

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC035409
Inspector	Andrew Hewston
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Secure Unit

Registered person	Northumberland County Council
Registered person address	Northumberland County Council County Hall Morpeth Northumberland NE61 2EF
Responsible individual	Daljit Lally
Registered manager	Julie Anne Tinkler
Date of last inspection	21/01/2014

Inspection date	04/06/2014
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	good
Outcomes for children and young people	good
Quality of care	good
Keeping children and young people safe	good
Leadership and management	good
Outcomes in education and related learning activities	good

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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Young people are provided with good quality care, which leads to positive outcomes. Staff have excellent relationships with young people and provide them with good support. There are individualised care plans that set out young people's diverse needs. Plans involve young people, are regularly reviewed and fully implemented by staff. Young people are encouraged to express their views and wishes so they can influence how they are looked after. They are fully involved with the planning of their placement and also work with a range of staff to look at how they will be supported to return to living in the community.

There are strong expectations of young people to achieve academically at all levels, which is supported by staff. This leads to young people making good progress in their education.

The staff team are knowledgeable and aware of their role and responsibilities in keeping young people safe. Staff manage behaviour effectively, which supports young people to develop positive social skills; although sanctions, single separation and physical restraint records are not always fully completed.

Staff are enthusiastic and committed, providing highly personalised care to the young people. They are supported by effective supervision arrangements and appropriate training. The home is well managed and the management team has a good awareness of working practices and deliver these well. The management team are also committed to developing care practices further.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This secure children's home is managed by a local authority. It is approved by the Department for Education to restrict young people's liberty. Education is provided on site.

The children's home provides two separate units that can accommodate up to 12 young people who are aged between 10 and 17 years and accommodated under section 25 of the Children Act 1989. Admission of any young person over the age of 10 but under 13 years of age requires the approval of the Secretary of State.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/01/2014	Interim	good progress
18/07/2013	Full	good
19/02/2013	Interim	good progress
15/08/2012	Full	adequate

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
28 (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, discipline or restraint in a children's home, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose; specifically, ensure the times and signatures are present within records of physical intervention and single separation. (Regulation 17B (3))	31/07/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure sanctions and rewards for behaviour are clear, reasonable and fair and relate to the behaviour that they are given (NMS 3.8)
- ensure children receive prompt feedback on any concerns or complaints raised and are kept informed of progress (NMS 1.6)
- ensure there are clear and effective procedures for monitoring and controlling activities of the home with staff involved with monitoring restraint being trained in the use of physical restraint techniques (NMS 21.1)
- ensure that children are helped by staff to achieve their educational or training goals; specifically, continue to develop and expand the existing links with the local college to provide opportunities for young people to engage with vocational training through effective use of mobility (NMS 8.4)
- ensure that children are helped by staff to achieve their educational or training goals; specifically, improve analysis of the existing data to provide an on-going overview of the progress young people are making (NMS 8.4)
- ensure that children have access to a range of educational resources to support their learning; specifically, develop a robust strategy for the introduction and effective use of new technologies to support teaching and learning (NMS 8.2)
- ensure the home provides a comfortable and homely environment; specifically, provide appropriate furniture to promote safe working practices when using computers within education. (NMS 10.3)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Young people make good progress from the point of their admission due to staff developing and delivering in-depth, detailed and individualised placement plans that include health, care and educational needs. As a result, young people prosper socially, emotionally and educationally. Young people are supported to develop awareness of why they are living at the home and the need to make positive changes when they leave. This has led to young people's behaviours improving. A placing social worker stated that a young person had 'matured considerably while being at the home.'

Young people's health needs are promoted positively. All aspects of health and health care service provision are effective, ensuring that young people have their immediate day-to-day needs, along with more long-term specialised needs fully addressed. These arrangements and their implementation, help to ensure that young people's physical, emotional and psychological health needs are addressed and improve. Staff talk with young people about their health and well-being to help them stay fit and well. Staff also help young people maintain and build on existing good health routines such as diet and exercise.

Young people's contact arrangements are well known and recorded. Young people have regular family visits and phone calls in line with their care plan and staff understand the importance young people place on these arrangements. Family members are made to feel welcome when they visit the home and this helps build relationships between staff and young people's immediate family.

