

SC040926

Registered provider: Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to six young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home is owned and operated by a local authority.

Inspection dates: 4 to 5 October 2017

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

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

Date of last inspection: 7 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:

- Staff are highly successful in engaging young people in positive, meaningful activities that enhance their experiences and their emotional well-being.
- Care planning processes are effective and there is clear evidence of young people making good progress across all aspects of their development.
- Staff are proactive about helping young people to achieve greater physical and emotional health.
- Consultation with young people is central to the service provided at the home. Young people have a voice and this is evident in their involvement in care planning processes.
- The setting places high emphasis on proactive and positive support for young people, to prevent incidents of challenging behaviour.
- Leaders are inspiring and enthusiastic, and promote a culture of high aspiration for young people to achieve positive outcomes in the home.
- Leaders and staff successfully work in partnership with families, placing authorities and other agencies to achieve the best possible outcomes for young people.
- The service is in transition and leaders are fully aware of its strengths and are already addressing the development areas identified during the inspection.

The children's home's areas for development:

- Risk assessments need to be more comprehensive and subject to greater frequency of review.
- The independent visitor to the home does not appear to seek the opinions of young people, their relatives or staff on the quality of care provided at the home.
- The home has a large staff team. Staff members have varied responsibilities and are based in three offices. This hinders the ability to create a domestic and homely environment for young people.
- The children's guide needs to be updated to reflect the changes in the service offered.
- Young people would benefit from greater access to computer equipment and the internet where it is safe to provide this.

- The missing-from-home procedures could be individualised for each young person. The outcome of independent return interviews is not routinely recorded.
- The staff team would benefit from considering appropriate sanctions for each young person, should their behaviour impact negatively on others.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
07/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
10/08/2016	Full	Outstanding
16/02/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
20/10/2015	Full	Outstanding

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
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— 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; (Regulation 12(1)(2)(a)(i))	30/11/2017
When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the independent person— if they consent, to interview in private such of the children, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as the independent person requires. (Regulation 44(2)(a))	30/11/2017

Recommendations

- For children's homes to be nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of their children, they will, in most cases, be homely, domestic environments.
(‘Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- As part of reviewing and revising where appropriate the statement of purpose (regulation 16(3)(a)), the registered person should review and update the children's guide as necessary, and make sure children are given an explanation of any changes.
(‘Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 24, paragraph 4.23)
- Children should have access to a computer and the internet to support their education and learning, unless there are specific safeguarding reasons why this would be inappropriate. In such cases, the home should consider whether and how it can support the child to access a computer and the internet safely.

(‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 29, paragraph 5.19)

- The registered person must specify the procedures to be followed and the roles and responsibilities of staff when a child is missing from care or away from home without permission and how staff should support the child in return to the home. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 45, paragraph 9.28)
- Evaluation of missing incidents should be undertaken to identify any gaps in training, skills or knowledge for staff or to record and retain evidence of what worked well. This evaluation should inform the review of the quality of care (see paragraph 15.2). (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 46, paragraph 9.31)
- Any sanctions used to address poor behaviour should be 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. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 46, paragraph 9.38)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Until recently, this home was operating as a short-break service with outreach support for young people and their families, and short-term emergency admissions. In August 2017, a decision was taken to cease the short-break provision in order to provide short- and medium-term placements. The aim is to transition young people to independence, to a foster family, or to return to their family home with the addition of ongoing outreach support.

There have been 83 young people who have accessed the service since the last full inspection. The short-breaks and outreach service has provided many young people and their families with high-quality parenting support, activities and interventions to equip young people with the skills they need to thrive. One parent said, ‘The service is definitely making a difference. Mine and [the young person’s] relationship is improving slowly.’ The young person said, ‘It’s really good and we are not arguing as much.’

Three young people have recently moved into the home. They have settled in well and have developed good relationships with the staff team. One young person said, ‘I like it, yeah. I am happy with my key worker.’ The home is modern, comfortable and spacious. There are three offices, which accommodate the staff, who also complete outreach work with other young people and their families. Leaders are currently considering the options

for reducing the number of offices to ensure that the environment is as homely as possible. There is a computer available for young people, but they cannot easily access the internet. The local authority is considering the options for making this available. Recommendations are made to address these issues.

Regular consultation with young people is evident throughout all of the care planning processes. Young people are supported and involved directly in making decisions about their care arrangements. Young people participate in house meetings, and are regularly reminded of their rights. They know how to complain. Advocacy is always explained and offered. One professional advocate who regularly visits the home said, 'I consider this home to be the lead place in terms of ensuring the voice of the child is heard.' A children's guide is provided to children and young people when they access short breaks. The children's guide requires updating to reflect the new service and a recommendation is made to address this matter.

Healthcare planning is highly effective. All young people who now live at the home have been registered with local services, and have been supported to attend appointments and access specialist services where necessary. Young people are also already making good progress in their education. For instance, staff have arranged for one young person with a history of non-attendance to complete regular work experience. She will access a bespoke service that enables young people to develop social skills and enhance their access to community resources, which will improve her chances of gaining future employment.

Staff provide a variety of activities to help build close relationships with young people. Inside the home, young people take part in pamper evenings and baking activities. They are helped to find their own individual interests outside of the home. Staff take them to trampoline activities, bowling and the cinema to promote social development and this helps to increase their self-esteem.

