

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC063683
Inspector	Denise Jolly
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Manchester City Council
Registered person address	Town Hall Albert Square Manchester M60 2LA

Responsible individual	Karen Dolton
Registered manager	Michael Francis Booth
Date of last inspection	28/03/2014

Inspection date	19/09/2014
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Previous inspection	satisfactory progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	There has been no enforcement action since the last inspection.

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	adequate
Outcomes for children and young people	adequate
Quality of care	adequate
Keeping children and young people safe	adequate
Leadership and management	adequate

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	adequate
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The home has overcome a period of changing leadership and staff, to offer young people an improving service. Currently it is adequate to meet their needs, although the experienced and qualified manager has plans in place to consult with young people, and ensure that staff develop the skills and practices to make a positive difference to young people's lives.

The manager is providing clear leadership that takes account of the need to ensure young people are safe outside of the home, as well as when they are resident. This is evident in initiatives that improve planning, to ensure staff analyse, evaluate and create actions from the data they collect about young people.

Relationships between staff and young people are generally calm and friendly. At present, they lack the depth of knowledge and trust that helps young people to work with staff to review their plans and share their views in any formal arena. Staff are working very hard to improve young people's confidence in their ability to make a positive difference to their lives. Most young people demonstrate warmth in their relationships with staff, and seek advice and support from them for some of the time. In turn, the staff respond with genuine interest and encouragement to their suggestions and views. This has improved relationships in the home as staff and

young people get to know each other better.

Monitoring of the service is regular and provides clear information about the conduct of the home. However, some requirements and recommendations are made to secure improvement in the quality of some records, and to promote the opportunity for consistent supervision and training for all staff. The manager has recognised many of the shortfalls identified in this inspection, but had not identified suitable arrangements to address them. The manager has a clear system for integrating the report of any independent visitor to the home, to maximise opportunities for effective development of the home.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This is a local authority home that provides care and accommodation for six children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/03/2014	Interim	satisfactory progress
23/05/2013	Full	good
23/11/2012	Interim	satisfactory progress
27/06/2012	Full	good

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

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 Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
17B (2001)	ensure that a written record is made of any restraint used in the home which shall include all the information required by the regulation (Regulation 17B (3))	14/11/2014
27 (2001)	ensure that all persons employed at the home receive appropriate training and supervision (Regulation 27(4)(a))	24/10/2014
32 (2001)	ensure, by means of fire drills and practices at suitable intervals, that so far as practicable, children accommodated in the home are aware of the procedure to be followed in case of fire (Regulation 32 (1)(e))	24/10/2014
34	ensure that the registered person shall supply to	14/11/2014

(2001)	HMCI a report in respect of any review conducted by him for the purposes of monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6. (Regulation 34 (2))	
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Recommendations

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

- ensure that sanctions and rewards are clear, and understood by all staff and children (NMS 3.8)
- ensure that the home has a record of the required recruitment and vetting checks carried out on staff, that shows the date on which the check was completed and who carried out the check (NMS 16.4)
- ensure that staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of young people, through regularly refreshed first aid and administration of medication training (NMS 18.1)
- ensure that suitable and regular arrangements exist for the professional supervision of the manager of the home (NMS 19.3)
- ensure that records are up to date and contribute to an understanding of a child's life, with particular regard to risk assessments and healthcare plans. (NMS 22)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **adequate**

changes in staff and management, and this has created disruption in their relationships. Some young people have been resident for a short while. It is early days in the development of open and trusting relationships with staff. Although they spend limited time in the home young people get on well with staff, and occasionally participate in activities with them.

Young people are aware of their family history and background. They maintain contact with friends and family, mostly through independent arrangements. Young people say that they are 'okay' in the home, and that staff are also 'okay.' However, some young people choose to spend the majority of their free time out of the home with their preferred associates and family members. This limits their ability to develop meaningful relationships with staff, or to participate actively in planning for their futures. In consequence, some young people make inconsistent progress in acquiring the practical and life skills to prepare them for adult life.

Young people negotiate their views and wishes in day-to-day interactions with staff, and choose their meals, activities and bedroom decoration. Young people were reluctant to speak with the inspector, and also with a senior manager who had made an arrangement to visit the home to consult with them. One young person said that although staff were approachable and listened to them, they did not have the ability to effect the change that they felt would help their lives to improve. This was because staff could not influence such matters as the amount of financial support for independence, or moving out of the children's home. They felt that it was a waste of time to share their views. The local authority has implemented a programme to enable looked after young people to have a voice, and some young people have engaged with this approach. Young people know how to complain, and staff encourage them to seek advice from independent professionals when they disagree with their care plans.

