

1251073

Registered provider: Manchester City Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is an adolescent support service provided by a local authority. It provides short stays for up to four children, and emergency placements for up to one child at weekends and on bank holidays. In addition, the service provides intensive, time-limited support to children on the edge of care and their families. This includes planned day visits for children.

Inspection dates: 1 to 4 September 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
---	--------------------

How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
---	-------------

The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
---	-------------

The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: first inspection

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is outstanding because:

- The home is extremely well led by a very experienced and competent manager who has high aspirations for children.
- The staff team is very well trained, qualified, experienced and enthusiastic. It skilfully intervenes in families, providing excellent support and guidance that help families stay together.
- The high quality of care and support to children and families has resulted in fewer teenage children being admitted to care.
- Highly effective collaboration with partner agencies ensures that children quickly receive the support they need from a range of professionals.
- Children, families and other professionals report that this is an excellent service. They recognise the very positive impact that it has on the lives of the children and families it supports.
- Social workers recognise the high quality of the home's assessments and reports and use them as a basis for better care planning.

The children's home's areas for development:

- Children's relevant plans do always detail the depth of the work the home intends to carry out with a child and their family. Nor do they demonstrate how the particular interventions used have been reviewed. This means that the home's records do not reflect well on the work undertaken and how successful particular interventions have been.

Recent inspection history

This is the home's first inspection after registration.

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

Recommendations

- Ensure that individual relevant plans that form the basis of the care offered to a child demonstrate clearly how the home is meeting the child's particular needs. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 11.1)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The home provides exceedingly good individual care for children with complex emotional and behavioural needs at difficult periods in their lives. It provides very high quality and wide-ranging support and advice to families of adolescents on the edge of care, enabling them to work through challenges they face in bringing up children who present dangerous and challenging behaviour. Through individually tailored, time-limited intervention programmes, the service successfully helps many children on the edge of care to stay at home with their families.

Since registration, 19 children have stayed at the home overnight and many more have visited during the day or received a service based in their own home. A senior manager explained: 'Those children who receive support from this service are less likely to need looking after. Early signs are that the home is doing some really good work. There is a clear reduction in the number of children coming into care as a result of their work.'

Transitions to and from the home are well managed and children are fully involved in their plans and decision-making. Staff help children to settle in quickly and children report that they feel very welcome and comfortable. Children who have stayed overnight at the home report that it has been a positive experience which they have thoroughly enjoyed.

Children receive the best possible care from staff they trust and this helps them to develop the skills they need to interact more positively with family, friends and the wider community. They benefit enormously from the friendly atmosphere and nurturing care they receive, which helps them to relax, build self-esteem and develop confidence. Without exception, they report that staff are kind and helpful, treat them well and provide for their needs. They enjoy friendly banter with staff and a range of activities tailored to their individual interests and needs. The activities provided are not costly, but involve having fun, learning new skills and engaging in positive interaction with others. They are activities that a child can continue in their own communities when their involvement with the service ends.

Listening to children is a key strength, and feedback from children is 99% positive. One

child's comments represent the views of many who have given feedback about the home: 'The staff are nice people and they treat us like their own children. I can chill out here and they keep my mind off things that worry me. Sometimes we talk about my worries and my dreams. It helps having someone to chat with... I feel safe with staff. I think this is an outstanding home because it's really fun and they've helped my family understand how to treat me better.'

Children report that their lives have improved as a result of the home's interventions. For example, one said: 'My anger is better,' and another said: 'There is nothing better they can do. They gave me a place to sleep and offered me food and drinks.' Children's emotional well-being improves because they learn to express and understand their feelings better, interact more positively with others and reduce their challenging behaviour.

The home has established extremely good and effective working relationships with the police, education case workers, the youth justice service and a myriad of other professionals whose aim is to support children's safety, welfare and development. This helps to ensure that children receive the best possible service from a range of dedicated professionals. Through the excellent engagement with children and with key professionals and parents, the home successfully influences children to obtain and benefit from this support.

The home has very strong relationships with the child and adolescent mental health service, whose workers have been involved in training staff in new approaches to behaviour management and engagement with children so that their practice is based on up-to-date theory. This has reinforced the expertise of the staff team, by focusing on the importance of working together consistently with other professionals and building nurturing and responsive relationships with children to good effect.

