

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	27/05/2015
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	Mr Paul McIntyre
Registered manager	Mrs Gwyneth Monk
Inspector	Ms Jackie Line

Previous Inspection	03/03/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Improved 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	Outstanding
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding

SC039673

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is outstanding because:

Leadership and Management

- Leaders and managers are inspirational, displaying passion and commitment to their role. This in turn sets the culture for the home which is innovative, warm, caring, and aspirational for young people.
- Robust and rigorous internal quality monitoring systems mean that any shortfalls are quickly identified and addressed. Consequently, there is an ongoing commitment to driving improvement forward and maintaining high standards within the home.
- Young people are exceptionally well cared for by a stable, experienced and highly competent staff team.
- The Registered Manager works collaboratively with partner agencies and this is hugely effective. She is quick to seek and secure specialist support services, where necessary to ensure the well-being of young people and staff.

Safeguarding

- Safeguarding is the highest priority, this ensures young people are well protected and safe living in this home.
- Risks are clearly identified, well understood and effectively managed. This helps to keep young people safe, and promotes their welfare.
- Risky behaviours that young people presented at the point of placement have dramatically reduced, and this has been sustained over time. For example, young people rarely go missing, and they are no longer involved in child sexual exploitation.

Experiences and progress of young people

- The quality of relationships between young people and staff is excellent. They are based on mutual respect, and consequently young people develop meaningful, reciprocal relationships with staff that stand the test of time.
- Young people say they are well supported by staff, and are empowered to make informed decisions about their own futures.
- Young people make significant progress based on their starting points, particularly in relation to their education, emotional well-being, and behaviour.

- Staff work inclusively with birth families and this has a tremendously positive impact on the lives of young people.
- Innovative and creative practice means that young people are well prepared for their next steps, and successfully manage their transition to independence.

To continue to improve the home needs to conclude its current review of external monitoring arrangements. This will ensure monthly quality monitoring visits are carried out by someone who is fully independent of the service, in line with new regulatory requirements

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):

- The registered person must appoint the independent person and is ultimately responsible for making sure that appointment does not give rise to a conflict of interest that would, or appear to, compromise the ability of that person to reach a rigorous and impartial judgement of the quality of that home's care (The Guide page 65, para. 15.6).

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 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
03/03/2015	CH – Interim	improved effectiveness
11/12/2014	CH – Full	Good
11/02/2014	CH – Interim	Satisfactory Progress
05/12/2013	CH – Full	Outstanding

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Outstanding
Young people experience stable placements and make significant progress in many areas, including their social presentation, self-awareness and emotional resilience. As a result, young people develop and mature, grow in confidence and learn to make responsible decisions. One young person confirmed: 'Staff help me to make my own decisions'. Furthermore, a social worker reports: 'She has done brilliantly, she was very shy when she first came with very little self-worth. Now she is more confident, is attending college regularly and has friendships with girls her own age – the difference in her is amazing.' Relationships between staff and young people are warm, caring and long lasting. These strong bonds and attachments develop respect and trust. Young people recognise that staff care about them, and consequently they feel valued. The views of young people were captured with one saying: 'I love the staff, they have helped and supported me so much, they know if I am not okay, and they are always there if I need them'. In addition, social workers recognise the impact that the strength of relationships has on young people's lives, with one describing it as 'the key' to the progress they have made'. Young people are consulted about day to day arrangements, and about how to improve the running of the home. For example, when young people said they did not always receive useful information on moving into the home, staff responded to this. As a result, a new young people's guide to the home has been introduced. This ensures young people now have all the information they need to welcome them to the home, in a format that is more accessible to them. Moreover, the new guide is being considered for wider dissemination across the organisation. Consequently, young people's voices are improving practice on a broader scale, and this is positively impacting on the experiences of others. Staff work tremendously hard to develop positive working relationships with birth families, and young people benefit from seeing staff and families working well together. They facilitate contact both within and outside of the home, and are highly supportive of young people's need to maintain relationships with those who are important to them. As a result, young people are enjoying improved relationships, and in some cases this is to such an extent that a return home is being given serious consideration. Innovative practice enables young people to prepare for independence and informs care planning. For example, young people have moved onto supported	

accommodation rather than full independence, because of the learning that came from their participation in an independence project earlier in the year. Spending time in a rented house with minimal staff intervention informed their own thinking, and that of professionals about what their ongoing support needs were likely to be. This has informed care planning and ensured that young people are receiving the correct levels of support, as they take their next steps to independence.

