

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	12/12/2016
Unique reference number	SC039676
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Lancashire County Council
Registered provider address	Lancashire County Council P O Box 100 Preston PR1 0LD

Responsible individual	Paul McIntyre
Registered manager	Susan Sewell
Inspector	Elaine Clare

Inspection date	12/12/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Good
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	Good

SC039676

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is outstanding because:

- Young people enjoy a variety of positive and life-enriching experiences. They make progress in all aspects of their development.
- Staff know the young people very well and they understand their needs. Staff are insightful and skilled in respect of the complex needs of each young person.
- Staff provide young people with structure and routine, and young people feel safe and well supported.
- Staff are innovative and tireless in their approach to facilitating communication with young people. Young people contribute to the running of the home when they can. They are supported to express their views about their future plans.
- Comprehensive risk management plans help to ensure young people's safety.
- Excellent multi-agency working and partnerships with families mean that care plans are effective and relevant.
- Staff treat each young person with respect and dignity.
- The registered manager has high aspirations for each young person. She is a strong manager and sets high standards for the care and welfare of young people.

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:

- The registered person must have systems in place so that all home staff are supervised and supported to provide each child with the high-quality care that they need. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', April 2015, page 52, paragraph 13.2)
- The registered person should oversee the welfare of the children in their care through observation and engagement with: each child; the home's staff; each child's family/carers where appropriate; and professionals involved in the care or protection of each child including their social worker, independent reviewing officer (IRO), teachers, clinicians etc. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', April 2015, page 45, paragraph 10.16)

Full report

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 have physical and learning disabilities.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/01/2016	Full	Good
23/03/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
22/10/2014	Full	Good
15/10/2013	Interim	Good progress

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Outstanding
Young people make significant progress in all aspects of their lives. They develop a positive self-view and increased confidence. This is because young people receive excellent personalised individual care reflecting their abilities, needs and vulnerabilities. A professional said, 'I cannot praise the team highly enough. They are exceptional.' A relative said, 'Staff do things with him that no one else has done. Nothing is too much trouble. He has made such progress there.' One young person who has left the service visited during the inspection to both his delight and that of the staff. His face expressed how pleased he was to see everyone. Young people have immensely positive relationships with staff. Staff are courteous and treat young people with dignity and respect. They are able to let staff know their views and wishes as staff take time to understand what young people are saying. A variety of communication tools in the home further reinforces and enhances the importance of young people's voices. Some young people are helped to express their views by using Makaton or picture symbols. Young people know that staff value their views and opinions, and their self-respect and confidence grow as a result. Young people are supported by staff who make considerable efforts to explain and reassure them if they are troubled or distressed. Social stories in a variety of formats are regularly used by young people. Staff are imaginative in how they enable young people's understanding of complex scenarios. Young people's understanding is increased and their safety enhanced. Young people's enjoyment of food has been harnessed, and they are involved in food preparation and baking with staff. The weekly menu reflects their choices, and young people begin to recognise healthy options and the effect on their health of making balanced choices. Young people's health needs are met, as detailed health plans clearly and concisely describe their medical needs. Close communication with health professionals ensures that positive outcomes are maintained. A professional commented, 'The carers display an excellent standard of knowledge and skills that support his emotional and behavioural health.' There is very good liaison with schools, young people attend school promptly and attendance is excellent. Young people's educational opportunities are enhanced and their learning maximised. Young people enjoy a wide range of opportunities and activities in the home and community. Plans reflect young people's choices. Two young people had been to	

the local pantomime and others to a Christmas fair. They enjoy new opportunities, widening their experience and community involvement.

Young people contribute to the running of the home whenever possible. This includes helping with chores at meal times, cleaning areas of the home and keeping their rooms tidy. Young people develop age-appropriate skills that help them move towards increased independence, suitably equipped with life skills. When young people move to their next placement, staff are dedicated to ensuring that the transition is as smooth as possible. Young people are supported at each stage, as staff are proactive and forward thinking about careful planning and preparation of each young person. Young people's distress and anxiety about change are reduced, as they are informed and prepared for each stage.

Families are welcomed in the home at any time. A relative said, 'Staff are always there for us if things become difficult. They have made a difference as I feel reassured that they are there to help us.'