Planning for transition back into the community commences when young people are first admitted. Individual plans developed with young people provide a supportive framework for helping them to develop the necessary knowledge and skills. Opportunities are provided for young people to develop practical skills and experience throughout their time at the home. For example, they have the opportunity to budget for food and to cook for themselves, as well as to explore issues such as the cost of accommodation and how to prepare for job and college interviews. One young person stated that they had 'given up drinking, smoking and messing about and I hope that this carries on after I have left here.'

Quality of care **good**

Young people benefit from having adults around them who ensure consistency and routines. This enables young people to feel safe and provides a basis for strong, trusting relationships to develop. This in turn encourages young people to develop

respect for each other.

Young people feel that they are listened to and that their views are taken seriously. They feel they influence the running of the home, such as in menu choices and activities.

Young people are involved in the development of their care plans and individual targets. Planning is highly personalised and needs relating to identity, religion and cultural preferences are set out clearly and met. Staff implement plans and support young people to achieve their potential.

Young people know how to complain. Information is provided to them as part of their induction into the home. They are also aware of the alternative ways they can voice any dissatisfaction. They can contact the complaints officer for the local authority via email and telephone, as well as contact an independent advocate. Young people use the complaints process where needed and they feel that staff are fair and take their concerns seriously. One of the Client Relations Officers for the local authority, who deals with complaints, has visited the home to talk with young people about the processes. Young people can raise concerns with any staff member. Staff ensure complaints are responded to in a timely manner, although young people are not consistently asked if they are happy with the outcome and advised of the next steps if they wish to appeal.

Young people have access to a range of health care services. Routine medical appointments such as dentists, optician and visits to the General Practitioner (GP) are arranged and facilitated by the staff. If needed, a GP and other health professionals can visit the young people in the home. A nurse is based on site for two full days a week and provides oversight and advice to young people. Nurses also provide advice to staff to help staff to support young people with their health needs. Psychiatric and psychology professionals are on site at least two full days a week and there are specialist services such as substance misuse workers and sexual health clinics. Additional to this, members of staff have undertaken training in mental health needs and this has widened their knowledge and understanding in this area. The understanding that members of staff have of the young people's needs, combined with the advice and oversight they receive from health care professionals, ensures that the young people receive positive holistic health care and support.

Staff encourage the young people to take part in a range of activities that promote confidence building. Examples of activities include a climbing wall, gymnasium and a music suite. Further activities occur off site, if the young people have approved mobility programmes and have been assessed as ready to take part in trips to the local community. For example, visits to riding stables. A young person has recently been involved with an outward bound course as part of the Princes Trust charity that offers a range of experiences to young people. Young people said that they had 'a brilliant time.' A social worker reported that young people are 'consistently kept busy, either through activities or engaging with the staff team. This has had a really

positive effect on their outlook for the future.'

The home is well maintained. Young people are able to personalise their rooms. Furnishings and decor are of a good standard throughout the home. The use of the media consoles within each bedroom enables young people to access television, their preferred radio stations and their own music choice. The level of access to this equipment is linked to the incentive scheme to encourage and promote positive behaviour.

There are robust systems in place to ensure that the security of the home is maintained to a good standard.

Keeping children and young people safe good

Young people said that they feel safe at this home. They have established positive relationships with each other and staff. They confirm bullying does occasionally happen but they are confident that staff manage any issues as they arise. There are high staffing levels and staff are skilled and vigilant. The home has recently received an award from the local authority in recognition of their work on anti-bullying.

The home has good safeguarding systems and practices that help to keep young people safe. Child protection procedures are in place, with all staff having a good awareness of the role of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and the local authority designated officer (LADO). Policies and procedures relating to safeguarding are regularly reviewed and commensurate with local authority procedures. Safeguarding referrals that have been made to the local authority are timely and well recorded with a clear chronology, showing the process and outcomes.

Robust arrangements are in place to respond to and support young people that display self harming behaviours. Health professionals help to support young people directly and also advise staff of ways to assist and care effectively for these young people.

