

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	8 June 2016
Unique reference number	1223201
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Leeds City Council
Registered person address	Leeds City Council, 3rd Floor, St George House, Great George Street, Leeds LS1 3DL
Responsible individual	Stephen Walker
Registered manager	Martin Scarth
Inspector	Stella Henderson

Inspection date	8 June 2016
Previous inspection judgement	N/A
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	Outstanding

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Summary of findings

The children's home provision is outstanding because:

- The home excels in fulfilling the main objective of its Statement of Purpose, which is to enable children and young people to, 'return to family-based environments and have successful, long-term placements there'. The home currently has a 100% success rate in this respect.
- Children and young people gain enormous benefit from the extremely focused and time-limited programme of intervention. This has an immediate impact on helping them to address unhelpful and unsafe behaviours. This results in change that is sustained over the long term. Children and young people are safer as a result.
- Evidence-based research underpins this model of practice. Staff have quickly acquired the skills and knowledge that they need to apply this research in day-to-day practice. This means that children and young people are able to begin to make changes to their lives from their first day at the home.
- The manager provides strong oversight of each child's care plan to ensure that staff deliver the programme to a high standard. His methodical and rigorous monitoring is highly effective. This contributes to children and young people making outstanding progress from their starting points.

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:

- 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. Children should be able to see the results of their views being listened to and acted upon ('Guide to the children's homes regulations and quality standards', page 22, paragraph 14.11).

Specifically, include and evaluate the views of children and young people in the manager's six-monthly report.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This is a local authority children's home. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for four young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The home is currently participating in a Department for Education-sponsored pilot. It uses a very specific model of intervention known as 'Multi-systemic Therapy – Family Integrated Transitions' (MST-Fit). The model delivers programmes of highly focused therapeutic and behavioural intervention to children and young people. The aim is to help children and young people to return to family-based environments and to have successful, long-term stability.

Recent inspection history

This is the home's first inspection.

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Outstanding
<p>The programme is proving extremely effective for children and young people. The goal of returning home and remaining there in the longer term has been achieved with a 100% success rate so far.</p> <p>This is a significant outcome for children and young people in terms of improved attachment to families, stability and sense of belonging. The programme provides additional benefits, helping children and young people to retain ties to their local schools and communities.</p> <p>Staff are excellent role models, and their work has immediate impact. They quickly get to work on providing highly focussed practical support. As a result, there are a lot of, 'quick wins' for all concerned, in terms of improvement in behaviour, attitude and parents feeling more in control.</p> <p>Children and young people recognise that the work that staff do is helping them. One young person said that staff, 'have helped things to improve massively for me', and that, 'my parents have noticed the difference in me'.</p> <p>Parents and social workers value the service and can see that it is having an immediate impact. One parent said that the programme, 'made us feel hopeful'. A social worker said the programme was, 'brilliant stuff', and their young person was, 'responding incredibly well to what they're offering'.</p> <p>Children and young people make a strong contribution to the planning of their own individual programmes. With the help of staff, they identify the behaviours that are preventing them from living successfully with their families. This gives them a high level of motivation to engage in the programme and a greater chance of achieving their goals.</p> <p>Alongside the bespoke programmes of intervention, children and young people enjoy warm and nurturing care and attention from staff. This strongly contributes to children and young people making exceptional progress across all other aspects of their development.</p> <p>For example, children's and young people's engagement in education improves tremendously. Before coming to the home, one young person did not attend school at all. By the end of his stay, his attendance was at 97%. Staff are very ambitious for children and young people to do well in their education. They help them to</p>	

achieve this by keeping to structured routines, having clear expectations and establishing good communication with school teachers and support staff.

Children and young people are taking fewer risks with their own safety, such as running away. Smoking and drug use also diminish along with involvement in criminal activity. However, the most significant improvement is seen in children's and young people's emotional health and reduction in challenging behaviour.

Staff provide direct coaching for children and young people. They help them to unpick particular behaviours and the emotions that go with them. Staff are extremely good at explaining to children and young people the skills that they need to be using in response to situations. They give them immediate feedback and offer very practical, 'this is how you do it' tips and techniques.

Children and young people absorb these skills very quickly. They learn to name, describe and, crucially, master their emotions. They see how these feelings can affect their decision-making. Children and young people then apply their learning to identify the points at which they could do things differently.

This helps them to make better decisions. It gives them the skills that they need to negotiate more effectively with others and to cope with frustration and conflict. Importantly, they learn how to calm themselves and how to accept praise. These are skills that will serve them throughout their lives.

Children and young people involve themselves in a number of enjoyable activities outside of the school day. They like to keep fit, so going to the gym is important to them. They also like to go to the cinema, have meals out and go on day trips to theme parks. This provides them with a happy balance of work and play.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding
Children and young people are asked to identify three or four behaviours that they want to change. These are often behaviours that prevent them from living successfully at home, such as running away from home or engaging in challenging behaviour, drug use or criminal activity. By focussing on these behaviours, risks can rapidly reduce. This is because staff are excellent at helping children and young people to understand how, by making poor decisions or having unhelpful thoughts and feelings, they can put themselves at risk. Children and young people learn how to identify and plan ahead for these situations, and how to implement strategies to interrupt these negative processes.	