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Young people are kept safe at the home, as staff know them well, and have effective strategies in place to meet their complex needs. Staff regularly review and update individualised plans and risk assessments in response to young people's changing needs. Communication between staff and young people is very good. Young people are consulted and informed about their plans. They feel safe and secure, as they understand the boundaries and house rules. Behaviour incidents have markedly decreased as young people have moved onto adult services. The atmosphere in the home is calm and welcoming for all. In the home, information is presented pictorially or in other formats that are appropriate to young people's needs. Young people's safety is increased, as information is more accessible to them. Staff help young people to understand what they see, and this is reinforced by discussions with staff, in young people's meetings and in one-to-one sessions. Young people are helped to understand the dangers presented by social media, and appropriate measures are in place to supervise and support young people's use of the internet. Young people participate in discussions about bullying and how to make complaints, at their weekly meetings with staff. They are reassured that	

adults take their views and concerns seriously.

Young people do not go missing from the home due to the high supervision and support of staff. Young people have complex needs, and appropriate staffing ratios ensure that they are kept safe. Young people are cared for by a consistent, committed staff team. This means that they develop trusted relationships with known staff and can talk to them if they want to.

There is a safe system for managing young people's medication. This contributes to a good standard of care. The registered manager has oversight and audits the records and practice to ensure safety and compliance.

Young people live in a home that is safe and secure. Regular safety checks are undertaken, of electric and fire systems, to ensure good working order. Young people are familiar with the need for checking fire alarms and completing fire evacuations from time to time.

Young people's safety is further promoted through the appropriate vetting of staff. There are effective and safe recruitment practices in place, meaning that young people are protected from adults who may wish to harm them.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
This short-break home is managed very well by an experienced and qualified registered manager who has been in post since 2007. The registered manager provides strong and effective leadership. Her focus is on the care of individual young people and ensuring that they progress in all areas of their development. She is enthusiastic and provides motivation and inspiration for staff to maintain excellent standards of care in the home. The staff team is well balanced in terms of gender and life experience, and this provides young people with opportunities to have positive relationships with a variety of adults. The home does not use agency staff. This means that young people develop relationships with adults whom they see regularly and who provide consistency of care. Young people are supported by staff who receive supervision, training and appraisals. They benefit as staff have opportunities to reflect on young people's welfare and progress. Not all staff receive regular supervision, and staff feel that they have not received supervision as regularly as in previous years. The registered	

manager was asked to address this shortfall. All staff complete the home's induction and core training. Additional training is provided for staff where young people have specific needs. This ensures that staff have the necessary understanding and skills to meet young people's needs.

The registered manager understands the strengths and areas for development for the home, and she has an ambitious and achievable plan in place to ensure that the service continues to progress. These plans include team development, additional training for staff, involvement of young people in activities, plans for outings in the wider community with young people and developments of their new home. Young people benefit, as the care that they receive and the environment that they live in continue to evolve and improve.

The statement of purpose is clear and concise, and the service provided by staff meets its objectives. The registered manager constantly monitors the standards in the home through well-organised methods of self-scrutiny. The registered manager works closely with the monthly independent visitor who provides external scrutiny of the service provided by the home. The independent visitor, on their last four visits, has not visited at a time when children and young people are using the service and, as a result, has not heard what they have to say about the home. The registered manager values the suggestions made by the independent visitor and sees these as an opportunity to improve the service to young people.

Partnership working is a great strength of the home. A social worker said, 'I have been privileged to work with the staff at [Name of home], who approach every case with a flexibility of mind and a can-do attitude. Their child-centred approach to practice has, without question, improved the outcomes of children on my caseload.' Social workers commended the registered manager and staff on the regular and good-quality recordings, one saying, 'Written and spoken communication with staff about young people is excellent.'

The registered manager ensures that all necessary information is available to staff about the needs of young people. When there are shortfalls in receiving information from other professionals, the registered manager and staff ensure that these are forthcoming. This ensures that staff have all the relevant and updated information about young people and their plans necessary for their needs to be understood and met.

Young people have positive relationships with their neighbours, a primary special school. The home is situated in a quiet, comfortable, residential area, and young people benefit from living in a large, well-furnished and maintained environment. There are some areas of the home that could be improved, but this has been recognised by the local authority and forms part of its redevelopment plan for the home.

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 whom 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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