-hand from care leavers about their experiences and the challenges that they face. This service excels at preparing young people for the realities of what's next so that they know what to expect. Effective links with semi-independence providers, and the involvement of young people in care planning, facilitate well-planned transitions to independence. Staff work tremendously hard to develop positive relationships with young people based on mutual respect and trust. New key-working initiatives provide more meaningful interactions that focus on promoting self-esteem, developing strategies for managing difficult situations, reflecting on feelings, and looking at what is going well together with things that are causing concern. As a result, young people learn more about themselves, and develop a positive self-image and emotional resilience. For example, young people can now identify positive qualities in themselves, such as being funny, clever, having nice manners, and being good at music and maths.	

A young person said about key working, 'It helps me think about stuff. I write it down and I then look back. It helps me to see how I have changed.'

Young people have been involved in contributing to the resource packs for this initiative which are now being disseminated across the authority. Young people understandably take great pride in the contribution they have made to this process.

Young people recognise how much staff support them and the positive impact that this has on their lives. For example, one young person said, 'If it wasn't for the staff, I would be in a mess. They are brilliant.'

Staff promote the importance of learning and education. As a result, young people's attitudes to education significantly improve, together with their motivation to want to do better. For example, one young person with a previously very poor attendance record maintained 100% attendance after arriving at the home. Most young people study hard for their exams, attend additional lessons and revise at home. Consequently, they do their best. Two young people have successfully made the transition to college, where they have settled in well and enjoy their respective courses. This represents significant progress given their past histories.

Where young people struggle with education, training or employment, staff ensure that they are on hand to support them, and they work closely with education partners to help young people overcome their difficulties. For example, one young person is now starting an employability course because he discovered college is not for him. Furthermore, staff support young people in school where necessary, to minimise the risk of exclusion. One young person receives a bespoke education programme. Although the reasons for this are understood by managers, this is not reflected within the young person's relevant plans. A recommendation is raised to address this shortfall.

Young people's opinions matter, and their feelings and well-being are at the forefront of everything staff do. This makes young people feel valued. Regular consultation with young people individually and in groups ensures that young people have their say about the day-to-day running of the home. Young people participate in their review meetings, and some have even chaired their own meetings. This means each young person contributes to discussions and decisions that affect them.

Young people make significant progress from their starting points in different aspects of their development. For example, an independent reviewing officer said, 'A young person who was rather shy has gained her confidence so much that she has started going out on activities and taking pride in herself.' Another young person does not engage in risky behaviour such as self-harm as much as they once did.

Staff develop excellent relationships with young people's families, and promote

positive and safe contact. A social worker said, 'Staff promote contact amazingly well.' As a result, young people enjoy improved relationships and quality time with their parents, siblings and extended family.

Staff actively promote young people's good health. Young people attend routine and specialist appointments to promote their physical and emotional well-being. Staff support young people with smoking cessation, and ensure that they receive appropriate advice and support regarding such things as sexual health and drug misuse.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Young people say that they feel safe and are safe living in this home. One young person said, 'Staff make me feel safe because they do their job looking after me.' Young people can identify trusted adults who they share their worries with, and they are confident that they will be listened to. As a result, young people feel secure and cared about. Most young people currently living in the home rarely go missing. When they do, staff respond by making robust efforts to locate them and ensure their safe return. Managers prompt children's services to carry out return home interviews, so that young people have the opportunity to speak to someone who is independent about what prompted them to go missing and what happened while they were absent from the home. Staff ensure that young people receive specialist advice in relation to risky behaviour. For example, representatives from the Amy Winehouse Foundation visited the home and spoke to young people about the dangers of drug use and illegal highs. Young people reflected on what they learned, commenting, 'You don't know what's in drugs' and 'I learned more about illegal highs and the effects you could have after taking them.' As a result of the support and advice they receive, incidents of young people experimenting with illegal highs have reduced. Staff clearly understand the risks posed by young people's behaviour, and this knowledge is underpinned by robust risk assessments. Staff develop an excellent understanding of young people's needs and triggers, and there are clear strategies in place to respond to risky situations and behaviours. This protects young people from harm and promotes their well-being. Staff work exceptionally hard to minimise and manage incidents of self-harm. Newly devised risk assessments, reflective work and the creation of distraction boxes help young people to recognise their triggers, and to identify different ways	

of coping with stress and anxiety. As a result, incidents of self-harm are reducing in frequency and severity.

