

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Malcolm Stannard / Gwen Buckley
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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.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

The centre is operated and managed by a local authority. It is situated in large grounds on the edge of a town. The provision cares for boys and girls and is registered as a children's home. It is approved by the Secretary of State to provide secure accommodation for up to 43 young people, between 10 and 17 years of age.

The centre comprises of four residential units, a school and administration facilities. The site includes a swimming pool, gym and outdoor play areas on site for use by young people. Music and dance studios, external areas for horticulture and rooms which enable vocational training are also available.

There were 34 young people resident at the time of the inspection.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

This was an unannounced interim inspection to monitor progress against the recommendations made at the last inspection in March 2010. All of the key standards in the staying safe outcome area were also looked at during this visit.

Strengths of the centre include safeguarding practices, the transparent relationships with external professionals and access to complaint systems for young people. Areas for development relate to the recording of the young person's healthcare and the formation of a policy and procedure for self administration of medication.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection in March 2010, management at the centre was asked to consider three recommendations. One of the recommendations has been fully addressed.

It was recommended that a policy and procedural guidance are available to enable staff to assess and establish if young people can keep and administer their own medication. Although progress has been made in relation to developing a self medication policy it is not yet available for use. The policy has been presented to the local primary care trust for ratification and a response is awaited.

Management was also asked to ensure young people's welfare is promoted by emergency medical information being kept up to date. This has not been fully addressed. Management in conjunction with health care staff are currently reviewing this process.

A further recommendation was made to ensure that in the event of a physical restraint, young people are routinely offered the opportunity to be examined by a registered nurse or medical practitioner. Previously a record of this practice was not always completed. This information is now entered onto critical incident records, enabling auditing of young peoples meetings with health professionals to be undertaken.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The privacy and dignity of young people at the centre is respected. Staff announce their arrival prior to entering rooms and afford young people privacy to make phone calls. Confidential information is stored securely and staff are aware with whom this can be shared and for what purpose.

A complaints procedure is in place which has recently been enhanced by the provision of further post-boxes where young people can leave forms detailing their concerns. Good information is made available on how to make a complaint and young people understand how to access the system. All concerns are responded to in a timely manner and an overview of how the complaint has been investigated is carried out by a professional external to the centre. This ensures that the system is transparent and robust. Appropriate records are held of all outcomes. Young people are able to raise any issues with confidence.

Child protection practice at the centre continues to be robust. Managers at the centre have good working relationships with external professionals and have embraced the 'working together' guidelines. The Local Safeguarding Children Board is informed of all restraints and information sessions have been held for board members on the method of restraint which is used in the centre. Safeguarding managers ensure that any allegations made are referred appropriately and keep comprehensive records of every event. The local authority designated officer views all incident records on a three monthly basis offering an external overview of practice. All staff members receive training in the centre's child protection procedures, meaning that the welfare of young people is protected.

Any incidents of bullying at the centre continue to be effectively addressed. A programme about how to deal with bullying is in place which is undertaken by young people and this has recently been accredited. Young people state that bullying is not a problem and that staff deal with any incidents.

Policies and procedures are in place to assist staff practice should a young person go missing without authority. There have been no absences since the last inspection. Comprehensive risk assessments are carried out prior to any young person undertaking mobility outside of the centre.

The centre continues to promote acceptable behaviour by the use of positive reinforcement. There is a well embedded incentive scheme which is understood by the young people and rewards positive attainment throughout each day. Managers at the centre are introducing some small modifications to the scheme to ensure it can be applied consistently throughout the centre. Sanctions are used sparingly and only when necessary. Each sanction is fully recorded and monitored by managers. Young people have the opportunity to write comments or sign their name on these records. Good appropriate professional relationships are apparent between staff and young people and these are used to promote socially acceptable behaviour.

All staff at the centre receive training in appropriate physical intervention techniques. Further refresher training is currently been undertaken. All occurrences of restraint are fully recorded and the information shared with the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Management take a reflective view of all incidents and a weekly analysis and monthly panel meeting are carried out to identify any trends in behaviour. A restraint minimisation policy is in place which promotes diffusion and diversion practice for staff and managers. There has been an increase in the number of restraints and separations occurring since the last inspection. However, this is commensurate with the rise in numbers of young people cared for. Young people are not separated inappropriately and on many occasions, this time is used to carry out individual programme work with young people. Young people are now routinely offered the opportunity to see a health professional within twenty-four hours following any physical intervention and incidents are appropriately recorded and monitored.

Individual behaviour risk assessments are completed for all young people and these are reviewed on a weekly basis. The assessments include details of measures taken to keep young people safe should they be at risk of self-harm.

Staff have a good knowledge and understanding of expected safety and security practices within the secure environment. Health and safety equipment checks are kept up to date. Effective communication with the local fire department, regular testing of fire equipment and fire drills ensure young people and staff know what to do to keep themselves safe.

Young people's safety and welfare is safeguarded by a rigorous recruitment and selection process. The Registered Manager monitors the local authority recruitment and vetting procedures. In doing so, the manager signs these off as being acceptable when she is satisfied that all the appropriate checks are in place. Young people are involved in the recruitment of new staff by interviewing candidates.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is not judged.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is not judged.

Organisation

The organisation is not judged.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Recommendations

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

- ensure there is a policy and procedural guidance to enable staff to assess and establish if young people can keep and administer their own medication (NMS 13.9)
- ensure young people's welfare is promoted by a system that ensures medical emergency information is kept up to date. (NMS 12.2)