Young people are aware of the health support services that are available and know how to access them. This includes, for example, substance misuse counsellors. However, some continue to engage in frequent incidents of substance misuse. Due to the efforts of staff, young people do not usually smoke cannabis while they are in the home. Some young people choose to continue smoking although they are aware of the associated health risks. Some young people are engaging with a range of specialist services, such as antenatal care and child and adolescent mental health services to support their health and well-being. Some young people have taken responsibility for their own health care, and prefer to access health services independently. This means they are more able to deal with the challenges they face in their personal lives.

Young people do not routinely attend education or work, despite identified individualised education programmes and the support of staff and education professionals. However, young people who have recently left the home had achieved regular college or education attendance, and gained some accredited awards for their efforts. One young person expressed their pleasure at embarking on the second year of a vocational course, because they felt it would improve their prospects for gaining employment in the future.

Young people are now beginning to respond to the efforts of staff to engage in cooking and cleaning activities. Young people are more willing to prepare meals with staff, and keep their own rooms tidy. Young people take pride in their appearance, and like to dress according to their preferences and interests. Those young people who had recently left the home said that staff had helped them to transition to their independent accommodation, with both practical and emotional support.

Quality of care

adequate

Staff work very hard to overcome the barriers to making and sustaining effective relationships in the home. Staff are becoming more relaxed and confident in their role now that changes in leadership and the team have stabilised. They express high aspirations for young people, and communicate these to them.

Staff identify and implement consistent strategies that help young people to consider the impact of their life choices on their future prospects. For example, young people are supported to think about the way they ask for help or participate in day-to-day chores. The staff also negotiate with young people who do not attend school, or who are involved in substance misuse. Staff take the view that although their efforts do not result in dramatic change, young people are learning the importance of stable and reliable relationships necessary to build positive futures. Their calm and proactive approach means that young people are developing warmer relationships with them.

Key workers are committed to creating positive relationships with young people and help them to participate in planning for their futures. However, some plans for young people do not include all the information necessary to help them to progress. This includes a minority of risk management plans, and healthcare records. Although staff record most information in great detail, it does not always provide a coherent and accessible picture of young people's unique and changing needs. The impact of the omissions is mitigated to some degree because staff communicate well with each other about the young people in staff meetings and daily handovers to ensure that any immediately presenting needs of young people are addressed.

Staff are committed to offer young people appropriate help and support to maintain good emotional health. Staff work with mental health professionals to identify strategies to support young people. They are awaiting training that will help them to understand better the difficulties encountered by young people who have suffered

attachment and loss difficulties. A clinical psychologist expressed her delight at the difference staff had made to the increased stability and access to therapeutic support for a young person who had failed to settle in many provisions. She said, 'the staff have made the home a safe base, and this has helped the young person to return to the home. This enables them to access support and guidance, and they are taking small steps forwards as a result.'

Staff are committed to focus more specifically on offering a range of activities and opportunities to young people. This increases their choice of positive alternatives to spend their leisure time, from playing cards and board games in the home to cooking and baking with staff, as well as offering community based activities. Although progress is slow, the staff remain enthusiastic and share their increasing knowledge of what young people like to do. This means that the choices and preferences of young people are considered in any activity plans. Staff are careful about maintaining positive relationships with the local community. They encourage young people to respond responsibly to local groups of young people to maintain the peace and security of the neighbourhood.

Professionals recognise and value the work that staff do to help young people improve their health and prospects. One police officer said, 'staff are very capable, they work hard to manage young people, and provide them with clear boundaries.' Staff support young people to understand the importance of complying with criminal justice orders. Young people respond to curfew orders, and engage with youth justice workers. This improves their understanding of the impact of positive choice on their futures, as they avoid further criminalisation. An education professional said, 'staff want the young people to attend education, and carefully balance their approach so that they promote positive change without increasing conflict.' This means that some young people make slow progress. Staff are not daunted by the frequent setbacks, and work tirelessly to find further suitable resources that may spark an interest or improve attendance at education resources.

Keeping children and young people safe adequate

Young people are safeguarded because staff members have a sound knowledge and understanding of the home's child protection and safeguarding procedures. This means that if staff have any concerns about a young person's safety or well-being they are able to take effective action. Staff are aware of the young people's individual and diverse needs and vulnerabilities. They take swift action in response to safeguarding concerns about young people and ensure the appropriate persons are notified. This includes reporting any injuries that young people sustain outside the home, so that all relevant professionals are involved in monitoring the welfare of young people who go missing.

Young people say that staff are approachable, and support them to stay safe. However, not all young people choose to follow the advice and guidance of staff,

particularly in regard to returning to the home as agreed in their placement plan. The staff have an excellent understanding of the home's missing from care procedures. The police say that staff are robust in their approach to the needs of young people. Staff implement agreed protocols to good effect when they believe young people are at risk of harm by their absence. Staff respond proactively to instances of young people being missing, and work well with the police and other professionals to limit their absence from the home. They pursue every avenue to make contact with young people, including searching for them in known locations, and contacting friends and associates to try to find them. Despite the efforts of staff, most young people fail to return to the home at agreed times, and some have extended periods of absence. This places young people at risk from unsuitable adults and activity in the community.

