

Children's homes – Interim inspection

Inspection date	07/03/2017
Unique reference number	SC040926
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council
Registered person address	People Directorate: Children, Adults and Families, Town Hall, Library Street, Wigan, Lancashire WN1 1YN

Responsible individual	Jayne Ivory
Registered manager	Victoria Hanlon
Inspector	Michelle Edge

Inspection date	07/03/2017
Previous inspection judgement	Outstanding
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection. This home was judged outstanding at the full inspection. At this interim inspection, Ofsted judges that it has sustained effectiveness. Since the last inspection, the registered manager has taken action to address the recommendations. Internal monitoring systems have been reviewed, updated and now include weekly and monthly audits. These highlight areas of improvement and development. Discussions were held with the independent person to improve the quality of recording and a new workforce development plan has been compiled. This short-breaks and outreach service continues to be highly effective and provides an outstanding level of care and support to young people and their families. One parent said, 'Without the support provided by [Name of home] things would have continued to go from bad to worse. They have not only helped [name of young person] but they have also helped me to understand what I need to do. They really are amazing, caring people.' Professionals, including social workers, were also highly complimentary about the service. One social worker said, 'They will always go the extra mile and want all young people to succeed and ultimately be happy and safe.' Safeguarding continues to be a high priority for all staff working at the home and is central to their practice. Staff have a clear knowledge of their roles and responsibilities in protecting young people and this continues to be on the agenda at team meetings and in supervision sessions for staff. In addition, the staff team has established structured care routines that young people respond to well during their short-break stays. One young person said, 'I was a bit nervous at first, but the staff talked to me about the plan during my stay. They [staff] also explained all about the home, what I had to do if the fire alarm goes off and talked to me about complaints and advocacy. They seemed interested in finding out about me and what I like to do.' Staff members manage behaviour through good, clear communication, which includes negotiation, compromise and flexibility. This has resulted in no punitive behaviour management, such as physical interventions and sanctions since the last inspection. This results in a home where praise is fundamental and consequences are rare.	

Education remains the primary responsibility of parents or carers. Nevertheless, young people continue to access education during their visit. This ensures minimal disruption to their routines. In addition, when young people have experienced difficulties in school, including bullying and exclusion, staff have arranged meetings and supported families to attend the meeting. This promotes continuity, consistency and a universal approach to young people's education.

Young people enjoy the time that they spend at the home. It provides space and time to look at some of the difficulties that they may have with family relationships or risk-taking behaviours, including alcohol or drug misuse and/or anti-social behaviours. Staff also provide emotional support and guidance to parents about more effective ways of managing behaviours. This has helped to strengthen family relationships and enabled young people to remain living in their home environment. One young person said, 'I like coming here. It gives me time to think. I can talk to staff when I feel stressed and they help. They [staff] also visit me at home. They talked to me and mum about not arguing and gave us little jobs to do, like walking out of the room instead of shouting. That's helped.'

In general, young people's daily records and risk assessments provide clear strategies on how to manage known risks. Key workers review and update records in response to incidents and robust communication within the team ensures that everyone is aware of the presenting issues and concerns. However, records are not consistently signed and dated by the author. Furthermore, not all staff have signed assessments to indicate that they have read and understood what is expected of them. In addition, when new risks become apparent, for example, suspected cannabis use, this is not always added to the risk management plan in a timely way. This does not ensure that all staff are following any revised steps to manage risks on a day-to-day basis. To date, this has not had a negative impact on the welfare and safety of young people and when discussed with the registered manager, immediate action was taken to update all relevant documents.

Highly effective managers and the enthusiastic and committed staff team are a real strength at this home. Together they continually strive to maintain outstanding standards. Agency or bank staff are rarely used as staff who already work at the home will carry out additional shifts or extra hours if required. This ensures that young people are cared for and supported by a consistent team. Excellent handovers and team meetings ensure that daily information is passed on and that strategies, plans and any developments are shared. There have been no breaches in regulations. Two good practice recommendations are made as part of this inspection.

Information about this children's home

This home provides outreach support and short-term respite care for up to five young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The local authority runs the home.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/08/2016	Full	Outstanding
16/02/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
20/10/2015	Full	Outstanding
23/02/2015	Interim	Declined in effectiveness

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:

- Ensure that children's risk reduction and behaviour management plans are routinely reviewed and revised to include up-to-date information about assessed risks for individual children, and clear and comprehensive details of the specific steps that the staff will take to manage any assessed risks on a day-to-day basis. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)
- Ensure that all children's case records (Regulation 38) must be kept up to date and stored securely while they remain in the home. Records must be signed and dated by the author of each entry. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)

What the inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspection we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

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 who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

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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