Staff continue to provide an enhanced level of support to young people and their families, through planned outreach services. This means that when young people do move on from the home, they receive ongoing support. This adds to the support network they can call on in times of need, and increases the chances of success moving forward.

Young people are cared for by staff that always place their individual needs at the centre of their practice planning for young people's care and accommodation very well. Young people report they are informed when new residents come to live in the home, and say they are well prepared. One young person has experienced an unplanned ending between inspections. The reasons for this are clear, and the Registered Manager took necessary and decisive action when it became apparent their needs could not be met safely. In making this decision the Registered Manager took account of the needs and feelings of all young people living in the home to ensure that everyone was appropriately protected. Furthermore, staff continue to provide input and support for the young person who has moved on from the home. This means that they are receiving some continuity of care, and staff have acted with their welfare and well-being in mind.

Staff fully promote the importance of learning and education to all young people, and this has a positive impact on their future life chances. All young people are engaged in education, training, or employment and make progress as a result of individual programmes of support. Based on their starting points, and taking account of their individual needs and abilities, young people take great strides forward with their attendance and attainment. Where young people need additional support in specific areas, this is facilitated through effective communication with education providers and the virtual school. Although one young person is not currently accessing full-time education, there is a clear plan in place to increase her participation and this is regularly reviewed. Moreover, because of the levels of encouragement she receives, this young person is developing her confidence and is now keen to build on her educational achievement to date.

Staff are excellent advocates for young people in terms of health. Where young people are new to the home staff proactively engage services to understand and address any outstanding needs. All young people attend routine appointments, and access specialist services where required. As a result, young people receive strong support to maintain their physical and emotional well-being.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding
Young people say they are safe living in this home. Their safety is the highest priority for staff, and arrangements to protect young people are robust. Staff are well trained and clear about their role and responsibility to safeguard young people and promote their welfare. Appropriate information about complaints is available, and young people report they are confident in raising concerns should they need to. Young people rarely complain and there have been no complaints since the last inspection. Young people have the skills, and the relationships with staff to sort out minor issues through discussion or by raising matters during regular house meetings. Incidents of young people going missing happen rarely. Indeed there have only been two incidents between inspections, both of which were short in duration. Systems for following local protocols are in place, and are followed when incidents occur. Links are maintained with external agencies, and the missing from home co-ordinator reports there is 'excellent communication', with staff at the home. Independent return interviews take place, and information is shared with staff to continually improve practice and prevent reoccurrence. Individual risk assessments identify vulnerabilities, and agreed multi-agency strategies are in place to safeguard young people should they go missing. A social worker outlines the impact of robust safeguarding practice: 'Safeguarding is a priority in this home and [young person] has been managed effectively and efficiently. They have ensured that this young person does not place herself at risk by running away, which she previously did, so they have been able to use techniques and tactics to ensure she has freedom whilst being kept safe'. Young people are empowered to take age appropriate risks necessary for their continual development into adulthood. This means, for example that young people are entrusted to travel independently, to spend time with their friends and participate in different activities in the community. Staff keep in touch with young people when they are away from the home, and ensure they check on their welfare periodically. As a result, young people are enabled to have appropriate freedoms without compromising their safety. This helps to build their confidence and resilience. Incidents of risk taking behaviour by young people reduce dramatically when they come to live in this home. For example, where previously young people were at risk of child sexual exploitation this is no longer the case, and young people who used to have high instances of going missing now don't go missing at all. Young people do not engage in offending behaviour, and do not misuse alcohol. Where there are risks, these are clearly identified and appropriate strategies are put into	

