

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Paul Scott / Gaynor Moorey
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The centre is registered as a children's home, operated by a local authority and is approved by the Secretary of State to provide secure care and accommodation. Education is provided on site within a purpose-built facility. The centre is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to 42 young people.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

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

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **good**.

Young people are generally positive about the care and support they receive. The commitment and quality of care provided by staff enables young people to make good progress, relative to their time at the centre. Young people achieve good outcomes in relation to their emotional resilience, behaviour management and educational achievement. As a result, young people's life opportunities are improved because they leave the centre with better skills and qualifications.

Young people enjoy positive relationships with staff. They feel valued and listened to by staff and know how to complain. There are lots of opportunities for young people to contribute to their care and the day-to-day running of the units. Staff work with young people in a way that maximises their potential. Young people's needs are rigorously assessed at their point of admission. Care planning and care practice is individually tailored to meet young people's unique and specific needs. Staff work in a coordinated way with a number of professionals to ensure young people have access to the services and support they require.

Young people say they feel safe. They are effectively protected by robust safeguarding practices such as systems for dealing with any child protection issues, bullying or concerns. Staff are suitably trained and show a good understanding of young people's risks and vulnerabilities. Risk management strategies are regularly reviewed and consistently put into practice. This promotes the safety and welfare of young people and minimises the risks of significant harm.

The centre is effectively managed in the best interest of young people. There is a clear focus on improvement development, evident in the progress the centre has made since the last inspection. The recommendation from the previous inspection has been addressed improving the quality of sanction records.

One requirement and three recommendations for improvement have been made. These relate to gathering the views of young people, Regulation 33 monitoring, children's records and notifications of serious events. None of the shortfalls impact negatively on young people's safety or welfare.

Areas for improvement

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
33 (2001)	ensure that the person carrying out the Regulation 33 visits interviews, with their consent and in private, such of the children accommodated there, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home; and inspects the premises of the children's home and records of any complaints; reports are of a consistently high quality. (Regulation 33 (4) (a) and (b))	30/09/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure all children communicate their views on all aspects of their care and support (NMS 1.3)
- review the systems for recording information on children's files to ensure staff are able to access information easily and quickly (NMS 22.1)
- ensure Ofsted are notified of the occurrence of any significant events within 24 hours of the incident occurring. (NMS 24.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people make good progress during their time at the centre. This is confirmed by the young people, external professionals including mental health specialists, and a

social worker. Staff are aware of the importance of making appropriate relationships quickly with young people. They understand that many young people find it difficult to trust adults and form attachments. Staff are particularly skilled in understanding the needs of young people with learning disabilities. They make suitable adjustments in routines to ensure that young people are included in all aspects of the day-to-day activities as much as possible. This means that young people's individual and diverse needs are recognised and addressed.

Young people have a number of opportunities to improve their self-confidence and self-esteem. They describe success in education and in learning skills that are going to help them when they leave the secure setting. One young person said, 'when I first came here, I was very naughty, but now I am good. I have learnt lots of things since I have been here.' The young person described being able to manage anger and deal with frustrations more effectively. He has learned how to look after himself and how to avoid getting into situations where further offending might have resulted. This reflects an approach by staff who understand the importance of helping young people build emotional resilience and regulating their behaviours before they lead to a negative outcome.

Young people benefit from good contact arrangements. For example, young people can make and receive telephone calls in private in their bedrooms from a cordless phone that is programmed with approved contact numbers. As part of the daily routines young people can make two 15 minute telephone calls to family members and approved friends. Families are encouraged to visit and flexible arrangements are made with parents who travel a long distance or who have small children they would like to bring with them. One of the practical life-skill sessions available is for the young people to bake a cake they can share with their visitors. Such activities help contribute to a positive visit and reflect a young person who is developing new skills and showing family and friends how well they are doing.

Young people's participation in education and attendance is very good. Young people are often at different stages of their academic journey and many have missed a significant amount of education before arriving at the centre. Care and education staff recognise this and work extremely hard to overcome the barriers to full participation in education. As a result, many young people have a positive learning experience and leave the centre with many academic achievements and vocational accreditations.

