

1237582

Registered provider: Rochdale Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a children's home owned and run by a local authority. The home provides short-break accommodation for young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The service has two main functions. The first is to provide short-term intensive outreach work within the community. The second is to provide short-break care. The home can accommodate up to five young people at any one time in the short-break service. Currently, the short-break service is provided to eight young people over set opening times.

Inspection dates: 18 to 19 September 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: 1 November 2016

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- The home provides a good-quality short-break service. The registered manager's analyses clearly demonstrate the positive impact and difference that this service has made to the lives of the young people and their families.
- The management team and staff are responsive through a well-organised outreach service. Crisis intervention enables young people and their families to have a break from each other by providing care or extending placements for the young people.
- Relationships between staff, families, social workers and young people are strong. Parents and carers commend the work undertaken with the young people and the support provided to them. External professionals would like more services like this for the young people and their families.
- The young people are encouraged to voice their opinions and make suggestions, and say that they feel the staff listen to them.
- The management team and staff know the young people well. They are child-centred. Planning decisions about which young people attend the service and their assessed compatibility with each other are effective. Young people experience planned transitions into and out of the service.
- The staff support the young people to learn to manage risks appropriately, and involve them with writing their individual care and behaviour management plans.
- The young people are involved in regular discussions concerning their safety, providing them with information that supports them in keeping themselves safe.
- Professionals, families and the young people consistently provide good feedback about the quality of the service.
- The staff team is very experienced and all staff members are qualified and enthusiastic. They skilfully intervene in families, providing consistent support and guidance that helps the young people and their families to stay together.
- The registered manager and assistant manager are inspirational and assertive. Both are very experienced, qualified and competent in managing children's social care services.
- The staff receive regular supervision and training. This provides them with opportunities to discuss their work, to learn new skills and to reflect upon practice issues.

The children's home's areas for development:

- Consideration needs to be given to seeking the views of professionals and young people when staff appraisals are carried out.
- The detailed information contained within young people's documents needs to evidence outcomes and young people would benefit from taking memorabilia home of the progress that they make in the service.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
01/11/2016	Full	Good

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

Recommendations

- Appraisals should take into account, where reasonable and practical, the views of other professionals who have worked with the staff member over the year and children in the home's care. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.5)
- The home's records on each child represent a significant contribution to their life history. Children and their parents should be supported to understand the nature of records kept by the home and how to access them. Staff should understand their important role in encouraging the child to reflect on and understand their history, according to their age and understanding. Staff should keep and encourage children to keep appropriate memorabilia of the time spent living at the home and help them record significant life events. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.5)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The management team and staff are continually looking to meet the needs of the young people, utilising the short-break resources and the services and skills of external professionals to best effect. The short-break service operates each Friday through to Tuesday mornings. Through well-organised panel meetings the staff identify when young people and their family relationships are close to breaking down. Through agreed and consented arrangements, planned stays for young people and specific outreach work with their family or carer are arranged. This significantly reduces those young people who are on the edge of care from being accommodated.

These arrangements have proved highly successful, with relationships between young people and their parents or carers being strengthened. There is clear evidence within the management team's operational report over the previous six months of progress being made and young people and their families being kept together. Data analyses show an increase in services provided to young people following the last inspection. This demonstrates the strength of the team and how effective they are at building relationships, acting as mediators and providing a good-quality short-break service.

There are currently eight young people accessing the service with two young people going through the referral stage. The registered manager ensures that a good admission planning process is in place. This includes impact analysis, meetings with external professionals and a series of visits with the young person and their family or carer before overnight stays commence. This allows for a smooth transition for the young people. Continued outreach work, as and when required, is available when young people leave

the service. The staff manage transitions into and out of the home well. Where young people choose not to use the short-break service an outreach service can be provided based in their own home.

