

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	2 June 2016
Unique reference number	SC039689
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Lancashire County Council
Registered provider's address	Lancashire County Council P O Box 78 Preston PR1 8XJ

Responsible individual	Paul McIntyre
Registered manager	Post vacant
Inspector	Jackie Line

Inspection date	2 June 2016
Previous inspection judgement	Declined in effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	The home was subject to one compliance notice following the last inspection. This was deemed to have been met following a monitoring inspection on 8 March 2016.
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC039689

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Young people benefit from being well cared for by a stable, experienced, committed and motivated staff team.
- Staff genuinely care and work hard to develop positive and trusting relationships with young people.
- Young people participate in different activities with staff. This helps them to invest in the home and relationships. Furthermore, they build confidence and have fun.
- Good routines and structures at home support attendance and learning. As a result, young people's education outcomes are steadily improving.
- Young people's physical and emotional needs are met, with access to specialist services where required.
- Care planning is robust. Staff contribute effectively to this process, and young people are involved in decisions affecting them.
- Staff plan and prepare young people well for independence. Managers advocate for young people to ensure that the timing of their transition to independent living is in line with their wishes, feelings and needs.
- Staff support young people to maintain contact with their birth family, where this is appropriate. Largely well-managed arrangements enable young people to enjoy positive time with people who are important to them.
- Young people can articulate how their lives have improved since coming to live in this home.
- Staff work hard to manage young people's complex needs, including some risky behaviour. Supervision and vigilance help to keep young people safe.
- A restorative approach to behaviour management means that young people begin to understand the impact of negative behaviour on themselves and others. Incentive schemes also motivate young people to make more positive choices about their behaviour.
- Good collaborative working is firmly established with relevant partner agencies to safeguard and promote young people's welfare.
- Interim management arrangements currently in place are highly effective. Strong leadership from a dedicated manager has driven improvements forward since the last inspection.

To continue to improve, the home needs to:

- Ensure that when young people make complaints, the procedures are followed and they are responded to promptly. Furthermore, that the outcome of complaints is clearly recorded.
- Take steps to check where young people are known to stay when they are away from the home without permission. This is to ensure that such arrangements are safe. This information should then be included in young people's risk assessments.
- Explore the circumstances around young people's drug use to understand fully the levels of risk, support the young people and keep them safe from harm.
- Review staffing arrangements so that enough staff are available to help young people manage bedtime routines, which can be sometimes be difficult.
- Ensure that daily records contain sufficient detail to provide more context for the reader about incidents that happen and what actions staff take.

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 children are able to take up issues or make a complaint with support.

In particular, that when a complaint is made the registered person makes sure that the complaint is responded to promptly by those responsible for doing so, and that the outcome of the complaint is recorded ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.13).

- Ensure that staff support children to be aware of and manage their own safety both inside and outside the home to the extent that any good parent would. Staff should help children to understand how to protect themselves, feel protected and be protected from significant harm.

In particular, staff should take steps to explore with young people the circumstances around their drug use to support them fully and keep them safe ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 43, paragraph 9.9).

- Ensure that the registered person specifies the procedures to be followed and the roles and responsibilities of staff when a child is missing or away from the home without permission.

In particular, staff must take steps to check the places where young people are known to stay when they are absent from the home without permission, and satisfy themselves that young people are safe there. All relevant information should then be included in a child's risk assessment ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph, 9.28).

- Ensure that the registered person plans staffing levels to ensure that they meet the needs of children, specifically in relation to managing and supporting bedtime routines ('Guide to the children's home's regulations including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.15).

- Ensure that staff understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. In particular, that children's daily records contain sufficient detail and context to events that occur ('Guide to the children's home's regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4).