Young people struggle to get along with each other, and relationships between those living in the home can be fractious. Changing allegiances mean that those involved each play a part, and no single young person is responsible. Individualised care ensures that young people receive appropriate support and guidance. Furthermore, group meetings help young people to see things from different perspectives. Clear boundaries enable young people to know what is expected of them, and help them to begin to recognise when their behaviour is unacceptable. Work is ongoing to help young people to treat each other with respect, and to learn how to resolve conflicts between themselves more easily.

Staff work collectively, consistently and calmly to help young people manage their behaviour. Staff promote appropriate behaviour through positive relationships, and this reduces the need for consequences. An independent reviewing officer said, 'Staff responses to challenging behaviour are calm, good natured, and clear messages are delivered warmly.' On the occasions when consequences are implemented, young people report that these are fair. No physical interventions have occurred for over a year, indicating that staff are skilled in de-escalation, which promotes young people's safety and well-being.

Effective collaboration with partner agencies helps to protect young people from harm. For example, in response to a recent concern about a young person's vulnerability to child sexual exploitation, the manager made a prompt referral to specialist services to safeguard the young person's welfare. Proactive relationships with the police minimise the risk of young people being criminalised. Early intervention allows for a restorative approach to be taken with young people who present behaviours that cause concern.

Timely health and safety checks ensure that a safe physical environment is maintained. The home is maintained to a very high standard, providing a comfortable and homely environment for young people to live in.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding
The home benefits from excellent leadership by a suitably qualified and experienced manager, who registered with Ofsted in 2010. Excellent deputising arrangements mean that the two assistant managers successfully maintained high standards of care during a period when the registered manager was away supporting another children's home within the authority. This	

reflects the strength and depth of the leadership team running this home.

The registered manager is inspirational and aspirational. A young person's personal advisor said, 'Within my working history I have never known another manager to be as passionate in caring for and supporting young people and ensuring that staff achieve positive outcomes for young people.'

The registered manager creates a supportive environment for staff. Staff receive regular supervision and training opportunities that meet their own developmental needs and the needs of young people in their care. A member of staff said, '[The manager] is the best, she looks after all of us, we all get a say and she will listen.'

Leaders and managers continually look for different ways to support young people, and to drive improvements forward. New and innovative approaches to key working, self-harm and preparation for independence positively impact on young people, and are all worthy of wider dissemination.

Young people receive exceptionally good care from a supportive, motivated, committed, warm and caring staff team. Low staff turnover provides young people with high levels of stability and consistency, and care from people who know and understand them well. Very positive relationships between staff and young people enable young people to make progress and to enjoy positive experiences. A young person who recently left the service could think of nothing the home could improve upon. She says the best things about her experience were 'the friendly atmosphere and all the support from staff'.

Professionals report high levels of satisfaction in the service, and in the standards of care afforded to young people. For example, an independent reviewing officer said, 'I have only positive things to say about the home.' A social worker reported that, 'The home is well organised, the young people are settled and happy, they thrive and outcomes are often improved. The staff work well together and have a positive influence on the young people.' Another social worker said that she wishes all of the children she supports could live in this home, describing it as 'wonderful'.

Rigorous monitoring systems enable leaders and managers to review the quality of the service provided. This provides them with an excellent understanding of the home's strengths and needs, and informs the development plan. Robust monitoring ensures that managers follow young people's progress closely. When concerns arise, the registered manager is quick to respond and involve other services where necessary, to address issues. Managers challenge other services where their response falls short of what is expected. For example, they recently challenged a school's approach to exclusion to ensure that teachers followed due process. This means that they advocate for young people, which promotes young people's interests and welfare.

The actions of leaders and managers demonstrate that they have the capacity to

learn from inspection. Improvements made to young people's risk assessments, and in reporting significant events to Ofsted, mean that the two recommendations raised at the last inspection have been met.

One recommendation is raised following this inspection.

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 that 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 that 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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