Young people are given a number of opportunities to contribute positively to both the developments at the centre and the wider community. For example, young people raise funds for charities, including more recently, one to support work with stray dogs. One young person has undertaken a course in the care of dogs and part of the training was participating in a job experience in a local dog refuge. This young person spoke very positively about this experience and his intentions to continue to develop this interest when he leaves the centre.

Young people's weekly meetings are held in each house unit. Student council meetings takes place every month, to which each house sends a representative with

a list of issues or suggestions. The suggestions that have been addressed relate to menu planning, developing a youth club for the young people on the graduate level, and mixed group sessions in communal areas. Young people have also recently been involved with the review and revision of the rewards and sanctions scheme.

In the past month the centre has commissioned the service of a local community based advocacy group. Young people have met twice with the group, without staff present, and expressed their feelings and thoughts about the centre. These external experienced professionals intend, after the third meeting with young people, to help them decide on the most appropriate ways of presenting their views and any concerns to managers. This is an excellent initiative that young people already feel is helping them frame the issues for them living at the centre. It also reflects a management team which continues to strive to create an inclusive environment in which young people feel their views and suggestions are important.

Another positive development is the introduction of 'my thinking' reports that are completed when young people have been involved in incidents. This provides them with an opportunity to reflect on the incident and explore how best to avoid incidents in the future. Also introduced are 'my training plan' reports. These are completed following sentence planning and review meetings and are an excellent tool when used effectively. They provide young people with the opportunity to reflect on and make sense of the meeting they have attended. These forms and this process are not however consistently used.

The centre plans well for young people's transition and their preparation for moving on from a secure environment to the community. Planning commences when young people are admitted. Staff provide advice and direction to placing agencies and help them search for placements for young people when necessary. The aim is always to seek the most appropriate range of community provisions and minimise the potential for recidivism or continuance of the risky behaviours that brought the young person to the centre.

The centre has a four-bedroomed step-down unit which is attached to the secure facility but separate enough to provide an excellent provision for young people to live semi-independently. This has only been used in the past six weeks and for one young person. The young person is doing very well in the step-down unit, enjoying the different regime and is appropriately supported by staff. The plan is for a slower transition for the young person prior to resettlement back in the local community. There is a clear plan for daily mobility trips outside of the centre, including training that will potentially lead to employment for the young person once placed in the community.

Young people make excellent progress in learning and developing practical life-skills. They are assessed at the point of admission as to the level of their practical skills. Areas are identified where they or staff feel further assistance is needed to improve their self-care skills and improve their confidence. Young people who are at the centre for a reasonable period of time are reassessed and re-scored in relation to their practical life-skills. This information is used to provide evidence of positive

outcomes for young people. The assessment and targeting of practical skills for young people is a well embedded fully integrated approach which ensures that young people are able to look after themselves in adulthood.

Quality of care

The quality of the care is **good**.

Staff understand the importance of developing positive and constructive relationships with young people as quickly as possible after they are admitted to the centre. Young people all comment on the staff they feel are special to them and who understand their needs and wishes. Staff are nurturing in their approach. But they also understand the importance of providing clear boundaries and expectations for young people so they can focus on the issues that brought them into a secure setting.

Young people's needs are comprehensively assessed and systematically addressed. The well-established multi-disciplinary assessment processes reflect a robust and thoroughly integrated approach to understanding young people's complex needs. Care and sentence plans are individualised and current. They identify areas of need and how to address those needs through a range of strategies and interventions. Plans are formally reviewed through a range of external and internal review processes. For example, weekly case co-ordination meetings are used to discuss the effectiveness of care planning, direct work interventions and behaviour management strategies. This ensures care planning and care practice is relevant and up-to-date.

Good health is supported at the centre. A comprehensive assessment process is undertaken with each young person as they are placed at the centre. Young people confirm that they see the nurse and doctor shortly after admission and other health care staff as required such as the dentist. Staff have a clear understanding of the challenges young people present through detailed risk assessments, which are informed by comprehensive health and psychological assessments. Training and support from external health professionals focuses on the needs of the young people being cared for. Staff awareness of the risks young people present to themselves associated with suicide and self-harm is very good and they know when to refer to others and seek help. The nurses at the centre have worked in different health areas and offer a holistic approach to the care of the young people.