Full report

Information about this children's home

This service is a local authority children's home. The home provides care and accommodation for six young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28 January 2016	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
18 August 2015	Full	Requires improvement
26 March 2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
14 January 2015	Full	Adequate

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
Young people develop positive relationships with staff. They are happy and relaxed, and benefit from warm and trusting relationships with staff who genuinely care. One young person said: 'Staff spend time with me. They know when something is up and they talk to me about it. They are lovely and I am well looked after.' Other young people describe staff as kind, and say that staff listen. Young people experience stable placements and they are well cared for. This enables them to make good progress against their individual starting points. For example, young people become more independent, develop confidence, learn strategies to manage their behaviour more appropriately and accomplish things that improve their self-esteem. They recognise that their lives are improving. One young person told the inspector: 'Things are much better for me since I moved here. I am actually going to school.' Another said: 'I was not ready [for independence] before, but I feel like I am more now.' Staff build constructive relationships with family members and friends to promote contact for young people, where this is appropriate. Over time, some young people enjoy improved relationships with those who are important to them. Others receive support from staff, who empower them to make their own decisions about whether they see their family members or not. Consequently, arrangements are individual to each young person, and in line with their wishes and feelings. Education outcomes improve steadily. Some young people remain on a reduced timetable to suit their needs. Attendance is better, and clear plans are in place to increase their participation. One young person, who is new to the home, now attends school following an 18-month absence. Although it is early days, this represents a significant achievement. It also reflects how well staff motivate this young person and how hard they have worked to identify the right education provision for him. Other achievements include a young person who has recently passed some entry level courses and secured a place at college, one who has completed a traineeship and one who is enjoying a work placement with hopes of securing an apprenticeship. As a result, staff promote young people's education, and support their learning and entry into further training or employment. Staff meet young people's individual health needs well. Some young people access specialist support to address their emotional needs or to help them to manage and reduce their cannabis use. All young people are registered with primary health services and receive support to attend routine appointments. Staff persist when	

young people sometimes refuse to attend. They make further appointments to ensure that young people receive timely reviews from the dentist and optician. Staff empower some young people to make their own health appointments, collect their own prescriptions and manage their own medication, where it is safe and appropriate to do so. Consequently, they learn valuable skills, enabling them to take responsibility for their own health and well-being as they move towards independence.

Young people develop skills which assist their transition to adult life. These include shopping for food and clothes, cooking, helping around the home and learning to travel independently. Good care planning means that individual pathway plans are robust. Young people contribute to this process, so are involved in plans and decisions about their future. As a result, young people know what is happening next and they are well prepared.

Consultation with young people is done individually and collectively, through key-work sessions and young people's meetings. They engage in these forums and their opinions influence the day-to-day running of the home.

Young people live in a home that is well maintained. Improvements to the physical environment mean that young people live in a home that is warm, welcoming and homely. Following a recommendation made at the last inspection, staff work together with young people to help them to look after their bedrooms. As a result, they now receive the appropriate support to maintain their personal space to a reasonably good standard. This makes young people feel valued and cared for.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
Young people say that they feel safe and can identify a trusted adult who they can talk to, inside or outside of the home, should they have any concerns. Young people know how to complain. One complaint has not been responded to promptly, and managers have failed to follow this up with those responsible. Consequently, the outcome is unclear, and neither the young person nor staff know what has happened because of their complaint. This does not give the impression that complaints are taken seriously. Young people sometimes go missing or spend time away from the home without permission. Staff endeavour to find out the triggers for this behaviour, and use the information to minimise and manage risk. This yields good results, and has significantly reduced missing episodes for one young person. Occasionally, staff fail to take appropriate action when young people are missing or absent from home. For example, during one incident staff did not go to collect a	

young person when they had the opportunity to do so. This resulted in the young person being away from the home without permission for a further night, exposing him to potential risk of harm. Furthermore, staff do not always carry out appropriate checks when young people tell them where they are but refuse to return home. This does not promote young people's safety and welfare, and contributes to the judgement of requiring improvement.

Staff have not fully explored the circumstances around some young people's drug use. This means that they do not fully understand the level of risk to young people outside of the home, in response to threats made against them. Although steps are being taken to minimise risk, more could be done to try to understand what has happened and work out a way forward to protect young people from harm.

Behaviour management in the home can be an issue, with volatile young people exploring boundaries, and acting out past frustrations and feelings of anger. Staff generally manage this well and work collectively to provide young people with consistency in a supportive environment. Some young people told the inspector that they do not always like the behaviour of other residents, and it unsettles them. A young person was physically hurt during one episode of challenging behaviour. Such incidents are rare, and young people say that, when they do happen, staff are close by and take action. This reassures them and helps them to feel safe.