place to minimise the risk of reoccurrence. For example, some young people informed staff that they had experimented with legal highs. Staff responded quickly and effectively to this concern. They organised for young people to gain advice, information and support from a specialised service, and the manager has arranged training for staff. As a result of effective staff intervention and support, young people gained a good understanding of the dangers of their behaviour, and stopped using legal highs. Furthermore, young people went on to complete their own research on the dangers of taking legal highs, and designed posters outlining key points in order to deter others.

There is a calm and effective approach to behaviour management. Levels of disruption are low and incidents of physical intervention are rare. Only one such incident has occurred between inspections and this was the first for over a year. The inspector observed staff respond to a young person displaying challenging behaviour with patience, sensitivity and thoughtfulness. At the same time staff made sure there were clear expectations and boundaries in place. It is demonstrably clear that staff have an excellent understanding of each young person's needs and triggers, and work creatively to manage these. Consequently, potentially highly charged situations are quickly diffused. Furthermore, young people are developing different coping strategies enabling them to manage their behaviour more appropriately.

Young people live in a home that is physically safe and secure. Regular environmental safety checks are undertaken and staff and young people regularly practice evacuating the home in an emergency. The home is maintained to an excellent standard, providing a homely environment in which young people invest and thrive.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding
The organisation and management of the home is outstanding. The Registered Manager has been in post since 2010 and holds an appropriate qualification. She demonstrates exceptional leadership which is recognised by staff, young people and professionals alike. As a result, there is a very clear ethos within the home. Staff confirm they are well supported and receive supervision regularly; this includes access to specialist support for the team where necessary. This enables staff to further understand the emotional impact that caring for young people can have on their own feelings. Appraisals take place within timescales, and these take into account the views of young people. It is clear that the management team are committed to staff development. There is a comprehensive training programme in place that is varied and meets the individual and collective needs of staff. This	

means that they keep up to date with their learning, and are equipped with the necessary skills to appropriately meet the complex needs of young people in their care.

Staff morale is high, and staff describe being 'content, motivated and happy' in their work. This translates into a very positive and relaxed atmosphere within the home, something that young people clearly benefit from. Staff unquestionably want the best for young people, and are committed to ensuring they achieve positive outcomes.

The Registered Manager is committed and passionate about her own role, and advocates strongly for young people. Staff and managers respectfully challenge decisions in order to get the best for young people. This determination is respected and ensures young people access appropriate support to meet their needs, and that their care plans are followed.

Internal quality monitoring takes place regularly, and is rigorous in its application. The systems in place provide a robust review of the home's practice relating to the quality of young people's care. The Registered Manager is reflective and constantly strives to improve the service. She is clear about the home's strengths and areas for development. All of this information contributes to the development plan which is reviewed and implemented, ensuring exceptionally high standards are maintained.

Recruitment processes could be more robust. Whilst references are being verified, there could be more detail added to records about this. The Registered Manager promptly liaised with the human resources department and received confirmation that a new pro-forma has been designed for reference verification, and that this has now been implemented. This demonstrates that any shortfalls that are identified are quickly resolved.

External monitoring takes place and this provides an additional layer to the quality assurance processes in place to protect young people. There is currently a review taking place about who is best placed to undertake these monthly monitoring visits, to ensure they are sufficiently independent in line with new regulatory requirements. A recommendation is made following this inspection to allow time for this review to conclude, and any changes to be implemented.

There are appropriate systems in place to notify Ofsted and other relevant persons of significant events that occur. This ensures that people are kept informed, and this means that young people's welfare is promoted. Clear partnership arrangements underpin all practice and there is tremendous satisfaction with the high-quality services provided.

No recommendations or requirements were set at the last inspection, and no complaints about the home have been received between inspections.

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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