

SC039689

Registered provider: Lancashire County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

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 may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 16 to 17 August 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **Good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers Good

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 1 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 good because:

- The home provides personalised and well-planned care that takes into account the needs of each young person.
- Young people are well supported to participate in their education.
- Most young people are making measurable progress from their initial starting points.
- Managers and staff work well with other professionals to improve outcomes for young people.
- There is good evidence that the manager is making child-centred decisions about young people coming to live at the home.
- Young people's hobbies and interests are well promoted.
- A young person who has moved on to semi-independent living recognises the positive impact that the home had on his life.
- The home is well maintained and decorated to a good standard. Young people are encouraged to personalise their bedrooms to reflect their own style and tastes.

The children's home's areas for development:

- Records of sanctions are not consistently monitored by the registered manager.
- Staff do not receive regular practice-related supervision.
- Young people's risk assessments do not always contain up-to-date information and do not provide a clear picture of how risks should be managed.
- Records do not always demonstrate how staff are applying a nurturing approach within their day-to-day care of young people.
- Staff appraisals do not include the views of the young people living in the home.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
01/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
02/06/2016	Full	Good
28/01/2016	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
18/08/2015	Full	Requires improvement

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
11.—(1) The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— (a) mutual respect and trust; (b) an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and (c) positive responses to other children and adults. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— (a) that staff— (ii) help each child to develop socially aware behaviour; (iii) encourage each child to take responsibility for the child's behaviour, in accordance with the child's age and understanding; (iv) help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone; (xii) understand and communicate to children that bullying is unacceptable; and (xiii) have the skills to recognise incidents or indications of bullying and how to deal with them; and (b) that each child is encouraged to build and maintain positive relationships with others. (Regulation 11)	22/09/2017
12.—(1) The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— (a) that staff— (i) assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child;	22/09/2017

This specifically relates to clearer risk management strategies in relation to monitoring young people believed to be under the influence of alcohol or harmful substances. (Regulation 12)	
The registered person must keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision.(Regulation 16(3)(a)(b))	22/09/2017
The registered person must ensure that within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes— (3)(ii) details of the child’s behaviour leading to the use of the measure; (iii) the date, time and location of the use of the measure; (iv) a description of the measure and its duration; (v) details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure; (vi) the name of the person who used the measure ("the user"), and of any other person present when the measure was used; (vii) the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure. (Regulation 35(3))	22/09/2017

Recommendations

- The registered person must have systems in place so that all staff, including the manager, receive supervision of their practice from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional, which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care.('Guide to the children’s home regulations including the quality standards’, page 61, paragraph 13.2)
- All staff must have their performance and fitness to carry out their role formally appraised at least once annually. This appraisal should take into account, where reasonable and practical, the views of other professionals who have worked with the staff member over the year and children in the home’s care.(' Guide to the children’s home regulations including the quality standards’, page 61, paragraph 13.5)
- Staff should be familiar with the home’s policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the children’s home regulations including the quality standards’, page 62, paragraph 14.4)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Young people receive a good standard of care, which promotes their development and progress. The young people enjoy spending time with key members of staff. Since the last inspection, one young person has left the home in a planned move to semi-independence. The young person was spoken to during the inspection and said, 'They did the best for me... the staff are sound... it is a good place. Looking back, I wish I was still there.' This demonstrates that young people value the care and support the home provides. Two young people have recently moved into the home and their relationships with the group are still very much in their infancy.

Overall, young people's physical health is good and they are supported to understand the benefits of leading a healthy lifestyle. Young people receive appropriate advice on particular life choices, including smoking and cannabis use. The staff ensure that recommendations from young people's health assessments are acted on; for example, staff ensure that young people are up to date with their immunisations and vaccinations. Through staff perseverance, a young person is now using their prescribed medication regularly and, as a result, there is a real improvement in their lifelong health condition.

Young people's emotional and psychological needs are well promoted. They receive help and support from specialist services to improve their emotional well-being. The SCAYT team (Supporting Carers of Children and Young People Looked After Together) provides advice and guidance to the staff team on supporting young people's complex emotional and behavioural needs. This ensures that the staff team is confident in responding to young people's presenting needs.

Young people are at different points within their education programmes. For example, one young person achieved 93.3% attendance, which reflects a significant improvement for them. Another young person was nominated for a 2017 celebration award in recognition of their educational achievements this academic year. These young people are making good progress in terms of their individual targets. The manager and staff have successfully re-integrated a young person back into education following a long period of refusing to attend. The manager is now considering how the home's routine can help prepare the young people in preparation for the new school year after the summer break.

The young people enjoy a wide range of social activities that enhance their overall experiences. These include horse riding, day trips to Blackpool and ice-skating. One young person is a member of a cheerleading squad and they recently qualified for the international cheerleading championships that took place in Croatia. The young people also enjoyed a summer holiday. These activities enable young people to establish positive relationships in their local community and improve their feelings of self-worth.

Young people are clear about how to make a complaint. There are clear procedures in place to ensure that these are responded to appropriately. Details about the complaints procedure and children's rights are readily available and accessible to young people in the home. Staff seek young people's wishes and views through direct work sessions,

informal conversations and regular house meetings.

