

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	10/08/2016
Unique reference number	SC040926
Type of inspection	Full
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	10/08/2016
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	Outstanding
The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the home contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help protection and care.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC040926

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is outstanding because:

- Young people receive a high quality of care from staff who clearly demonstrate their commitment to meeting their individual needs and keeping them safe.
- Young people continue to thrive and grow in confidence. Staff prioritise their wishes and feelings, and actively involve them in decision making. This has significantly increased their self-esteem.
- Warm and trusting relationships between young people and staff help young people to feel happy and safe while they enjoy their short-break stays.
- Partnership working is extremely effective, and staff consistently work with parents, carers, young people and other professionals to ensure that everyone is working towards the same goals.
- Young people are encouraged and supported by staff to increase their independence skills. They are also actively involved in decision making with regards to their futures.
- Young people are provided with plenty of new and exciting opportunities to develop their social skills
- The home is run exceptionally well. A strong, dedicated management team leads an experienced competent and caring staff team.
- Staff are effectively trained to meet the specific needs of each individual young person in their care.
- Staff work effectively with parents within the family home. This has prevented many young people from coming into care.
- The home is well maintained and provides a welcome and warm environment. This shows young people and their families that they are clearly valued and deserve the very best.
- The manager can further improve the monitoring of the service by ensuring regular audits of all the home's records and devising a detailed workforce development plan.

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 the registered person actively seeks independent scrutiny of the home and makes best use of information from independent and internal monitoring (including under regulations 44 and 45) to ensure continuous improvement. They should be skilled in anticipating difficulties and reviewing incidents, such as learning from disruptions and placement breakdowns. They are responsible for proactively implementing lessons learned and sustaining good practice. In particular, if the information provided is inaccurate this will need to be challenged and amended. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)
- Ensure that the registered person should actively make best use of information from independent and internal monitoring systems to ensure continuous improvement in the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)
- The registered person should have a workforce development plan which can fulfil the workforce-related requirements of regulation 16, schedule 1 (page 53, paragraph 10.8)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This home provides short-term respite care for up to five young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. A local authority runs the home.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
16/02/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
20/10/2015	Full	Outstanding
23/02/2015	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
12/12/2014	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Outstanding
The home has provided outstanding short-breaks and outreach support to well over 50 young people in the last year. This has enabled young people to remain living with their families in a safe and happy environment. One parent said, 'without the support of (name of worker). We could not have got through the last few months. She has not only helped my child, she has also really helped everyone else in the family. I can't thank all the staff enough.' Young people say they feel 'safe' and 'happy', staying at the home, and thrive on the many opportunities provided to them to try new and exciting activities, sometimes for the first time. These have included trips to the cinema and local park, swimming and youth groups. Activities follow the interests of the young people, as well as developing their self-confidence in line with care planning. One young person said, 'I was frightened when I got here, but all the staff were friendly and checked that I was OK. I have learned so much, like how to make a cake, design my own photo album, and also have made some new friends. I really love it here.' Staff actively promote education for young people and encourage their attendance during their short-breaks stay. They work closely with young people, parents, virtual heads and schools to help remove barriers to young people's learning. When difficulties have arisen, staff have provided support and guidance to young people and their families, and attended meetings to ensure that a consistent approach to education is maintained. Direct work sessions have taken place with young people who may be experiencing difficulties within their education settings to ensure that they understand the importance of education and that any additional resources that promote a young person's learning have been accessed. These have included stationery, books, and on some occasions, computer equipment. Young people benefit from improved health. Staff have a clear understanding of each young person's health needs and support them and their families to access services that can meet them. This has included services such as child and adolescent mental health services, sexual health clinics, and drug and alcohol services. Staff also take extra measures to promote good health outcomes for young people by providing positive role modelling. For example, one key worker within the home arranged her own dental check up at the same time as a young person who had a fear of the dentist. This helped the young person to overcome her fear to access dental treatment that had been outstanding for a long time. This	

also demonstrates the trusting relationships that staff have established with young people.

