

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	18/08/2015
Unique reference number	SC039689
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 Jane Tandy
Inspector	Ms Line

Previous inspection date	26/03/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Requires improvement
The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.	
how well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement

SC039689

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is requires improvement because:

- Risks relating to some young people's behaviour are not clearly identified and reviewed. Furthermore, risk management plans are not always followed by staff. As a result, staff do not demonstrate consistently good safeguarding practice to ensure the welfare of young people is maintained at all times.
- Care plans are not sufficiently reviewed for those young people who spend considerable amounts of time away from the home. This means agreements are not in place to make sure that arrangements are safe and well managed.
- Quality assurance monitoring systems are not being used effectively to identify and respond to practice issues, patterns, and trends. This means improvements are not consistently driven forward, and this has limited progress between inspections.
- A shortfall has been identified in the training and development of staff. 50% do not have an up-to-date first aid certificate, and consequently there are times when at least one member of staff on duty is not suitably qualified.
- Staff are not persistent and proactive in their efforts to help all young people overcome difficulties in education. As a result, two young people's school attendance is low. This is impacting on their outcomes and future life chances.
- The home has not yet benefitted from a planned programme of refurbishment. This means improvements have not been made between inspections, and the home environment is not maintained to a good enough standard.

The children's home strengths

- Young people are now safer because of the actions of managers. Where it is recognised that some residents have a detrimental impact on others and their needs cannot be met safely, plans are made for them to move on.
- Recent improvements to admissions processes means that impact risk assessments and placement planning are more robust. As a result, young people's needs are more clearly identified and can be met safely without compromising the safety of those already living in the home.
- Greater efforts are being made to ensure that return home interviews are being completed, and that the views of young people are being taken into account about why they go missing to try and minimise future risks.
- Staff do encourage young people to make a positive contribution. As a result, most access a range of social and recreational opportunities.
- Young people are developing positive relationships with some staff; this provides a platform from which they are able to make progress.
- Some young people are developing greater self-awareness, and are better able to manage conflict as a result.
- One young person is supported to maintain her school placement even though this is some distance away. This provides her with continuity and consistency, and enabled her to sit her exams.
- Young people's health and well-being is promoted.
- Staff benefit from regular supervision and say they feel supported by managers who they describe as approachable and accessible.

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

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets 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 with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
8: The education standard In order to meet the education standard and that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so, the registered person must ensure (2)(a) that staff (iii) understand the barriers to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child to overcome such barriers; (x) help each child to attend education or training in accordance with the expectations in the child's relevant plans.	30/10/2015
12: The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standard the registered person must ensure 2(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 a child; (iii) have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; (v) understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person (d) that the premises used for the purpose of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health.	30/10/2015
13: The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard the registered person must enable inspire and lead a culture in relation to the children's home that - (1) (a) helps children aspire to their full potential; and (b) promotes their welfare (2) In particular the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to – (f) understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and	30/10/2015

use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home; (h) use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.	
14: The care planning standard In order to meet the care planning standard the registered person must ensure that children - (1)(a) receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home, with particular reference to having agreements in place for young people who spend time away from the home.	30/10/2015
31: Staffing of children's homes Ensure that at all times, at least one person on duty at the home has a suitable first aid qualification (Regulation 31(2)(a)).	30/10/2015

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- Ensure that any sanctions used to address poor behaviour are restorative in nature, to help children recognise the impact of their behaviour on themselves, other children, the staff caring for them and the wider community. In some cases it will be important for children to make reparation in some form to anyone hurt by their behaviour and the staff in the home should be skilled to support the child to understand this and carry it out, specifically that any financial consequences are proportionate and reasonable (The guide to the quality standards page 46, paragraph 9.38).
- 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 to the quality standards page 65, paragraph 15.6).

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
26/03/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
14/01/2015	Full	Adequate
14/02/2014	Interim	Good Progress
01/11/2013	Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	requires improvement
Some young people are developing positive relationships with staff and this is helping them to make good progress against their starting points. For example, one young person is developing greater self-awareness, she is beginning to recognise when she is not okay and learning different coping strategies. As a result, her outbursts are now less frequent and shorter than previously. Another young person is responding well to the introduction of a mentor, and is beginning to engage more readily in constructive leisure activities. This is improving his confidence and self-esteem, and enabling him to maintain more appropriate friendships in the local community. For other young people their progress is limited because of a lack of engagement in the home and with staff over a prolonged period of time. As a result, one young person is not engaging with his care plan and developing the skills, confidence and resilience to successfully prepare for his life as an adult. Young people's experiences have been hampered between inspections because of the influence and behaviour of other residents. For example, one young person was assaulted on two occasions, and another young person had an increase in missing episodes and challenging behaviours. Some young people's placements ended to ensure that others were protected from harm. Consequently, the outcomes, progress and overall experiences of young people are variable. Education outcomes for young people are mixed. One young person has been supported to maintain her school placement, which is some distance from home. This provided consistency and continuity at a crucial time in her education. Consequently, she sat her GCSE's and did better than anticipated. She is enrolled at college, and is being appropriately supported with this transition. Two young people have low school attendance, plans in place to progress this are not clear, and some documentation held in the home is out of date. Therefore, education arrangements are not sufficiently reviewed to effect change. When young people are not in school they do not engage in structured activity. Staff are not consistently proactive and persistent in promoting young people's learning, and helping them to overcome difficulties. This will impact on their future life chances.	

All young people are registered with relevant health professionals and their health needs are well met. Staff are persistent where young people refuse to attend appointments to ensure they access necessary health care. Timely key work sessions about health, and encouragement from staff enable them to overcome barriers. For example, one young person has been supported with his fear of the dentist and has now attended for a check-up.

