

Children's homes - interim inspection

Inspection date	26/01/2016
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

Inspection date	26/01/2016
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 judge that it has sustained effectiveness. High standards of care have been maintained between inspections. Stability, consistency, good routines, and clear boundaries enable young people to make continuous progress relative to their starting points and length of time living in the home. For example, a young person has gone from being shy, quiet, guarded, and emotionally flat, to being happy, confident, engaged, and far more outgoing. A young person scores 9 out of 10 in terms of how well she is doing, and another told the inspector she is in 'a great place right now'. Transitions into and out of the home are well managed. Young people describe being given sufficient information before moving in, and having the opportunity to visit. This provides young people with the opportunity to ask questions and allay their fears. Support is offered in equal measure to those who move on, demonstrating a continuity of care and long term commitment to young people. Young people are positive about their time in the home with one saying: 'This home is where I found myself, and X is like a second mum to me'. A social worker describes staff as being 'very supportive and efficient' when a young person returned to live with her mum, something she had wanted and worked towards for a long time. Pro-active monitoring of young people's progress allows for analysis and reflection. This process means patterns and trends are identified, and plans put in place to address concerns. For example, a pattern of behaviour emerged in respect of one young person at school, on certain days and with particular teachers. Staff liaised with the school to share this, and a new support plan is being implemented. Furthermore, where there are concerns about progress managers respond promptly. For example, a multi-agency meeting is currently being co-ordinated to review a young person's emotional well-being, and look at how best to meet her needs. Good partnership working and swift action promote young people's welfare and safety. Young people make significant progress relating to their education, with some outcomes being exceptional. For example, one young person achieved GCSE's	

grades A-C, and is now studying for her A levels at college. Another young person is maintaining an apprenticeship subsequent to leaving the home. Where young people struggle staff effectively support them into alternative education or post 16 provision. Recently, a young person successfully attended an interview for a work placement to compliment her functional skills classes. Routines in the home support learning, expectations are high and boundaries clear. The inspector observed a young person completing work set by school during a period of exclusion, and staff are advocating well for a young man to ensure he receives the most appropriate provision to suit his needs.

Staff respond well to young people's health needs. All are registered quickly with relevant health services, and are supported to attend routine and specialist appointments. Links are made with mental health services, and advice is sought where necessary to meet young people's emotional needs. Some young people arrive at the home at high risk of self-harm. Risks and incidents reduce over time because of the support provided by an experienced staff team. This demonstrates significant progress for exceptionally vulnerable young people. Where those new to the home present with such behaviour, staff utilise their experience to support them and minimise risk. Refresher training is planned so that staff keep up to date with their knowledge and skills in this particular area.

Behaviour is managed through communication and quality relationships. Young people are praised and rewarded, and this promotes positive responses. Consequences are rare, but when implemented they are fair and proportionate. No restraints have occurred between inspections demonstrating the ability of staff to de-escalate situations. Staff are alert to the change in dynamics brought about by young people new to the home. Two young people in particular can clash on occasions. This is being monitored, and work is being undertaken to help them manage their relationship in a healthier way.

Young people say they are safe, and can talk to staff about their worries. Risks are clearly identified, and safeguarding issues are responded to swiftly and sensitively. Young people are supported through some difficult and upsetting experiences. Staff listen and take account of what young people tell them. Leaders and managers work well with partner agencies to ensure all matters are dealt with appropriately. This inspection identified that although risks are clearly identified and well responded to in practice, risk assessments do not always contain sufficient detail. This is an area identified for improvement so that strategies for minimising and managing risks are clearly outlined in the relevant records.

The registered manager does not notify Ofsted consistently about significant events that take place in the home. This means that all those with an interest in young people's safety and welfare have not been appropriately informed, and the regulator cannot effectively monitor events in the home. A recommendation is raised to improve consistency in this area.

Management arrangements are robust, and the home is led by a committed and

experienced leadership team. Effective succession planning means two assistant managers are ably supporting the registered manager who is temporarily overseeing a second children's home. Staff report a continuation in levels of support and stability provided to both themselves and young people.

At the last inspection on 27 May 2015, the manager was asked to take account of one recommendation. Action has been taken to ensure that people carrying out external monitoring visits are now sufficiently independent. This change improves the quality assurance arrangements in place.

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 sex aged from 11 to 17 years. The home takes emergency placements. Placements are also available for young people bailed or remanded by a court.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
27/05/2015	Full	Outstanding
03/03/2015	Interim	improved effectiveness
11/12/2014	Full	Good
11/02/2014	Interim	Good Progress

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 staff continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. In particular risk assessments must include steps and strategies the home will take to manage identified risks (The guide to the quality standards paragraph 9.5, page 42).
- Ensure systems are in place to notify Ofsted and other relevant persons if one of the situations specified in regulation 40(4) (a-e) occurs (The guide to the quality standards paragraph 14.10, page 63).

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 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 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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