The staff are skilled and experienced in providing parents, carers and young people with the necessary support. This enables families to work through the many areas that they face in bringing up adolescents who present as placing themselves at risk or who have challenging behaviour. Through individually agreed plans and time-limited intervention programmes, the service has, since registration, successfully helped many young people to stay at home with their family or carer. Positive comments from a placement officer, social workers, a parent and visiting professionals include:

- 'The staff have worked really hard with the young person to build a good relationship to the extent that he is now visiting the service. Staff managed to get the young person to open up and allow him to explore his relationships in the family home. This is great progress and staff should be commended for this.'
- 'The staff are very caring and can also manage challenging behaviour. They have been very supportive to us and we could not have managed without this service.'
- 'I find the home to be of [a] good standard and the cleanliness is second to none.'
- 'Provides a valuable service which is much needed for some families.'
- 'Really useful service as it allows us to place young people who are in crisis and the short break provides the opportunity for the young people to calm down and reflect on their situation, while I and the staff work concurrently with their family.'

The staff understand the importance of setting realistic and achievable targets that are meaningful and support the young people to progress. Routines have been established, agreed with parents and carers, which the young people are able to follow. These arrangements set clear boundaries within the service and are consistently followed within young people's homes. One young person told the inspector, 'It's good here. I chill out and I am ready to return home as my relationships with my family are better.' Another young person said, 'I am fully aware of why I am here and what needs to be done. They [staff] involved me and my family at the beginning and I know and have agreed my plan.'

The staff and young people have good relationships. Observations of the interactions between the staff and young people showed them getting on well, discussing current affairs, social interests and education. Despite the young people only being in the home for short periods, the staff know them well. The young people are comfortable with each other and in the presence of staff, they confirm that they feel listened to and have fun. Young people enjoy friendly banter with staff and experience a range of activities inside and outside of the home.

The young people have individualised 'all about me' plans that the staff review with them

regularly and keep up to date. These detailed plans support the staff to work with the young people consistently. However, there is limited evidence to show the good work carried out and the progress that young people have made during their time at the home. A recommendation is made to ensure that the records kept in relation to the young people tell the story and show their progress of their time spent in the home.

Consideration is being given to introducing memory boxes or scrap books for the young people, although this has yet to be fully implemented. Staff do take photographs of activities and celebrations. This practice when embedded will ensure that the young people take positive memories of their time in the home with them when they leave.

The responsibility for young people's health and education remains with their parents or carers. Young people are registered with their own family health services and do regularly attend education. Staff provide support to the young people and their families around health appointments or school meetings. Young people and staff undertake direct work sessions on relationships, behaviour and safety and they have access to healthy young minds (previously known as the child and adolescent mental health service). Young people confirm that these arrangements have helped them to make more informed choices about their physical, psychological, social and emotional health needs.

The internal and external environment is maintained to a high standard. The home provides a welcoming atmosphere where the young people can relax. The young people have made their bedrooms more individual by bringing their personal possessions from home and shopping for items of their choice that reflect individuality, personality and identity. This helps them to feel more at home.

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

Safeguarding practices and protecting the young people are thorough and understood by staff. By providing planned short breaks and overnight crisis accommodation, the home provides a safe place for those young people who need a break away from their family or a temporary place of safety. This protects young people and helps them to sustain family relationships and stability at home.

Safeguarding training provides staff with a good understanding of safeguarding policies and related procedures. Staff are also experienced and familiar with the signs and symptoms of harm, including abuse, child sexual exploitation, radicalisation, self-harm and bullying. One professional worker says, 'The staff at the home have the young people's safety and welfare at the centre of everything they do. They know the individual young people and are able to promote their individual needs within a context where safeguarding is given high priority. The young people are effectively safeguarded to the best abilities of the staff at the home.'

There is a strong approach taken to risk management. Risks are identified, assessed and managed effectively, with other professionals when required. Through this work, young people are enabled to begin to take age-appropriate responsibility for their own safety.

The management team and staff are not risk-averse. They see the benefits of young people being able to experience new things and take measured risks.

This contributes to a culture in which the young people who are receiving short breaks participate in activities that they would not otherwise be able to undertake. This assists in ensuring that the short-break experience is centred on the needs of the young person or group of young people as much as the needs of parents and carers.