Individual and group work interventions delivered by care staff and other professionals effectively challenge young people about past behaviour and anti-social attitudes. The progress young people make, including any changes to their attitudes or risks of offending, is reviewed at intervals by the interventions worker. There are a number of resources available to staff to assist them in their work with young people. The positive outcomes most commonly described by young people are dealing with their anger, understanding the impact of their behaviour on others, and developing interests for example in sport and working with dogs.

Staff ensure that the daily routine supports young people's education. Care staff and

education staff work closely together to ensure young people get the right support to help them attend regularly and achieve their potential. For example, care staff will provide support for young people who are struggling to manage their behaviour and cannot stay in the classroom. This often proves effective in securing a quick return to the education setting.

An excellent range of well-planned and purposeful activities and leisure pursuits is available to young people. During the inspection young people were on a three week break from formal education. However, each week has a clear learning theme. For example, 'our future', focusing on events that encourage young people to think about a positive future that is free from criminal activities and 'let's get healthy' which includes a health check, healthy cooking and physical activities. These are examples of how staff use fun activities for the purpose of helping young people explore their issues and learn from their experiences.

Young people say they understand how to make a complaint and are confident to do so. There are several ways of raising concerns including internal complaints forms and direct access to an independent advocacy service. There is clear evidence that young people's concerns are listened to and acted upon and young people are always informed of the outcome of their complaint. However, records do not reflect whether young people were satisfied about the outcome. No complaints or serious concerns were raised by young people during the inspection.

The centre is a purpose-built secure facility which has now been in operation as a replacement for the old building for two years. Every effort is made to maintain the building and tackle issues of deliberate damage or wear and tear. There are good systems in place to tackle any problems that might arise and an effective replacement and redecoration strategy is in place.

Safeguarding children and young people

The service is **good** at keeping children and young people safe and feeling safe.

Generally young people report that they feel supported, cared for and protected in the centre although incidents that happen with other young people can make them unsure of their environment. Robust policies and procedures support practices to achieve this. Staff display a sound understanding of key safeguarding matters with child protection training delivered at very regular intervals. When issues arise staff are quick to take action to ensure the safety and well-being of all involved, including gaining advice from the Local Safeguarding Children Board. The Local Authority Designated Officer said the unit is open and transparent in its dealing with any issues related to child protection.

Staff know young people in their care well and identify when there are tensions between individuals. A rigorous approach is applied to any bullying behaviour. As a result young people have confidence that staff would intervene if necessary thereby providing further safeguards. The units approach to bullying is holistic and is presented to the young people through many different mediums such as arts and

crafts, workshops and written materials. Areas covered within bullying issues include diversity and equality. There are clear recording systems for each incident of bullying which also highlight any racist incidents. However the recording systems do not include young people's feedback.

Each young person has individual information in place detailing what course of action needs to be followed in the event that they are missing while on mobility. Young people who do go missing are protected as far as possible and responded to positively on their return. One young person went missing while out on a mobility session since the last inspection. Agreed protocols are followed and unit staff work alongside the local police to ensure a quick and safe return. Young people understand why room searches and physical searches are necessary. Any searches are undertaken in a discreet manner and recorded appropriately.

Staff are well trained in the use of physical restraint and training is kept up to date. Good de-escalation steps, developed together with the young people, allow them the time and space to learn to manage their own behaviours. Good monitoring processes are utilised to examine every episode of physical intervention. Extra vigilance is in place if a young person receives any injuries during restraint. These incidents are scrutinised and young people are always asked if they wish to complain. Medical help is always offered after any incident of restraint. These steps ensure that practice is safe, of a high standard and that staff learn from each episode. Single separation is recorded and clearly shows why young people have been placed in their rooms. Young people views are recorded but the opportunity to do so is not always used.

The effective management of the young people's behaviour is a strong aspect of the centre and situations are dealt with through discussion and communication. Young people understand why there are rules. A range of varied and relevant sanctions are used appropriately and there is evidence that young people take the opportunity to share their views following any sanction.