The home has high aspirations for the children it supports, and to this end embraces new and pioneering practice developments. For example, it is part of a national innovative project aimed at providing immediate support to children in need whose mental health is at risk. Arrangements have been set up for a specialist counsellor to be based at the home and provide a service to those children who would otherwise not receive the mental health support they need. This is a new and exciting venture that is in the early stages of development, so its impact is not yet evident.

An educational psychologist attends the home regularly and meets with children, families and staff. Holding these meetings in the informal setting of the home helps children and their families to feel more relaxed, less intimidated and, with staff support, to make their voices heard at meetings focused on children's education. It empowers parents and children by enabling them to contribute to plans that more effectively address the child's educational needs.

Staff advocate very well for children, including for those who are not receiving full-time education. They provide high levels of support to facilitate children's re-engagement with school. This significantly improves their future life chances. For example, they assist

children and their parents at meetings with school; get children up in the mornings and take them to school, where necessary, to re-establish good attendance routines. Commenting on how well the service has supported her child, one parent explained: 'She needed help to get her into education. Now she is in full-time education.' A child said, 'They are very helpful. They help me sort things out in school if something bad happens.'

Parents say that staff help children to reduce their prejudicial behaviour and become more tolerant and respectful of others. For example, a parent explained, 'The women there are strong and empowering and this has helped him to have a proper look at women and he has grown much more respectful of them. Having staff from all different races and backgrounds has opened him up to seeing there are good and bad people in every race and community.'

Staff engage with many hard-to-reach families remarkably well, often successfully intervening with those who are wary of and resistant to engagement with other professionals. Their highly supportive, non-judgemental intervention helps families to care for their children better and keep them safer. Feedback from parents is extremely positive, with comments such as 'simply the best', and 'excellent'. One said, 'Staff have been amazing, supportive, professional and friendly, very warm and welcoming.' The same parent said, 'He has been treated better than fair. It's been fantastic – the friendship, listening ear and fun time has made a massive difference.'

Without doubt, the service has a very positive impact on children's lives. A professional summed up the views of almost all families, professionals and children involved with the home by saying: 'It's an amazing service. They offer everything a child needs. It's that special something that other workers don't offer. The emotional support to children is brilliant... just brilliant. I'm very happy with everything they do.'

How well children and young people are helped and protected: outstanding

Safeguarding children is a key strength. By offering planned short breaks and overnight emergency accommodation, the home provides a safe haven for those children who need respite or a temporary place of safety. This protects children and helps to sustain family placements.

The staff team works closely with the emergency duty team and visits families in crisis. It provides families with exceptional levels of support, which successfully enables them to manage difficult situations without the need for their children to go into care. Where necessary, the home provides overnight accommodation in the event that no family member is available to care for the child. This reduces the likelihood of children running away and, alongside their extremely good and supportive interventions, the staff help family relationships to get back on an even keel so that, in most cases, children return home the next day. The home refers the family for further support from children's services, including planned intervention from its own service, as appropriate.

The home protects children very well. It fully embraces the local authority's Signs of Safety model for working with children and families. This means that children's individual

safety needs are paramount in the home's interventions. Staff, children, parents and other professionals have an excellent, shared understanding of how the home is addressing the child's safety needs.

Without exception, children referred to the home have significant safeguarding needs. These include going missing and displaying aggressive and violent or sexually harmful behaviour. Risks are clearly identified in care planning documentation and individual risk assessments guide staff in how to keep children safe and manage risk-taking behaviour. Children are extremely well supervised and supported by staff who prioritise their individual safety needs in all aspects of the home's work with them.

Staff carry out extensive direct work with children on staying safe. They refer them for specialist help, such as for drug and alcohol advisory services, when needed and because the home has developed good partnership working with support services, children quickly receive offers of support. Staff help children to take care of their sexual health and to talk openly and safely with their families about sex. This reduces stress levels and improves relationships within the family. For example, one parent restricts and/or supervises internet access and use of social media where this is required. This helps to protect children from child sexual exploitation.

The home has developed skills in carrying out assessment, intervention, moving on assessments for children who have displayed sexually harmful behaviour. Specially trained staff are well supported to do this work, which is in its early stages. This is extremely valuable work as children are openly reflective with staff whom they know well and trust. This means that the quality of the assessment is likely to be very good. Youth justice workers are extremely positive about the quality of the work undertaken so far.

