

# SC061810

Registered provider: Cumbria County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

The home is registered to accommodate six young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home is managed by the local authority.

**Inspection dates:** 2 to 3 May 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 **good**

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

**Date of last inspection:** 19 January 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

- Communal areas inside the home have been redecorated, in consultation with young people, and now provide a homely and welcoming environment.
- The home makes very good use of the county's emotional-resilience workers to improve young people's coping strategies. Staff involve themselves in this work and can be highly creative, with good effect.

- Most young people have increased attendance and show progress in their education, with some exceeding expectations. There is a specific role of an education coordinator, which ensures a sharp focus on young people's education.
- The home has good links with stakeholders and shows particular strength in multi-agency working in respect of safety planning for young people.
- Although young people prefer not to engage in structured meetings and key-worker sessions, there is a wealth of evidence that their views are sought and their wishes and feelings considered.
- The home has good systems in place to help young people get ready to live independently and to transition out of their care and into adulthood.
- The staff team is both stable and experienced, which provides continuity and expertise in the care it offers. Newer staff are making a highly valuable contribution to the staff team and develop positive relationships with young people.
- Staff have access to good training and development opportunities, with some becoming champions in specific areas. This ensures they are knowledgeable in their fields. Opportunities for progression keep them motivated and keen to improve.
- The management team is now well embedded. Managers have a good understanding of young people and their individual needs. Good monitoring systems are in place to ensure the smooth running of the home.

#### The children's home's areas for development

- The home's responsible individual left the local authority some time ago and HMCI have not been informed of his departure. A result of this is that the regulator has not been provided with the required evidence to assess the suitability of the responsible individual currently in post.
- There has been one calendar month in which a visit did not take place by the independent visitor.
- Young people consistently report some level of dissatisfaction with the meals they are provided with. Although efforts have been made to address this, their views have not been fully acted upon in this area.
- Good systems are in place to safeguard young people, but their frequent misuse of cannabis and alcohol impacts on their well-being. Efforts to address and reduce this need to be more effective.

- Staff need to identify effective ways to minimize the impact that new admissions have on group dynamics.

## Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement    |
|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| 19/01/2017      | Interim         | Sustained effectiveness |
| 14/06/2016      | Full            | Good                    |
| 23/02/2016      | Interim         | Sustained effectiveness |
| 08/10/2015      | Full            | Good                    |

## 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   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| 44: Independent person: visits and reports<br>The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month. (Regulation 44(1))                                                                       | 30/05/2017 |
| 49: Notice of changes<br>The registered person must give notice to HMCI as soon as it is reasonably practicable to do so, if the registered person is an organisation, any change in the identity of the responsible individual. (Regulation 49(e)(iii)) | 30/05/2017 |

### Recommendations

- Children must be consulted regularly on their views about the home's care, to inform and support continued improvement in the quality of care provided ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.11). Specifically, this relates to seeking young people's views on food and meals and providing them with meals they enjoy.
- The registered person should ensure that, in line with their individual health plans and the ethos of the home, children are offered advice, support and guidance on health and well-being to enhance and supplement that provided by their school through PSHE. Staff should have the relevant skills and knowledge to be able to help children understand, and where necessary work to change, negative behaviours in key areas of health and well-being such as, but not limited to, nutrition and healthy diet, exercise, mental health, sexual relationships, sexual health, contraception and use of legal highs, drugs, alcohol and tobacco ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.18). Specifically, this relates to reducing young people's misuse of cannabis and alcohol.
- Expectations of standards of behaviour should be high for all staff and children in the home. These standards should be clear and unambiguous. Children should be supported to develop empathy and understanding towards each other. Positive behaviour and relationships should be reinforced, praised and encouraged; poor

behaviour should be challenged and discussed ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 39, paragraph 8.11). In particular, this relates to promoting positive relationships between all young people and minimising the impact on the group's dynamics when a new young person is admitted.

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good**

The majority of young people at this home are settled and are progressing well in most areas. The members of the stable staff team know the young people very well and have developed positive relationships and built up trust.

Staff have been trained in the neurosequential model of therapeutics, which is a developmentally sensitive neurobiology-informed approach to clinical problem solving. They work alongside emotional-resilience workers to deliver 18-week programmes of support to young people to help them adapt their responses and behaviour, and better identify and understand their emotions. Some examples of this work are highly detailed and creative, such as devising an emotional monopoly game to play.