Young people benefit from a stable staff team. The centre has robust recruitment processes including young people being involved with the interviewing process which ensure that only adults who have been assessed as suitable to work with young people are employed.

Numerous risk assessments, individual risk assessments and safety checks of the premises and fire equipment ensure that the young people live in a safe environment. Fire drills are undertaken on a monthly basis to ensure everyone is up to date with emergency procedures. The systems operated and attention to the detail of each young person's needs and vulnerabilities has ensured that their safety is promoted to a very good standard.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the children's home are **good**.

Leadership and management are good. The centre is effectively run by an

experienced and qualified manager who has a detailed understanding of the complexities of running a secure children's home. Managers have high expectations of staff that they provide young people with a positive care experience that improves their future prospects. The effectiveness of this approach is evident in the good progress young people make during their time at the centre.

The recommendation from the previous inspection has been addressed. Improvement to sanctions records ensures that young people's views are appropriately documented.

The home's Statement of Purpose is sufficiently detailed and provides relevant information about the services and support the centre offers. A user-friendly version of this document is available to parents. Young people are provided with a copy of the children's guide at admission. This guide is child friendly and provides young people with good information about the service and to whom they may speak if they have a concern or need advice.

Young people are cared for by an experienced and well qualified staff team. The reorganisation of the way the units are structured and managed is now embedded into practice. This has resulted in clearer lines of accountability and a more cohesive staff team who fully understand their roles and responsibilities. Managers and staff have had to face a number of challenges in maintaining appropriate staffing levels over recent months. Staff have demonstrated their commitment to young people through being flexible about the times they work and the role they play. This has ensured adequate and safe staffing levels have been maintained throughout this period with minimum impact on young people's care.

New staff are given a good induction and introduction to working in the secure environment, including shadowing experienced staff members. They are also expected to complete the Children's Workforce Development Council's induction standards within six months of employment. A member of staff has developed a comprehensive supervision monitoring tool that is currently being piloted in the centre. This system has been used effectively to improve the frequency and quality of staff supervision. As a result, staff receive regular formal supervision that is clearly focused on evaluating and improving practice and performance, and professional development. Staff training needs continue to be met and there are good systems in place to ensure mandatory training is updated within timescales. As a result, young people are cared for by well supported and competent staff who have the right skills and knowledge to meet young people's needs.

Procedures for monitoring and evaluating day-to-day practice and performance are robust. A number of internal monitoring systems and meetings have been introduced to complement Regulation 34 monitoring. These systems and meetings provide good opportunities to gather, analyse and review all aspects of the centres operation on a regular basis. Information is utilised to identify areas for development and formulate an agreed response to addressing shortfalls and areas of concern. This ensures that there is a clear focus on constantly improving the quality of care for young people and that the data provided to Youth Justice Board (YJB) is accurate. The YJB monitor

said, 'performance management and monitoring has improved significantly over the last six months resulting in a reduction in the frequency of monitoring visits to once every six months.'

Each unit is visited monthly by an appointed visitor for the purpose of Regulation 33 monitoring. A written report, which is submitted to Ofsted, is prepared in relation to the conduct and operation of each unit. These reports often vary significantly in their quality, in particular the level of evaluation by the visitor and the extent to which the views of young people and their families are gathered. Also, there are a number of examples of Regulation 33 visitors not inspecting the necessary records as set out in regulations and guidance.

The detail of information in young people's records is good, providing an up-to-date picture of young people's individual needs and development. Records are stored confidentially and securely. However, the organisation of records does cause confusion for some staff. It is difficult at times to access the most up-to-date information because there are three different electronic recording systems and a hardcopy paper system in use. This was evident throughout the inspection when some staff found it difficult to locate the most up-to-date information on young people.

The centre has a system in place for the management and notification of serious incidents. Four notifications have been sent to Ofsted since the last inspection. However, a number of the reports have not been sent within 24-hours of the incident occurring. Also, inspectors became aware during the inspection of a serious accident that Ofsted had not been informed about. Scrutiny by the inspectors confirmed appropriate action had been taken to support the young person involved and their welfare had not been compromised.

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 *Inspections of children's homes – framework for inspection* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.