Regular searches are made of communal areas and bedrooms in order to ensure that any prohibited items are located and found and to ensure young people are kept safe. Personal searches are only completed where there is a specific risk identified and full records are kept.

A policy and procedure is in place in relation to incidents of young people absconding from the home. There have been no incidents since the last inspection. Good links are in place with relevant agencies to share concerns relating to sexual exploitation or young people going missing. Information is also shared with those relevant organisations in the area where young people are to live when they leave the home. This allows for additional support to be in place. Staff have received training in sexual exploitation and drug and alcohol use to support and care effectively for young people.

The physical environment is safe, secure and well maintained. Staff and young people know and understand fire evacuation procedures and routinely engage in fire drills so they know how to stay safe. All activities are routinely and robustly risk assessed to help keep young people being safe.

Since the last inspection the home has appointed a number of new staff. Good recruitment procedures are in place and records kept that show the right people are employed to work with vulnerable children. Young people say they enjoy having an active role in the selection process for new staff. Their views are considered by the recruitment panel on the appointment of new employees.

Behaviour management is good. Clear behavioural expectations are in place for all young people at the home. Young people are able to discuss in detail the benefits of the incentive scheme and are keen to achieve as a result of the rewards and positive reinforcement received. Relationships between young people and staff are warm and reciprocal. As a result, young people demonstrate trust in the adults that care for them and young people state that they can talk about any worries or concerns to their link worker or other staff.

There has been a gradual reduction in the use of physical restraint. All behaviour management incidents are recorded and monitored by the manager to ensure practice is appropriate and areas where improvements can be made identified. However, people who monitor restraints with the manager do not all have training in the methods being used at the home. This means they may not fully understand or be able to assess whether the application of techniques used is appropriate in all cases. Some records are not consistently maintained. These include a small number of missing signatures and times within records of physical intervention and single separation. In addition, sanctions imposed for negative behaviour are not always sufficiently varied with a high reliance on early bedtimes. Subsequently they do not consistently provide opportunities for all young people to learn from and take responsibility for their behaviour through more creative restitution. The range of sanctions given has, however improved in the month prior to the inspection.

Leadership and management

good

The Registered Manager and supporting management team effectively manage the home. The home has been through a period of significant reorganisation of the staffing structure. Managers retain a clear focus on improving the quality of care and outcomes for young people.

The previous inspection highlighted two areas of development. Closed-circuit television (CCTV) recordings of incidents where physical restraint has been used are now reviewed with staff from the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) on a regular basis. Staff have also received additional training in supporting young people

with mental health needs. These changes show commitment to improving the care provided to young people.

The home's Statement of Purpose is regularly updated as staffing and practices within the home change. The statement provides good information about the services the home provides and sets out the theoretical basis of the care provided. Young people and their families receive good information about the home and young people are made aware of their rights and responsibilities while living there. A written guide is provided to young people, which uses child-friendly language. Staff support young people to ensure that they understand the content. All young people's information can be made available in differing formats and languages where required.

The home is visited on a monthly basis to monitor practice and the care provided. Visits are completed by representatives from the National Youth Advocacy Service and include discussions with young people and professionals. Reports are detailed and provide a good picture of life in the home and the quality of care. Regular monitoring of the records and examination of care practices is carried out by the Registered Manager. This helps to highlight areas of development, as well as patterns, themes and trends that the management team act on to improve service provision.

When significant events occur within the home all necessary parties are informed in a timely manner and kept up to date with how the matter is being addressed and responded to.

There is a good mix of experience among the staff team with newer staff's views helping to develop the service; for example with new activities. A small number of staff vacancies are being appointed to, and a detailed induction package is in place for all new starters, including a theoretical basis of care provided, alongside training in interventions and gaining experience within each of the homes' units.

Staff members are supported well to carry out their role with young people. There is regular formal supervision provided, as well as annual development appraisals. There is a good range of relevant training and formal qualifications undertaken that assists staff to deliver good quality care. Staff with supervisory responsibilities undertake relevant courses to support their teams.

Case records relating to young people clearly identify progress made and give young people a good understanding of their care so they can make sense of their childhood and history.