Parents report that staff are 'firm but fair' and they value this approach. Staff use positive behaviour management strategies extremely effectively, building on the warm and nurturing relationships they have with children. As a result, they minimise the risks to children's safety and there has been no need for sanctions or restraints. Children have a strong sense of safety and report that they feel completely safe in the home and listened to. One said: 'It's a fantastic place for me to go and say something when I'm angry. They help me with my anger at home. I would like to go there more often.' There have been no complaints about the home.

The home goes the extra mile to assist children in need of protection. For example, staff recently looked after a child in hospital with mental health issues who was between placements, and had no one to visit or look after her. A small team of staff visited her in rotation, spending the day with her and eventually assisting the social worker to escort her to her new placement. This helped the child to feel safe and cared for at a very difficult time in her life. It facilitated her smooth transition to a new placement.

Staff have a very good knowledge and understanding of child protection. They know how to respond swiftly to any safeguarding concerns, such as children going missing. Four children have gone missing from the home, a total of nine times. The home has

taken immediate action to secure their safe return by searching for them, contacting known associates and attempting to contact the children. It has shared information promptly with safeguarding agencies and parents. Such actions protect children and in all but one case, have secured the child's safe return. Despite the strong safeguarding practice, and prompt intervention by police, an unaccompanied asylum seeking young person went missing after an overnight stay and did not return.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

This adolescent support service is extremely well led by an inspirational and assertive registered manager who is very experienced and competent in managing children's social care services. She confidently manages a team of staff which is knowledgeable, enthusiastic and ambitious for children. Consequently, the home makes an impressive difference to children's lives and is fulfilling its stated aim of helping children on the edge of care to remain with their families. Social workers describe the service as 'excellent' and recognise the skills of the staff team. For example, one said, 'This is an excellent service provided by people of values, skills and knowledge of children and systems.'

The senior leadership team maintains exceptionally good oversight and scrutiny of the home and takes prompt action to address any challenges that could undermine the work of the home or that may impede children's progress. This includes taking steps to improve collaboration between the home and other professionals involved in supporting children. For example, the responsible individual is taking steps to improve the quality of the feedback provided by an agency that carries out independent return interviews on behalf of the local authority. This is to ensure that staff at the home are made fully aware of any discussions held with children that might alert them to safeguarding concerns that could draw children to go missing.

Partnership working is developing very well. The home is continually strengthening its collaboration with partners so that children are increasingly receiving the services they need. This promotes improved outcomes for children across all areas of their development. The home actively challenges other professionals who are not meeting their obligations to children. This includes those responsible for setting up and delivering appropriate education. The manager invokes the support of other professionals, as required, to assist in progressing children's plans. This ensures that, in most cases, children get a first-rate service from a range of professionals.

The home provides good quality, reliable information to those responsible for care planning, which is based on its close work with children and their families. This helps strengthen social work assessments and care plans so the local authority is more likely to find the right placements for those children who do need a care placement. The service manager for looked after children explained: 'They have done some really, really good work... I was very impressed by the detail in their reports. It's a rich source of information that has helped us to make decisions.'

Managers have a very good understanding of the home's strengths and areas for improvement and are fully au fait with children's progress and development. They have

a clear development plan and are continually improving the systems, recording and partnership working so that the home goes from strength to strength building on its good foundations.

Managers provide staff with extremely good supervision, training and guidance so that the home's interventions are highly effective and the children's needs are met exceptionally well. Staff enthusiasm is encouraged and nurtured in a culture of openness and positivity. This empowers them to work effectively, with confidence and authority.

Children's individual placement plans do not always outline clearly the detail of the work to be undertaken by the home. Consequently, some six- and twelve-weekly reviews of the child's progress do not reflect the high quality and depth of the work carried out by the home. While the placement plan reviews show that the child has made significant progress, neither how this was achieved nor any recommendations for future interventions are clearly set out. This means that the good work undertaken by the home is not well reported.

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 differences 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 whom 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: 1251073

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Manchester City Council, P O Box 532, Manchester M60 2LA

Responsible individual: Amanda Amesbury

Registered manager: Valerie Jenkinson

Inspector

Sharon Lloyd, social care regulatory inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence>, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

© Crown copyright 2017