Where appropriate, staff work with external agencies to try to manage young people's behaviour without criminalising them. For example, some good work goes on between staff, social workers and police from the early interventions team. This ensures that young people receive clear messages about what constitutes acceptable behaviour, and the possible consequences should their behaviour fall short of this.

Where young people are already involved in the criminal justice system, staff support them well. One youth offending worker told the inspector that staff are very supportive, and young people's compliance with the court-imposed orders improves because of this. Good support and effective partnership working reduce risk and promote young people's welfare.

Staff focus on developing young people's self-confidence and self-esteem. Behaviour management focuses on rewarding positive choices, thereby reducing the need for sanctions. Young people report that consequences are fair. Individual work with young people helps them to reflect on their behaviour. As a result, they begin to develop an understanding about how their behaviour impacts on themselves and others. Furthermore, over time young people learn strategies to modify their behaviour.

Restraint is only ever used as a last resort to protect young people and staff from harm. Only one restraint has occurred since the last inspection. Records show that

managers follow procedures, and those involved have the opportunity to reflect on and learn from what has happened.

Sound recruitment processes prevent unsuitable people from being able to work with young people. Routine health and safety checks create a safe environment. Fire procedures are clear, and equipment is tested and serviced regularly. Young people and staff participate in fire drills, therefore know what to do in the event of such an emergency.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
A new manager took up post very recently and is currently applying to register with Ofsted. Interim management arrangements have been in place since the departure of the registered manager in January 2016. The interim manager will continue for a short period to allow for a smooth transition of responsibilities. The interim manager is effective, dedicated and meticulous. She is also very supportive for staff and young people alike. As a result, she drives improvement and raises the standard and quality of care provided to young people. The five requirements and one recommendation raised at the last inspection have all been met. Consequently, strong leadership improves young people's experience of living in the home and contributes to them making measureable progress. Staff morale is high. They buy into the ethos, culture and working practices developed since the last inspection. Consequently, staff now approach their work with renewed vigour and enthusiasm. Staff report that they feel well supported, and describe the interim manager as available and empowering. They say: 'Roles are clearly defined, so we know what we are doing. We are more focused. Strong management frees us up to work with the young people.' A programme of supervision and appraisal takes place consistently. Staff value supervision and describe it as useful. One member of staff said: 'I get the chance to talk about young people's behaviour, how it makes me feel and my own development.' As a result, staff have the opportunity to reflect on their own practice. Furthermore, it demonstrates that the emotional impact of the work is recognised and well managed. Staff report positively about the range of training courses on offer, including face-to-face and online options. This provides flexibility and accessibility for staff. Training is ongoing, and so staff refresh their knowledge and keep up to date with the necessary skills to meet young people's individual needs. Leaders and managers track young people's progress in relation to their plans.	

They follow up on recommendations made at planning meetings and reviews, and when they have concerns they challenge others effectively to avoid drift. This means that managers champion young people's needs and drive forward progress.

Internal and external monitoring takes place regularly. Improved systems ensure that good standards are maintained overall. Shortfalls are quickly identified and addressed. Leaders and managers fully understand the needs of the service. They appreciate what works well and know what needs to improve. This informs developmental priorities.

Appropriate systems are in place to notify Ofsted and relevant persons when significant events occur. This ensures that people are kept informed and means that young people's welfare is promoted.

Sufficient staff are employed to meet the needs of young people. Three staff are generally on duty for most of the day. The third member of staff leaves between 9.30pm and 10pm each night. This means that fewer staff are on duty to support bedtime routines. This is a critical time of the day and one which some young people find very challenging. The deployment of staff does not fully support young people at this time, and is an area identified for improvement.

Record keeping is mostly good. Plans are thorough and underpin good care practice. However, daily case records sometimes lack detail. This means that the reader is unclear about the context of incidents or what action staff have taken in response. A recommendation is made to ensure greater consistency.

Five recommendations are raised following this inspection to secure improvement.

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 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

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