Young people's views, rights and entitlements are valued, respected and upheld. Young people have access to independent advocates who visit the home regularly, and listen to their views and ideas. The registered manager consistently seeks and acts on young people's views. Young people's meetings minutes regularly include feedback from the registered manager and deputy. These topics and responses are shared within staff meetings to ensure that the staff are all aware of the issues discussed and the responses given. Young people state that issues such as bedroom changes, activities and menus are quickly responded to, even if this is to explain that the request is not possible. Young people said, 'Even if is a no, we still get it explained why, so at least we understand.' As a result, young people know that they are listened to and treated with respect.

Clear and up-to-date information about how to make a complaint and how to contact a range of independent agencies ensures that young people are fully aware of how to raise concerns with both the staff team and externally, although no such actions have been necessary. Young people confirmed that the complaints procedure was explained when they first came to visit, but that they feel able to go direct to staff to talk about any issues that they may have and were very happy with the responses provided. This meant that they had not felt it necessary to use the formal complaints procedure.

Effective and bespoke plans improve young people's independence and life skills. The registered manager and staff are ambitious for, and are fully committed to, optimising and developing the life skills of young people. To this end, they have structured programmes to support young people to learn and develop new skills and abilities. This has included tasks such as laundry, shopping, budgeting, cooking and accessing community facilities. The staff continually review the strengths and abilities of young people, sharing the information collated with parents and professionals, and adjusting plans to drive continued improvement.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding
Staff ensure that the welfare and safety of young people is paramount. Consequently, young people are kept safe during their short-break stays and are looked after extremely well. In addition, the home has robust safeguarding measures in place that promote young people's safety and well-being. For example, staff stringently follow clear missing from care policies and procedures. Regular effective direct work sessions address risks with young people. This helps them to recognise their own vulnerabilities. As a result, there have been a reduced number of missing from care incidents since the last inspection.	

On the rare occasion that young people do go missing, staff are vigilant and swiftly implement missing from home procedures. They work very closely with parents, carers, police and social workers to provide detailed information about the event. Return home interviews are arranged and any information gained is used to inform future risk assessments and safeguarding practice.

Comprehensive risk assessments ensure that staff fully understand all young people's individual needs and vulnerabilities. Overall, these are up to date, detailed and diligently followed by all staff. Excellent relationships means that young people trust staff and therefore listen to them, taking on board their advice and guidance. Consequently, young people are learning to reflect on their past behaviours and understand how to keep themselves safe. One young person said, 'It is the first time anyone has actually told me why I cannot go around getting so angry and lashing out. The staff talked to me about different ways of dealing with my anger, which has really helped.'

The behaviour of young people is extremely well managed. Staff members provide an environment of high praise, warmth and acceptance. This, together with well-developed behaviour management plans which are regularly updated and understood by the staff team, promotes positive behaviour. As a result, staff have not needed to resort to sanctions, consequences or restorative methods of behaviour management. Young people are relaxed and comfortable in the presence of staff, with plenty of hugs, fun and laughter. This leads to nurturing care practice where praise and acceptance are fundamental, and consequences are rare. Young people thrive as a result.

Staff are very open and transparent in communication with young people, their families and all the professionals who support them. Parents say that staff keep them updated and informed about the welfare of their child during their stay, and that they have every confidence that staff do their best to ensure their welfare and safety at all times. All the professionals spoken to as part of the inspection and in feedback received from online surveys confirmed that they have every confidence that staff know and understand the policies and procedures necessary to keep young people safe while they are enjoying their short breaks at the home.

