

SC039676

Registered provider: Lancashire County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a short-break children's home operated by a local authority. It provides care and accommodation for up to 10 young people who may have physical and/or learning disabilities.

Inspection dates: 8 to 9 November 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	Outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
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The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 28 March 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is outstanding because:

- Young people benefit from excellent care and support, which is planned in line with their individual needs and wishes.
- Young people make good progress from their starting points. For example, they grow in confidence and increase their independence skills.
- Young people have opportunities to enjoy a range of fulfilling activities and develop friendships.
- Young people benefit from well-considered planning when joining or leaving the service.
- Risks to young people's safety and well-being are clearly identified and carefully managed, so they are protected from harm.
- Positive, consistent support enables young people to develop safe, appropriate behaviours.
- The home is very well led by a highly experienced registered manager.
- Social workers and parents express high levels of satisfaction with the service provided.
- Young people receive their care from well-trained, well-supported staff.
- The registered manager makes good use of quality assurance systems, which supports continuous improvement.

The children's home's areas for development:

- Care should be taken to ensure that young people's risk assessment and care planning information contains all the relevant, up-to-date information. This will help to ensure that staff have access to current guidance about how to meet young people's needs at all times.
- Formal supervision should be provided to all staff on a regular basis to support their ongoing development and to support reflective practice.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
12/12/2016	Full	Outstanding
03/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
12/01/2016	Full	Good

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

Recommendations

- A record of supervision should be kept for staff, including the manager. The record should provide evidence that supervision is being delivered in line with regulation 33(4)(b). ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.3)
- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4) This specifically relates to risk assessment and care planning information.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Young people receive an excellent level of care and support, which is planned in line with their individual needs. This helps to ensure that their needs are continually met in an effective and responsive way. Feedback from parents, carers and external professionals involved in young people's care is consistently positive. Their comments include: 'I can only describe them as outstanding. The care [name of young person] is given is exceptional in every way,' and 'I have so much confidence in them. I can be sure that [name of young person] is always well looked after. I couldn't ask for more.'

A social worker commented on the ability of managers and staff to adapt the service to meet young people's specific needs. She gave an example of a young person, whom she introduced to the service, who had some complex health needs. The social worker described how the registered manager immediately arranged training for the staff team members, to help ensure that they had the necessary skills to care for the young person in a safe manner. The social worker said, 'Whatever needs doing, they just get on and do it. That "can-do" approach really stands out for me and it makes the service more inclusive.'

Young people receive their care from a consistent, well-trained staff team that knows them well and fully understands their needs. This supports trusting and nurturing relationships between staff and young people. Observations of young people interacting with staff and receiving care and support are highly positive. Staff support young people in a kind, caring and patient manner and take time to understand the things that are important to them.

Staff ensure that young people receive safe and effective health care. When young

people have specific health conditions, staff have a full understanding of their needs and the support that they require. A parent and a social worker commented on the home's effective medication management. One parent said, '[Name of young person's] medication has been very complicated. There have been so many changes but they are so thorough with them and always take time to ensure that they are fully up to speed. That is very reassuring for me.'

Young people make positive progress due to the standard of care and support that they receive. For example, one young person has been supported to establish a much-improved sleeping pattern, which has had a positive impact on his overall well-being. Several young people have developed skills which have enabled them to manage their personal care more independently. An innovative approach to one young person's behaviour support has been so successful that other services, including education, have adopted the home's approach. This has resulted in a significant decrease in the number of serious incidents involving the young person.

Managers and staff are committed to enabling young people to express their thoughts, needs and wishes. They are skilled in the use of various communication tools and constantly develop these to meet young people's individual needs. One staff member demonstrated a new tool that she has developed for the purpose of assisting young people who do not verbally communicate to express pain or discomfort.

Staff have good understanding of young people's individual methods of communication, for example the use of gestures or vocal sounds. A parent commented that staff at the home now communicated more effectively with her son than some of his own family members. Meaningful communication helps staff to understand what young people are expressing and learn about the things that are important to them. As a result, young people are enabled to make choices in their day-to-day care.

Young people are provided with a range of information, which is produced in formats that they can understand. For example, the young person's guide and complaints procedure are available in a pictorial, easy-to-read format. This means that the information is more accessible and meaningful for the young people and demonstrates that the registered manager considers young people's needs when developing information.

Young people benefit from a high quality activities programme, which is carefully planned to provide opportunities for them to socialise, try new things and to have fun. Examples of recent activities include a trip to a pirate festival, a puppet festival, a Harry Potter theme day and a torchlight parade. Great care is taken to evaluate each young person's response to an activity, so that staff learn about the things that they particularly enjoy. A social worker commented, 'They are always trying something new. They get really creative and the young people have some fabulous experiences.'

The registered manager and staff provide valuable support to those young people moving on to adult services. Each young person who is due to move on has an individualised transition passport, which is developed by staff. This includes information

about their strengths and needs, and assesses the support required by the young person to experience a smooth transition. There are a number of examples of very positive pieces of work that have taken place recently. A social worker described the recent transition of a young person who has some complex needs. She commented that the registered manager and staff had gone 'above and beyond' in the support of this young person's transition, working closely with the new staff team members to help them get to know the young person, and facilitating a number of visits. She said, 'It was a really great transition in difficult circumstances and that was due to the work put in by the home.'

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Young people appeared relaxed and content in their surroundings, indicating that they feel safe at the home. All the parents spoken with expressed a high level of confidence in managers and staff to provide safe and effective care to their loved ones.