Although the home has previously had a settled group of residents, the admission of a new young person has impacted significantly on the group dynamics and has resulted in a higher number of behavioural incidents. Staff have a good understanding of the group dynamics and speak to young people about resolving their issues and respecting each other. However, the increase in behavioural incidents and arguments among young people is significant. The home currently relies on consequences for managing serious incidents between young people, but the manager is aiming to move to a more restorative approach to behaviour management.

The home employs a member of staff specifically as an education coordinator. This ensures there is a sharp focus on young people's education and ensures they are achieving and are placed in provisions best suited to their needs. Most young people are in full-time education and are making good progress. The home liaises with education provisions and runs revision classes to help young people revise for examinations. The education coordinator is a strong advocate for young people whose education provisions are not supporting them to achieve their potential.

Young people in the home are relatively independent. The home's current placements are all of the older age group and there is strong focus on preparing young people to live independently or for transition into their next placement. All young people manage their own budgets, and some learn to cook for themselves through cookery classes. Young people have access to a range of leisure activities, although, due to their ages, most choose to spend their free time socialising with friends.

Although young people help with the weekly shopping, and are encouraged to contribute to a shopping list, they complain that the meals prepared for them are not to their taste,

and some often choose not to eat them. There is no system in place for young people to plan what meals they would like for the week or to stipulate how these are prepared. A recommendation is made to address this because young people were consistent in their expressions of dislike for meals.

Aside from the food, young people views, wishes and feelings are gathered via a number of forums. They spend time with their key workers (although have elected not to have formal key-worker sessions), have group meetings and feel comfortable enough with staff to express their views on a day-to-day basis. Some feedback from young people is highly positive; for example, one young person wrote, 'I like Hawthwaite because I think it has good use of support and encouragement and I think staff are kind, generous and loads more.'

The home supports young people to have safe contact with family and friends. Staff also help young people share their views about contact and whether the level is right for them. One young person is transported a long distance several times each week to have contact with her infant son.

Young people are involved in developing a homely environment for themselves. They help choose paint colours, furniture and furnishings and the home has been transformed into a much more welcoming and homely environment since the last full inspection.

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

Young people admitted to the home have experienced a wide range of safeguarding issues including child sexual exploitation (CSE), drug and alcohol misuse, self-harm, neglect and missing-from-home episodes. The home has a highly developed multi-agency approach to managing risks. Many young people are subject to safety plans, which are devised by all agencies involved in their care to help minimise and reduce risk. These plans are reviewed at regular intervals.

At the point of placement some young people are at high risk of CSE. The home is successful in reducing the risk for young people, and young people at the home who are subject to CSE risk assessments are now at category one, or are even uncategorised, due to the reduced risk. One young person was involved in making a film about CSE and online grooming to increase her understanding of the issues.

Self-harm is an area of significant risk for some young people. One young person with very high risks in this area has the support of a dedicated staff member alongside an emotional-resilience worker, and is working well to reduce her risk. Staff are creative about how they support young people in this area and involve the young person in devising ways to reduce their incidents of self-harm. One young person has been bought a very large teddy which helps her to better manage her emotions and has reduced incidents of serious self-harm. Managers and staff are also vigilant to any patterns or trends in self-harm incidents.

The home has strong links with the local police force and works closely with it around missing-from-home incidents. Missing-from-home incidents have increased following the admission of one young person and as a result of the home sharing information (including photographs) with the police she has been intercepted and returned to the home in a timely manner. Independent return interviews always take place following missing episodes.

Cannabis and alcohol misuse is prevalent in the home currently. Young people attribute this partly to their ages and this being normal experimental behaviour for their age group, and partly to the effect it has on calming them and making them feel better about their current situations and issues. Although the home takes a proactive response to drug and alcohol misuse – by undertaking room searches when suspicions arise, removing alcohol from young people who bring it into the home and educating young people about the effects of drug and alcohol misuse – this has not yet had a significant impact on the frequency of cannabis and alcohol misuse.

The home educates young people about radicalisation and extremism through group discussion. The staff group also attend Cumbria Prevent and Deter triage meetings regularly and staff have undertaken online Prevent training.