This encourages children and young people to take responsibility for their actions. With the strategies that they learn, they are able to protect themselves actively from harm. Incidents of missing from home have consequently reduced, as has criminal activity.

Highly effective work with young people about child sexual exploitation prevents the risk from becoming an actuality. Staff use the support of others to help children and young people to learn about and to manage risk. These include workers from drugs projects, the youth justice system, primary healthcare services and the police. One social worker explained that a young person, 'had engaged massively in the police strategy to keep her safe'.

Practical measures are also highly effective in protecting children and young people. For example, staff actively search for children and young people if they go missing. Always seeking to improve the service, the manager has further strengthened safeguarding arrangements, for example in one case by securing a higher level of police co-operation.

This demonstrates the willingness of the manager to go the extra mile and hold others respectfully to account. Children and young people are safer as a result. They say that they feel safe here, and parents and professionals are in agreement with this view.

Children and young people are enthusiastic about the, 'token economy' that, along with praise and immediate feedback, reinforces positive behaviour and sensible decision-making. Children and young people are rewarded often for their behaviour, accumulating tokens that can be exchanged for what they want. For example, one young person accumulated enough to take her parents out for a meal. Brothers who were at the home enjoyed the nature of this reward system so much that they asked their father to use it at home.

This is a system that does require staff to be alert for the sometimes subtle changes in behaviour. The benefit of this is that staff need to be close to hand at all times and ready to respond to concerns if necessary. This provides reassurance to children and young people. There is no bullying, and behaviour management is so effective that staff have no need to use sanctions or physical restraint.

Children and young people benefit from living in a home that is comfortable, homely and spacious. The house is decorated and furnished to a very high standard, and its location provides a safe setting for them. A newsletter from the home is distributed in the local neighbourhood. This promotes good working relationships and acts as another useful safeguarding measure.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding
<p>The registered manager is highly experienced in residential care and has managed this home since its opening in January 2016. He holds the level 4 diploma in leadership and management for care service and health and social care.</p> <p>Two members of staff are due to complete their level 3 diploma in July of this year. This will mean that all of the staff team will have this qualification. Each staff member brings a range of skills and experience, and they regularly undertake mandatory and self-directed learning.</p> <p>Over and above this, all members of staff have responded exceptionally well to the accelerated learning that has been required of them. This has enabled them to deliver, to a consistently high standard, the therapeutic and behavioural programme that children and young people have signed up to. This helps children and young people to make significant and sustained changes to their lives, with all the benefits that go along with that.</p> <p>The motivation and enthusiasm of staff are key elements in the success of the programme. Research informs every aspect of this programme, and staff have an excellent understanding of how this underpins their work. They apply this in their day-to-day dealings with children and young people and are very confident practitioners.</p> <p>Staff speak positively about their work, one remarking that, 'This model of intervention is completely different to what we've done before. It's a complete change of culture.' Shifts are meticulously planned but flexible enough to be adapted to meet individual need.</p> <p>In addition to supervision and team meetings, a great deal of reflective practice is required by staff. This gives them time to think about what is happening for children and young people, and about how things can be improved and be made more effective.</p> <p>This is a model of working that requires strong leadership and management, which the manager more than fulfils. He actively manages the programmes for each individual child and holds frequent de-briefings with staff. He and the staff also receive direct support from therapists and the lead academic of the programme. This means that problems can be promptly resolved and changes to plans quickly implemented.</p> <p>The manager has very high expectations of staff. They are able to fulfil this because their time is freed up to concentrate on children and young people, rather</p>	

than paperwork. One member of staff estimated that over 95% of their time was spent, 'on the shop floor, not in the office'. This constant presence of staff not only reassures children and young people, but also means that staff are there to support, guide and coach them continuously.

The manager's monitoring of the home is frequent, detailed and highly effective, bringing about further improvement. Using data, observation of practice and feedback from others, the manager is building up a clear evidence base of what is working well, and where things need to be looked at again. For example, he has already identified how the programme can be adapted to help parents more.

Children's and young people's progress is closely tracked and evaluated. This is supplemented by the assessment from the independent visitor and the manager's six-month overview of this home. The manager's subsequent report could be strengthened by reference to feedback from children and young people, their parents and other professionals. This would help to give a more rounded view of the service and of what has been achieved.

Partnership working is excellent and staff are keen to share their knowledge, tips and techniques with other professionals. One teaching professional explained that staff had shared some strategies with her. She is now able use the same techniques with the young person when he is at school. This means that he experiences a level of consistency that further helps him to achieve his goals.

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 children looked after 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 that 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 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 whom 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 the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

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