Young people's behaviour and identified risks are known before they take up any overnight stays in the home. The staff are fully aware of the family dynamics before providing an outreach service in the young people's homes. This means that all risks are understood, and behaviour is managed very well, not only by staff, but also by young people themselves. Regular discussion with parents and carers ensures complete transparency and consistency in the behaviour management process.

There have been no significant incidents, sanctions, complaints, restraints or disclosures since the last inspection. Young people rarely go missing, and if they do, they benefit from an effective response to promote their quick and safe return. Staff maintain highly effective partnerships with the police and all other safeguarding agencies to promote the safety and well-being of young people. Young people are protected from abuse, bullying, exploitation and all other forms of significant harm. Careful thought and consideration is given to which young people are placed together to ensure group compatibility and the safety of young people at all times.

The home provides a safe environment for the young people to live in. Regular health and safety monitoring ensures that the home is free from hazards. This keeps everyone safe who visits, works and lives in the home. Staff working in the short-break service and providing outreach to families have been thoroughly vetted, to make sure that they are suitable and competent people to be working with young people and their families.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

There have been management changes since the last inspection. A new registered manager joined the service in March 2017. He is qualified and has a wealth of experience in managing other local authority services for young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. He has the support of an assistant manager who knows the short-break service well. She is qualified and has worked in short breaks for some considerable time. Together they know the home's strengths and areas for improvement and are inspirational and assertive leaders. They provide effective support to the staff.

The staff describe their supervision sessions as a positive experience, which they use to discuss the young people and their own development, and to reflect on their practice. The registered manager oversees the staff training schedule to ensure that the staff are working with current knowledge and practice. All staff are qualified and hold a level 3 or equivalent or higher qualification. The staff team has a wealth of experience and the skills necessary to deliver this service successfully to young people, their parents or carers.

Training is work in progress and aims to recognise the strengths and skills that staff deliver to the young people and their families. This is being achieved through the individual staff member's strengthening practices manual (workbook) that covers planning, parenting, evidencing and analyses.

The registered manager has taken time to get to know his staff team and has delayed staff appraisals for this reason. He expects to have them completed by October 2017. A recommendation from the last inspection is repeated. This is because the appraisal format does not currently seek the views of other professionals who have worked with the staff member over the year or the views of the young people in the home's care.

Staff are sufficient in number to meet the needs of the young people using the short-break service and the work carried out with parents and carers. Specialist family support workers lead the outreach work, while residential support staff provide care, control and guidance to the young people in the home. There is sufficient time for both areas of work to be undertaken as residential support staff assist the family support workers during the times when the short-break service is closed. This means that more focused work is achievable with the young people, their parents and carers and reduces significantly any need to accommodate young people in the home.

Staff engage well with wider networks to pool resources, share information and coordinate efforts to increase the ability of different agencies to meet the needs of particular young people. This includes making joint visits with social workers to young people's homes and supporting parents and carers to understand and manage their young people's behaviours and risk. All work is overseen by the management team and reflected upon during regular team meetings.

There is effective scrutiny of the performance of the home. Each month, the home is visited by an independent person who scrutinises the home's practice and consults with young people and other interested parties involved or associated with their care. This enables the independent person to form an impartial and professional opinion about the standard and quality of young people's care and the arrangements made to safeguard them and promote their well-being. The manager makes good use of the home's internal and external monitoring activities and is consistently ambitious and energetic about sustaining the home's improvement.

The registered manager is not afraid to challenge when he feels that services are not being appropriately provided to the young people or their families. He has the support of senior leaders within the local authority and this contributes to a service which is needed and sought after. The data produced, so far, shows significant costs savings, as young people have not needed to be accommodated. This data also takes account of the period (January to March 2017) when the home closed for major refurbishment, although the outreach work with the young people and their families carried on.

The service is achieving its aims and objectives as set out in the statement of purpose. The one requirement and two of the three recommendations made at the last inspection

have now been met.

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: 1237582

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council, Number One Riverside, Rochdale OL16 1XU

Responsible individual: Jill McGregor

Registered manager: Mark Ford

Inspector

Mark Kersh: social care inspector

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