The home has recently seen an increase in the use of consequences which is in line with the increase in unsettled behaviour from the young people. Although the manager is aiming to reduce consequences in favour of restorative practice, consequences are still considered effective. Staff have tried a number of different consequences, but have concluded that the only effective consequences with the current resident group are grounding, car bans and supervised spending. Some young people spoken to thought these were fair and effective; others felt that speaking to staff about their behaviour would suit them better. Most young people felt that rules and boundaries were generally fair, although they had a number of suggestions about tweaking them slightly to better suit their wishes and feelings.

Most young people reported feeling safe in the home and understood what actions staff took in order to keep them safe. Young people do not always like staff knowing so much about them – for example where they are, who they are with, what they are doing – but understand that this is in order to keep them safe. One young person reported feeling less safe within the home and had experienced threats and negative behaviour from other young people. This had been addressed by staff and had resulted from the changing dynamics within the home following a new admission.

The home has not had any incidents that have required restrictive physical intervention to manage behaviour, which is indicative of the use of positive de-escalation techniques.

The home enables young people to take age-appropriate risks and staff understand that young people need to learn to keep themselves safe. Rather than reducing all risks, the home incrementally introduces young people to situations where they may expose themselves to risk and this is in line with their ages and their plans to move on from the safety of the home environment.

## **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

The home is led by a manager with suitable qualifications and experience. The management team has had time to embed itself and is efficient and effective. Managers have a very good understanding of the home and specific knowledge of individual young people. This enables them to make appropriate decisions about young people's care. Managers are clear about the progress young people are making and are aware when anything impacts on their progress. Managers are proactive about implementing new strategies and ideas to ensure young people make continuous progress.

Managers have high expectations of staff and young people alike. They are realistic about what young people can achieve during their time in the home and ensure that appropriate plans are in place for transition into independence and out of the home. Transitions into the home are carefully considered and the manager feels supported by senior managers within the organisation to make decisions on admissions to the home in line with matching requirements.

Staff report high levels of satisfaction with the systems in place for induction, supervision and appraisal. Staff who are new to the team feel their induction was positive and thorough and report high levels of support in getting to know the expectations of the job role and the young people. Training is offered across a range of issues and some staff have opportunities to train as trainers in certain areas, and thus become a resource for the area, not just the home. Others have the opportunity to become champions for a specific area, such as CSE.

The home's statement of purpose clearly sets out its aims and objectives. Previous requirements about the statement of purpose being updated and sent to the regulator have been met.

The provider has changed the nominated responsible individual for the homes it operates. The regulator has not been provided with information to show the previous post holder has left the position, and consequently has not had the relevant information to enable assessment of the new responsible individual's suitability. Therefore, a requirement is made for this to be addressed.

The manager has robust monthly monitoring systems in place which cover a wide range of areas to be checked. This system works well and ensures the manager has good oversight of the home and any areas for development. A development plan further evidences that the manager has a good understanding of the home's strengths and weaknesses and of how to address any areas for development. External monitoring is of a good quality, although the registered manager finds that the timing of the visits can conflict with his monthly monitoring schedule and is therefore not always helpful in identifying issues which would be picked up shortly after, during the manager's monthly checks. Additionally, although there were two visits in March 2017, there was no visit to the home in February 2017 and a requirement is made to reflect the necessity for monthly visits to take place.

The home works in close partnership with partner agencies to ensure young people get good all-round care. As a service of the county council the home has excellent access to other county council services and makes good use of these, for example the emotional-resilience workers and social workers. Other agencies, such as health services and the police, report positively in feedback about their working relationship with the home. One representative from the police force reported, 'Excellent information sharing and concerns are addressed as soon as possible.' Where services are not effective, the home actively challenges on young people's behalf, for example when educational placements are not fully meeting young people's needs.

Young people are encouraged to fully participate and are able to voice their opinions in a number of different ways. Managers actively seek feedback from young people about their placement experiences and what could be done to improve things. Young people are involved in the recruitment process and therefore have a say in who is employed to care for them.

## **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:** SC061810

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider address:** Organisational Development, The Courts, English Street, Carlisle CA3 8NA

**Responsible individual:** Deborah Evans

**Registered manager:** Colin Wall

## Inspector

Charlie Bamber: social care regulatory inspector

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