Staff work with social workers and the police to agree the management of an individual's absence, so that they support approved plans and risk reduction strategies. Staff do their best to assess the welfare of young people who are persistently absent from the home. They promote daily contact, provide transport to enable young people to return to the home, and foster the cooperation of friends and relatives to encourage their safe return. This helps young people experience and understand that staff genuinely care about their safety and welfare. Other professionals comment that this has made a real difference to some young people, who have taken small steps to return to the home more often. This enables staff to support young people to access other services that protect their health and wellbeing, such as therapeutic services and medical appointments.

Despite the recent formation of the staff team, young people's behaviour is usually consistently addressed in the home. Occasional misunderstandings arise due to differences of approaches used in sanctions. However, staff rectify the error quickly so that young people know what is expected of them. Staff demonstrate excellent knowledge and understanding of using a positive and nurturing approach to behaviour support. Staff restrain young people on rare occasions, in order to prevent harm to others. An occasional omission in records of restraint, such as failing to record an offer of independent medical examination has not affected the safety and welfare of young people. However, it prevents young people from having a complete record of their time at the home. Staff routinely use environmental support and praise or reward, to motivate young people to improve their behaviour. Staff model open and accountable relationships, and this means they encourage young people to talk to them about any difficulties that arise between them. Because of this, young people live calmly and amicably in the home for most of the time.

Bullying is rare, but when it occurs staff identify the work that is necessary to improve relationships in the home. They offer advice about respecting individual's property and personal space, and understanding the impact of negative or violent behaviour towards others. However, because relationships remain superficial at present, progress is slow due to young people preferring to take themselves out of the home to avoid conflict or constructive discussion.

Managers recruit and select new staff by using procedures that help prevent unsuitable people from having access to young people. Staff have transferred into the home from other children's services as a result of a recently completed service review. The human resources department maintains the records of recruitment checks externally. The Registered Manager does not keep a complete record of those checks in the home. This falls short of recommendations for good practice outlined in the National Minimum Standards for Children's Homes 2011, and limits an opportunity for managers in the home to oversee the continuing suitability of those employees.

The environment is physically safe and appropriately secure. Staff have participated in routine drills for the evacuation of the home. However, young people have not been present, and this prevents them from knowing what to do in an emergency.

Leadership and management

adequate

The Registered Manager has been in post since April 2014. He has managed children's homes for many years, and is suitably qualified to undertake his responsibilities. He leads staff who have been relocated from other children's homes in the last six months, as part of the local authority review of residential services. The home now has a stable and largely qualified staff team to meet the needs of young people placed. The manager and deputy work well with staff, to deliver an enthusiastic and aspirational service to young people. They are working effectively with all the other professionals who support young people.

Monitoring of the home by the Registered Manager is generally sound. Monitoring of critical information, such as when young people are missing, or how well they are engaging in education, informs changes in staff approaches to young people's care plans. All who work in the home demonstrate this flexible and child-centred approach. Both requirements from the previous inspection have been met. This means that gaps in employment histories of staff have been identified and rectified, to ensure all staff are suitable to work in the home. Additionally, independent visitors regularly offer young people an opportunity to speak with them, although they do not take the offer up very often. The manager is reviewing ways of helping young people to see the importance of talking to people outside of the home about the conduct of the home. However, the manager has not sent his monitoring reports to Ofsted in the required timescales. This limits an opportunity for independent scrutiny of the progress of the home.

In addition, the development plan for the home lacks analysis of the information that has been gathered about staff development and supervision. For example, staff who need it are not booked onto refresher training in first aid or the administration of medication, despite a review of training need in the home that identified this shortfall. Although this has not impacted on young people, it prevents staff from

refreshing their skills and knowledge to care effectively for young people. The Statement of Purpose and the young people's guide is an accurate account of the conduct of the home.

Staff maintain most records and documentation well, so that they contribute to the on-going care and support provided to young people. However, in some cases the way in which risk assessments and health care plans are recorded and reviewed does not promote consistency. This inhibits staff from identifying clear lines of practice to ensure that they respond in line with agreed plans.

A very experienced, committed and caring team of staff looks after young people. Managers promote reflective practice that enables staff to work together to identify solutions to difficulties that arise in the home. However, some staff including the Registered Manager do not regularly participate in formal supervision of their roles and responsibilities. This hinders their ability to identify the skills and knowledge necessary to provide high quality care that meets the changing needs of young people.

Independent visitors on behalf of the provider regularly visit the home, and gather the views of young people where this is possible. Reports provide clear actions to improve the quality of the service when necessary. The Registered Manager responds to any actions raised in a timely fashion, and this helps the overall development of the home.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The 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 relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.