Young people are also helped to develop skills for independence. Staff teach them to budget, cook, travel independently, and meet their own safety needs. Staff recognise the importance of contact with family and other important people. They promote this in accordance with the plans agreed with social workers.

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

Young people at the home say that they feel safe and well cared for. All children and young people who access the service have suitable risk assessments and, where necessary, a supporting behaviour management plan. This approach, as implemented by a well-trained and highly skilled staff team, has been very successful in de-escalating any challenging behaviour from young people. Consequently, there are very few incidents of concern and physical intervention is very rare; the last instance of restraint was in 2015. There have been no complaints or allegations at the home, and no serious incidents that have required notification Ofsted. Given the very diverse and complex safety needs of young people who have accessed the service, this is excellent progress.

Since the service has been adapted to provide short- and medium-term placements, there has been a need to assess risk more comprehensively, review the records more regularly and ensure that staff capture the most up-to-date information. Staff were able to demonstrate suitable knowledge and understanding of how to respond appropriately in order to minimise the risks to individual young people and keep them safe. One staff member said, 'I would rather be on the team that did too much than the one that did too little.' However, the actions required of staff are not comprehensively recorded on the risk assessments or updated with sufficient frequency. The safety of young people has not yet been compromised, but there is the potential for this shortfall to impact negatively in the future. A requirement is made to address this shortfall.

Similarly, the approach to behaviour management has been quite general, in order to meet the needs of a large number of young people. This was effective for young people staying on short breaks or accessing the outreach service. There was no need for sanctions to be used in order to help young people to take responsibility for their actions, as behaviour rarely warranted consequences being imposed. Young people are rewarded for positive behaviour and staff are at the point of considering appropriate sanctions for each young person, should their behaviour impact negatively on others or require restorative means of making amends. A recommendation is made to give further swift consideration to this matter.

If a young person goes missing from the home, staff are very proactive about searching for them and on many occasions staff have returned them home without the need for police intervention. Where appropriate, local protocols are followed and the police, families and social workers are informed. Independent return interviews are offered on young people's return. Leaders participate in regular forums to assess and reduce the risk of sexual exploitation or other forms of harm to young people. One young person has increased her engagement hugely since living at the home, through a specialist safeguarding service. A social worker said 'Absolutely amazing difference.' As the home is now accommodating young people for longer periods, the missing-from-home risk assessments could benefit from being individualised and the outcomes of independent return interviews should be recorded to allow effective monitoring and evaluation of outcomes. Recommendations are made to enhance this practice.

All staff have had mandatory safeguarding training, and are aware of the procedures for reporting a concern about a young person. The home is well maintained and the physical environment is suitably risk assessed. Staff and young people take part in regular fire evacuations.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager is a highly competent, inspiring and child-centred leader with a wealth of appropriate experience in caring for young people. She is suitably qualified, and is supported by a deputy manager who also has considerable experience of providing residential care. Both have suitable qualifications to manage the service. They

successfully lead a motivated team of experienced and well-trained staff.

Staff benefit from a comprehensive training and development programme. They report that the home is very well managed, and that they feel supported and happy in their roles. Supervision is regular and of good quality. The team has regular meetings where staff are encouraged to contribute to care planning processes for young people. Care planning is highly effective and is subject to regular review. Young people who are new to the home are already making exceptional progress. The service meets its aims and objectives as outlined in the statement of purpose, and has tangible evidence of its ability to strengthen families, prevent placement disruption through the foster care support line, and reduce admissions into full-time local authority care. Children who have received short-break services and outreach are making excellent progress across all aspects of their development as a direct result of well-planned and child-focused interventions.

The independent visitor to the home does not always engage directly with young people and a requirement is made to address this matter. This has not impacted negatively on the quality of the service provided, as all aspects of this service are thoroughly evaluated. Leaders reflect on feedback provided by young people and their families, and are continuously striving to enhance the service they provide. They review the outcomes for young people in weekly care planning meetings and look closely at the progress of young people against the quality standards outlined in regulation.

The management team has a thorough oversight of practice in the home, and a detailed understanding of the individual needs of young people and families. The members of the management team have very high expectations with regard to the support that young people and families receive. There is a culture of high aspiration and a willingness to exceed the expectations of the families that receive the service and the professionals that refer them. The registered manager has recently used research related to the number of disruptions to children placed in foster families in order to demonstrate a clear need for increasing the duration of emergency placements. This will allow the authority time to assess the needs of young people, and to seek the placements that are most able to meet the diverse needs of young people.

During the inspection, leaders outlined that the service is currently in transition. They were aware of its strengths and were already addressing the development areas that were identified. Leaders and staff work alongside local authority social workers to achieve the best outcomes for young people. The manager is highly proactive about seeking support and specialist services for young people. One social worker said, 'Most young people are in crisis when they come here and the staff deal with it extremely well. They are very realistic and compassionate at all times.'

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: SC040926

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council, Town Hall,
Library Street, Wigan WN1 1YN

Responsible individual: Jayne Ivory

Registered manager: Victoria Hanlon

Inspector

Nicola Thomas: social care inspector

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