Young people's cultural needs are well met. Staff respect individual choice and support young people from different faiths to follow their religion and celebrate religious festivals. One young person follows a halal diet, which is in accordance with his wishes.

Staff support and encourage young people to learn new practical skills in preparation for their move to more independent living. Staff have created an independence programme that supports young people to undertake a range of tasks in order for them to gain an understanding of how to look after themselves. This is good practice and provides positive opportunities for young people to progress.

The staff team values the importance of family relationships and works positively with family members to promote safe and meaningful contact. Staff have supported some young people to strengthen their family relationships. Young people's positive friendships are encouraged and facilitated. This ensures that important attachments are maintained and young people's sense of identity is promoted.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

All staff are sufficiently trained in safeguarding. This ensures that they have a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities to help keep young people safe. The staff encourage young people to make safe decisions. However, on occasions young people's challenging behaviour has put a strain on relationships in the home. For example, some young people have experienced bullying and others have colluded in negative behaviours. At times, there have been inconsistencies between members of the staff team imposing clear and consistent boundaries.

Interactions between young people are not always positive and, despite staff efforts to address difficulties, some young people have bullied others and engaged in negative alliances that have impacted on the stability of the home. Individual key-work records and the house meeting minutes do not reflect how the young people are being helped to improve their relationships and resolve their conflict more positively. Furthermore, incidents of bullying are not always clear, which impacts on the manager's ability to assess the frequency of such incidents or actions taken.

Incidents of young people going missing from care are responded to well by the staff team. Good protocols are in place, which include staff searching for young people and trying to maintain contact via mobile phones. The staff work collaboratively with the local police and placing social workers to manage the risks.

One young person is spending extended periods of time away from the home with a family member. This has been agreed with the placing authority. The staff ensure that regular welfare checks are undertaken to ensure that the young person is safe and well.

Young people's risk assessments and risk management plans are not always updated in response to incidents, including incidents of bullying, collusive behaviours and drug and alcohol misuse. This means that staff do not have agreed strategies in place to manage and support these behaviours.

Staff encourage positive behaviour through the use of individual incentives and rewards. This means that physical intervention is very rarely used. However, on one occasion, a physical intervention was used inappropriately. Although the records state that the physical intervention was used to prevent serious harm, information is brief and makes it difficult to assess how well the staff managed the situation leading up to the physical intervention. The records of sanctions and consequences show that the staff regularly impose sanctions rather than use a more restorative approach. The manager does not consistently monitor the sanction records to ensure that the young people have been given the opportunity to discuss their sanctions or to evaluate staff practice.

There have been no new staff employed in the home since the last inspection and there is a history of robust recruitment to effectively safeguard the young people. Routine health and safety checks create a safe environment. Young people and staff participate in fire drills, so they know how to respond in the event of an emergency.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager provides effective leadership to the staff team. He continues to work towards the required level 5 management qualification. The registered manager demonstrates a good understanding of the presenting needs relating to the young people currently living in the home, and is committed to improving their outcomes and experiences. Several professionals commented on the positive support provided to the young people by the manager and staff. A placing social worker said, '[name] has told me he likes it here, he looks well and seems relaxed.'

The registered manager has taken appropriate action to address concerns in relation to staff practice through disciplinary processes. This supports staff to improve their practice and ensures that the welfare and safety of young people is promoted.

The home meets its aims and objectives as set out in the statement of purpose. The statement of purpose was reviewed in June 2017. However, HMCI has not received a copy of the updated document. This is not having an impact on the quality of care given to the young people.

Young people benefit from a stable staff team. However, records show that not all staff receive regular practice-related supervision. However, team meetings do take place at regular intervals, which focus on the needs of each young person and provide the manager and staff the opportunity to reflect on practice in the home. All staff have their performance and fitness formally appraised at least once annually. However, the appraisals do not take into account the views of the young people. This is a missed opportunity to further improve practice. Staff members continue to benefit from training, which supports their learning and ensures that the staff remain equipped with the skills and knowledge to support the young people.

The manager has taken action to address the requirements and recommendations made at the last inspection. There is good evidence to show that the manager is challenging the local authority when he does not consider a new referral is suitable for the home. This demonstrates the manager's commitment to providing a calm and stable environment for the young people.

The manager and staff work proactively with other agencies and professionals, including the virtual school and specialist mental health service, to secure improved outcomes for all young people. Consequently, there have been improvements in young people's attendance in education since the last inspection. A placing social worker confirmed that the home has been proactive in increasing a young person's hours in education and is proactive in getting the young person back into mainstream school. This ensures that young people are supported to reach their full potential.

The manager does have a realistic understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. Despite the management team undertaking regular monitoring of the home, the team's monitoring has not identified the shortfalls found during this inspection, such as weaknesses in recording, risk assessments and staff supervision. The registered manager accepted this and has made assurances to address these issues.

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 difference 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 who 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: SC039689

Provision sub-type: Children's home

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

Responsible individual: Paul McIntyre

Registered manager: Steven Searle

Inspector

Michelle Bacon, social care regulatory inspector

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