

Children's home – Interim inspection

Inspection date	10/02/2017
Unique reference number	SC039673
Type of inspection	Interim
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	09/11/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Outstanding
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection This home was judged outstanding at the full inspection. At this interim inspection, Ofsted judges that it has sustained effectiveness. Young people continue to receive excellent support from dedicated staff. A young person who has recently moved on from the home said, 'The staff have helped me a lot and have been there for me. They have been amazing.' Young people told the inspector that they feel happy and safe, and that they get on well with the staff. Very positive interactions were observed between the staff and young people. Relationships are based on care and mutual respect. Young people and staff share good humour, and this makes for a relaxed and warm environment. Relationships between young people have improved since the last inspection. With the support of staff, young people have devised their own conflict resolution charter. This outlines young people's commitment to using strategies such as, 'walk away', 'don't involve others to make it worse', 'tell staff', and 'sit down and talk it through'. As a result, they are able to recognise potential conflict situations more easily and are able to walk away from arguments, which means overall they get along with each other better. Teaching young people how to manage conflict equips them with an important life skill. The staff manage transitions into the home very well. Young people visit before moving in. This gives them the chance to ask questions, meet the staff and young people, and prepare for their next steps. The registered manager carefully considers the matching of new young people to those already living in the home. She thinks through the risks and the potential impact of new admissions. This helps keep young people safe and maintains stability. A new young person said, 'There is nothing [about the home] I don't like so far.' He enjoys being able to see his friends, likes his keyworker, and has already been taken to watch football matches, which is something that he likes to do. The staff encourage young people to participate in activities that suit their interests. For example, one young person plays football for a local team and another young person has started kickboxing. This builds their confidence, provides opportunities to develop new friendships and enables young people to have fun while learning new skills.	

Professionals and parents continue to have high levels of satisfaction in the service and in the care provided to young people. A parent commented: '[X] loves it. The home is one of his safe places. [Staff] give him independence, he is encouraged and he makes choices for himself. He is dealing a lot better with his anger. Staff constantly talk to me and tell me everything. I couldn't be more pleased, it's fantastic what they do.'

The registered manager continues to involve the home in new initiatives. For example, the staff and some young people are about to pilot a new programme designed to support and prepare young people for independence. Contributing to new developments shows a commitment to improving outcomes for young people.

Young people continue to receive support with their physical and emotional well-being, and staff respond effectively to any incident of self-harm. Young people receive prompt access to medical treatment and specialist services to safeguard and promote their well-being. The staff update risk assessments quickly to ensure that relevant information is shared. Staff work closely with young people to understand their triggers and support needs, and this promotes their welfare and safety.

The home remains relatively settled, with only occasional incidents of challenging or risky behaviour by young people. No young people have been reported missing or absent from the home since the last inspection. The staff manage behaviour well through the positive relationships that they have built with young people. The fact that restraint has not been used since April 2015 reflects how skilled staff are in managing young people's behaviour.

Young people access education that is best suited to their individual needs. The reasons why one young person receives home tutoring are now clearly outlined in his education plan. However, the amount of education that he receives has not increased as quickly as anticipated. This is because staff had been waiting for some equipment to be replaced, something which is now resolved. A recommendation is raised to ensure additional education is facilitated without further delay, to enable the young person to make progress in his learning.

This inspection highlighted vulnerabilities in staff recruitment processes. Gaps in employment history are not always accounted for prior to an individual starting work. Furthermore, consistent efforts are not made to verify the reasons why people have left relevant employment. This means that the principles of safe recruitment practice are not adhered to and consequently this does not fully protect young people.

Two recommendations are raised following this inspection.

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 irrespective of gender aged from 11 to 17 years, who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
09/11/2016	Full	Outstanding
26/01/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
27/05/2015	Full	Outstanding
03/03/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness

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 recommendations:

- Ensure that the home works closely with the placing authority so that the child is supported and enabled to resume full-time education. In the interim, the child should be supported to sustain or regain their confidence in education and be engaged in suitable structured activities. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', page 28, paragraph 5.15)

In particular, implement plans to increase a young person's participation in education in line with his individual needs.

- Ensure that good employment practice is maintained. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)

Specifically, ensure that gaps in employment history are addressed prior to a person starting work, and that the reasons for leaving relevant employment are verified as far as is reasonably practicable.

What the inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspection we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

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 whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

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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