Outcomes in education and related learning activities

good

Young people receive an individual interview with a personal tutor soon after arrival at the home, they are provided with a good introduction to what is available and are involved with selecting which education course they will access. Young people benefit from a good initial assessment that prioritises their learning needs and helps settle them into school quickly. Information on previous attainments and assessments are where possible obtained to inform the assessment process. Where information is not available the personal tutor is proactive in seeking out information on special educational needs statements from previous schools or local authorities. Education staff are good at recognising wider barriers to education and are skilled at implementing strategies to help young people progress.

Young people generally engage well in their learning and make excellent progress relative to their starting point and length of stay. They enjoy their education. The development of English and mathematics is good. Most young people achieve their learning goals and relevant accredited qualifications. A good focus is on the development of personal development and social skills with noticeable improvements in confidence and self-esteem. Attendance at education is very good with incidents of young people not engaging with education rare. The standard of young people's work is high particularly in art. Those young people who are capable and who have longer stays are supported well and are able to successfully continue with their GCSE courses. Equality and diversity is celebrated and promoted well within teaching and appropriate wall displays.

The quality of teaching learning and assessment is good. Personal tutors provide a high level of individual support for young people. The tutorial system works well at helping young people progress with frequent and regular reviews of progress. A good emphasis was placed on the development of English and mathematics. Teachers had a good rapport with young people and high levels of mutual respect were in place. The school provided a harmonious and positive learning environment for young people who enjoyed their learning. Good use is made of wall displays to celebrate young people's work and create a positive learning environment.

The curriculum that is available to young people is adequate in meeting their needs. The focus is on developing English and Maths skills alongside other core subjects such as science, ICT, humanities, modern foreign languages, art, music and PSHE. Access to Physical education is part of the young person's timetable. Education staff have been creative in introducing a small number of employment-linked projects, such as motor-cycle maintenance and fashion design and occasional recreational drama and dance sessions. However, the limited access to vocational training restricts the progress that young people can make in developing the skills to enhance their chances of progressing into further learning or training. Links have been made with a local college to help extend the vocational offer however, this has not yet been fully utilised. Well-advanced plans are in place to develop occupationally-relevant work and training in the kitchen.

Classroom accommodation is good with good access to appropriate information learning technology which teachers use sufficiently to promote learning, but could be used more creatively to improve engagement and the range of assessment activities during sessions. However, the working height of computers in all teaching areas is fixed and appropriate height-adjustable chairs are not available. Young people use secure personal accounts to keep electronic personal diaries and save their work to education computers; however, arrangements for staff to save and retrieve portfolios of work for moderation, verification and as a 'back-up' copy are insufficient.

Young people are involved with reviewing and monitoring their learning and help set their own individual and personal learning targets. Young people record the activities they engage with through enrichment on a personal electronic diary which is reviewed by their personal tutor. Links between personal tutors and their link welfare worker are good. Time is provided each day for young people with their tutors to set their learning objectives which are well understood by them. Points are awarded at the end of each lesson to recognise where personal and behaviour targets have been achieved.

The behaviour management of young people is very good, teachers are skilled at de-escalating poor behaviour in classrooms and rarely are young people removed. Where this takes place the young person is skilfully managed back into education swiftly usually on the same day. Staff provide immediate and consistent challenge regarding inappropriate language which is well-received and clearly understood by the young people. A rewards system for good behaviour is used well and is understood both by teachers and young people.

Good external links are in place with external agencies such as the Princes Trust and the army. Mobility is used well where appropriate to help facilitate work experience and external visits. Teachers provide informal information advice and guidance however, more formal access is insufficiently clear. Staff believe that the county Connexions service would respond adequately to requests for support to individual young people for careers advice.

The management of education is good with well-established quality assurance processes in place which include a system for the observation of teaching learning and assessment which takes place on a termly basis. The outcomes of observations are linked to a performance management system. A productive link with a local school provides opportunities for teachers to undertake training with teachers from a mainstream school. Data is collected on all aspects of a young person's progress and details report produced on an individual basis however, a complete formal analysis needs to be more frequent.

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.