Young people's individual talents and interests are identified and nurtured. As a result, they are supported to engage in different leisure activities including fishing, police cadets, singing lessons, and joining the St John's ambulance to learn first aid. As a result, young people are developing their potential and ambitions. In turn this improves their feelings of self-worth.

When young people are new to the home, introductions are well managed. One young person says she was appropriately welcomed and is settling in well. She reports receiving information about the home and staff beforehand, and that she benefitted from an introductory visit which helped to allay her anxieties. It is clear this young person was actively involved in decision making about the move. This demonstrates a good example of effective care planning and young people being warmly received into the home. One young person's care plan has not been sufficiently reviewed to take account of the amount of time he spends away from the home. This means agreements are not in place to ensure that arrangements are safe and well managed.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement
Safeguarding practice in this home is not consistent enough to be good. Some good practice is identified, for example managers took swift action to safeguard young people from the risks presented by other residents. Plans were made for them to move on and young people report they now feel safer as a result. Improvements have been made to admissions processes and impact risk assessments are now more robust. This means young people's needs are more clearly identified and can be met safely without compromising the safety of those already living in the home. This inspection also highlights shortfalls in some aspects of safeguarding. For example, risks relating to some young people's behaviour are not clearly identified	

and reviewed to take account of unfolding events or new information. Consequently, staff responses do not always take account of increasing risks. Risk assessments are completed but identified strategies are not always followed by staff. For example, levels of communication with young people who spend time away from the home are not consistent with what is expected and set out in the risk assessment. When two young people were absent from the home this was not reported promptly to the police even though there was evidence of increased risks to them. Another young person was not collected quickly when he was found at his parent's home after being missing. This is contrary to the plan in place to minimise risks relating to contact with his birth family. As a result, staff do not demonstrate consistently good safeguarding practice to ensure the welfare of young people is maintained at all times.

All young people can identify a trusted adult who they can talk to if they have any worries. One young person was not sure who he would talk to other than staff if this was ever necessary. The interim manager is taking steps to revisit this with him so that he knows who he can contact should he ever need to ask for help outside of the home.

Young people sometimes go missing. Staff make efforts to locate them, and recently improved record keeping reflects this. Greater efforts are being made to ensure that return home interviews are being completed by an independent person. Moreover, managers are listening to and acting on what young people say about why they go missing. For example one young person said he was bored at home and there was not enough to do. Consequently, different activities have now been introduced for him to minimise reoccurrence.

Staff implement a system of praise and reward, as well as sanctions and consequences. This helps young people to learn how their behaviour impacts on themselves and others. Positive reward builds up young people's self-esteem and ensures that negative behaviour does not become the only focus of attention. Where young people make financial payment by way of reparation greater review is needed to ensure that sums involved are reasonable and proportionate.

Although young people present behavioural challenges, the need for restraint is minimal. Staff are all trained in behaviour management and this is kept up to date. Staff utilise their skills to de-escalate situations, and just four episodes have occurred where staff needed to physically intervene to keep everyone safe. Staff and young people are appropriately debriefed providing them with the opportunity to reflect on incidents and learn from them.

Health and safety checks are carried out routinely, and consequently the home provides a safe environment for young people to live in. They are supported to understand what to do in the event of a fire in the home and participate with staff in regular fire drills. This means they know how to exit the building safely in the event of such an emergency.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement
The Registered Manager has been in post since February 2011 and is suitably qualified, holding an NVQ level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People and level 4 in Residential Childcare Management. This is an accepted equivalent of the level 5 management qualification that is now required. She is supported within her role by two deputy managers who are also suitably qualified and experienced. The Registered Manager is currently absent and appropriate interim management arrangements are in place. A Registered Manager from one of the authority's other children's homes is providing management support. Her presence is bringing a fresh perspective, leading to some improvements being made to the home's function. These improvements now need to be consolidated. Young people benefit from a stable staff team and this provides consistency and continuity for them. The home is properly staffed and additional resources are now available when required. For example, additional staff were utilised recently to meet the needs of a particularly complex young person who stayed at the home for a short period. This demonstrates managers are resourceful and responsive to ensure that young people's needs are met safely and positively. All relevant checks are carried out, and as a result any additional staff are suitably vetted and deemed competent to deliver safe care. Staff report they feel well supported and receive supervision regularly. They describe managers as approachable and accessible. Training is mostly good. Staff have access to a range of training courses to aid their professional development. Not all staff have an up to date first aid certificate as this expired several months ago. This means there are occasions when at least one member of staff on duty does not have an appropriate qualification, and this does not promote young people's welfare. Appropriate systems are in place to notify Ofsted and other relevant persons of significant events that occur. This means that people are kept informed and young people's welfare is promoted. Not all serious incidents are suitably reviewed. As a result, managers are not utilising opportunities to reflect and learn from events that happen in order to minimise risks and prevent reoccurrence. Internal quality assurance monitoring systems are in place. They are not consistently robust or evaluative to inform leaders and managers about areas for development so that the quality of care provided to young people improves. This has resulted in limited progress between inspections and contributes to the home not yet achieving good enough services and standards of care. The authority is	

currently reviewing its arrangements in respect of independent visits the home. This is to ensure those who carry out external monitoring functions are suitably independent. It is recommended this review is concluded in a timely manner so the authority can be confident that this additional layer of scrutiny is vigorous and meets the regulatory requirements.

Of the two requirements made at the last inspection only one has been met. Improvements have been made to ensure the needs of residents already living in the home are accounted for when new admissions are made. However, the long awaited programme of refurbishment has not yet commenced. As a result, necessary improvements have not been made to the fabric and decoration of the home and the home environment is not maintained to a good standard. Given the work is now due to start in September, this requirement is repeated.

Five requirements and two recommendations are raised to address the shortfalls identified in this inspection and to secure improvement moving forward.

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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