Young people receive their care from a highly experienced staff team that has a clear understanding of their needs. Staff demonstrate the ability to identify risks to young people's safety and well-being and are able to confidently describe the measures in place to keep each young person safe. Young people's care plans include strategies in managing risk and maintaining their safety. It was noted in some examples that parts of this information could have been more detailed. A recommendation is raised in relation to this matter to support further improvement.

Safeguarding procedures are well established. All staff are provided with training at the start of their employment, which is periodically updated. Staff demonstrate a clear understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities and are able to confidently describe the actions that they would take in the event that any safeguarding concerns are identified. Staff have clear understanding of the organisation's whistleblowing policy and express confidence in managers to deal with any concerns effectively.

Staff support young people's complex behaviours in an effective manner. Staff have good understanding of young people's emotional responses and take time to understand the behaviours that they present. Staff have clear, individualised guidance for each young person about the potential triggers for challenging behaviour and agreed strategies to manage them. This enables staff to provide consistent, effective behaviour support which, in turn, supports young people to develop safe and appropriate behaviours.

There have been no incidents of physical intervention or restraint since the last inspection, which further demonstrates the positive behaviour support provided at the home. One parent described her son as being 'overall, much calmer' since he began using the service. A social worker complimented the home on the behaviour support provided to one young person, which had been so successful that other services supporting the young person had adopted the home's approaches.

No new staff members have been recruited at the home since the last inspection. However, well-established recruitment procedures are in place, which help to ensure that any new staff employed are of suitable character. This helps to protect young people from harm.

Young people are cared for in safe, comfortable surroundings, which helps to protect them from harm. A range of health and safety checks are routinely carried out to ensure that any matters needing attention are quickly identified and addressed. A staff member was observed conducting health and safety checks and identifying a potential health and safety concern. He was seen to report this immediately, and it was noted that a contractor attended within hours to rectify the issue.

A daily fire risk assessment helps to ensure that young people's specific needs are carefully considered and that emergency procedures are agreed for any group of young people who may be staying at the home. This helps to ensure that young people can be evacuated quickly in the event of an emergency. Equipment, such as hoists and fire safety equipment, is regularly checked and serviced to confirm that it is safe for use.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home benefits from highly effective leadership. The suitably qualified and experienced registered manager demonstrates a strong commitment to the care of young people and clear expectations of high standards across the service. External professionals and young people's parents or carers are highly complimentary about the management of the home and the standards of care provided. A social worker commented, '[Name of registered manager] manages very professionally without losing that family feel. That takes a lot of skill.'

The registered manager reports a good level of support from the provider, including regular access to supervision. The home is adequately resourced and delivers the services described in the statement of purpose. The registered manager ensures that there are sufficient numbers of staff on duty to provide a safe, effective service. The turnover of staff is extremely low, and the use of casual staff is minimal. This means that young people benefit from consistency and receive their care from staff who understand their needs.

The registered manager and staff work positively with external agencies. Highly effective relationships between the home, partner agencies and parents result in young people receiving well-planned care. A social worker said, 'Communication is excellent. Information is often prepared before I have even requested it. They always attend reviews and give valuable input.'

The registered manager demonstrates an in-depth knowledge of young people's needs and of the support that they require. Care planning is effective. Young people's strengths and needs are clearly considered, and there is clear guidance for staff about how their needs should be met. In a small number of examples, daily care plans lacked detail

about some aspects of young people's day-to-day needs. This information was available in other records. However, it is recommended that daily care plans are updated to include these details so that staff can access the information quickly and efficiently.

The home is clearly centred on the needs of young people. The registered manager ensures that careful consideration is given to young people's needs when organising the service. One parent commented, 'What stands out for me is the way they make sure the young people are really well matched. They always have him with other young people he gets on with. I think that is really good.' Another parent described how the registered manager often 'went out of her way' to accommodate specific requests, which she found immensely helpful.

The current staff team includes a number of staff who moved from a different home, which was closed following a reconfiguration of services across the area. As such, some staff have faced disruption and uncertainty. Nevertheless, staff morale is high, and staff present as highly motivated and proud of the service.

Staff describe a supportive environment, within which they are able to express their views and raise concerns. A staff member commented, 'I cannot imagine there ever being anything I couldn't raise.' A number of examples of individual staff support were noted. For example, the registered manager has revised one staff member's working patterns to support them through some family illness. While staff reported a good level of day-to-day support, some shortfalls were identified in the home's formal supervision programme. The registered manager was able to demonstrate that she had identified this issue and was taking steps to address it.

There is a comprehensive training programme in place designed to equip staff with the skills to meet young people's needs safely and effectively. Managers carefully monitor staff training to ensure that the whole team is up to date and engaging in refresher training within mandatory timescales. The training programme is adapted in line with the specific needs of children and young people. For example, staff have been provided with training in meeting one young person's healthcare needs.

All but one staff member have nationally recognised qualifications in caring for young people. The experience of staff was evident throughout the inspection. Staff engaged positively in the inspection, often requesting to show the inspector positive pieces of work that they had completed.

The registered manager makes effective use of quality assurance processes, which enable her to monitor standards and safety on a regular basis. Action is taken to ensure that any areas for development are addressed. One requirement and one recommendation were made following the home's last inspection, which have been addressed. Effective quality assurance means that young people benefit from a continually improving service.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and 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.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, 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'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC039676

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Lancashire County Council, PO Box 78, Preston PR1 8XJ

Responsible individual: Paul McIntyre

Registered manager: Susan Sewell

Inspector

Marie Cordingley, social care inspector

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