Staff members understand their roles and responsibilities in respect of keeping young people safe. Staff members receive regular training in various aspects of safeguarding practice. This has included child sexual exploitation, radicalisation, female genital mutilation and psychoactive substances (legal highs). They understand what to do if they are concerned that a young person is being harmed in any way. Outreach workers have also shared with parents and carers the information gained to ensure that they are also fully aware of any signs that their child may be at risk, and what resources and support are available for them to access. This ensures that all who are involved in the young person's life have the right information. The service has a full range of safeguarding policies and procedures in place that are regularly reviewed, in line with the Local Safeguarding

Children's Board procedures. These guide and enhance staff practice, which, in turn, helps to keep young people safe.

The home has established highly effective working relationships with a wide range of safeguarding professionals. This includes the local authority's safeguarding team, the police, youth offending services, and drug and alcohol teams. This ensures that plans for young people are detailed and individualised to meet their needs. This keeps them safe and promotes their welfare. A social worker stated, 'Communication is excellent, and both the manager and staff always keep me regularly updated about any areas of concern. They always provide detailed accounts of events and I have every confidence in their abilities to keep young people effectively safeguarded.'

Robust monitoring of health and safety ensures that both young people and staff are safe. Risk assessments of the home, the activities and behaviours of the young people are exceptionally thorough and give staff an excellent awareness of how to respond to concerns if they arise. Detailed assessments of the locality and the careful matching of new admissions, support young people staying at the home safely.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
A competent and committed registered manager who clearly has the children at the centre of all practices manages the home effectively. A deputy manager who shares the same aspirations and vision for the service supports her. The manager continues to develop her own professional development and actively encourages the staff team to research any new topics and share their findings with other staff members in the team. This provides an opportunity for learning and ensures that research and development is a key area of ongoing development in the home. One staff member said, 'Both of the managers are excellent. They really listen to us and are interested in any new ideas that we may have and continually look for improvements, while encouraging us always to reflect on our practices.' Managers and staff have exceptionally high aspirations for the young people using the service. They are proactive in developing their own and other local authority's practices. For example, they have shared their outstanding practices with neighbouring local authorities that are in the process of setting up their own edge of care services. The staff team was also shortlisted for a local authority award in the competent council awards scheme. Although they did not come first, this was a significant achievement and recognised the continued hard work and development of the team. In addition, the staff team is always looking for opportunities to develop its knowledge and skills from recent research and evidence-based	

practices. This has included development work, such as working with unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people and young people at risk of radicalisation.

An enthusiastic management team constantly encourages individual development and improvement in the service. Supervision is supportive, including discussions relating to both working practice and the young people. Each staff member has their own development plan, with targets to enhance their skills and reflect on their own practice. Annual appraisals promote critical examination of working practice, encouraging staff to improve. Staffing levels meet the needs of the young people and good consideration is given to effective teamwork and getting the right people for any vacancies as they arise. All staff either have completed, or are in the process of completing, the level 3 diploma for residential childcare. They state that 'training is excellent, varied and provides the time to think about why we do the job we do and how we can really help young people'. Consequently, the young people benefit from a well-informed, proactive staff team.

Young people thrive due to their individualised placement plans. Most young people's files provide a clear and detailed picture of their experience and progress during their short-breaks stays. Safeguarding is a high priority and is managed exceptional well. However, shortfalls were found in the manager's oversight of records within the home. For example, not all individual risk assessments had been reviewed or updated following significant incidents. On other occasions, some staff had not read and signed documents to indicate that they were fully aware of any changes to young people's plans. Although this does not directly impact on the welfare of the young people, it does not support improvements in practice and it may cause confusion within the staff team, if members are not all fully aware of any changes in young people's care. In addition, it means that the manager's internal monitoring systems are not robust.

Although the manager has considered the workforce development plan for the home, this still needs to include details around staff induction, training, supervision and managing poor performance. When brought to the attention of the manager, she took effective action to begin the revision process. The manager has also identified further areas for improvement with regards to the monthly independent monitoring visits. She is addressing this, and has arranged meetings to discuss the content and evaluation of the independent visits.

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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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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