

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Malcolm Stannard / Shaun Common
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	6 October 2009
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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 outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

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 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 25 young people resident at the time of the inspection.

Summary

This was an announced inspection to evaluate the quality of care and security at the centre. All of the key standards within the Every Child Matters outcome areas were inspected as well as the arrangements for management at the centre. Formal education provision was not inspected on this occasion.

Strengths of the centre include safeguarding arrangements, planning for a young person's future, support and development for staff and clear leadership by an experienced management team. Areas for development are related to health care and incident recording.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Managers were asked at the last inspection to make three improvements. They were asked to ensure complaints are recorded in detail; that safeguarding issues have clearly recorded outcomes and fire equipment checks and fire drills are recorded consistently across the house units.

These matters have all been addressed. Managers provide help to ensure complaints can be understood by all who read them, staff record fully all fire checks and drills and safeguarding issues are fully concluded promoting young people's welfare.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The centre promotes healthy eating and a healthy lifestyle, holds the healthy schools award and is able to meet individual dietary needs.

Mealtimes are friendly social occasions and young people receive support from staff to help them understand the importance of a healthy diet and exercise. They benefit from well-balanced and nutritious meals. Through the menu young people are offered choices and individual needs are recognised. This includes cultural or medical dietary requirements. Fresh fruit is freely available and fresh vegetables are available each day.

Themed days and events enable young people to experience a variety of food from around the world and all young people are encouraged to try healthy food and food that is new to them.

Young people live in a provision where their individual health needs are identified upon admission and services provided to meet them. Young people are registered with a local health practice and are able to see a General Practitioner (GP) of either gender. The GP visits the centre twice a week and undertakes admission medicals. A nurse assesses young people at the time of their admission and develops a health care plan which identifies targets. The plan sets out for example how they will access sexual health education and information, immunisations, optical and dental treatment.

Good health care support is available to young people. Staff support them to access relevant health professionals in line with their individually identified needs. Young people state, 'staff care and encourage us to look after ourselves.' Records of appointments with all health professionals are well kept ensuring the physical, emotional and health needs of young people are identified and reviewed. However, the health information on medical emergency sheets is not always updated to reflect individual progress or circumstances.

Young people and staff caring for them are well supported by internal and external professionals. These include specialist drug workers, education psychologists for dyslexia and mental health professionals such as psychologists and psychiatrists.

Young people's welfare is safeguarded by the centre's policies and procedures for administering medicines. Medication is securely stored within the centre and staff are trained to administer this safely. A member of staff with first aid training is available on each shift. Clear records are maintained of medicines administered and these records are audited on a regular basis.

In situations where young people take responsibility for their own medication, the centre does not have a policy or procedural guidance for staff.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people are afforded privacy and their information is stored securely, which promotes their rights. They are able to make and receive telephone calls and therefore keep in touch with people important to them. The centre has a policy and procedure for staff to follow when undertaking any searches in order to promote young people's welfare and safety.

The centre has a clear complaints procedure that is known by staff and young people. Young people are provided with information about complaints, which is in a suitable format. Complaints are handled in a timely manner and clear records are kept of all matters and their outcomes. Commendably, there is external scrutiny of complaints by someone independent of the centre, which makes the monitoring and management of them robust. Young people are therefore able to access a procedure which promotes and protects their rights.

Staff are trained in the centre's child protection procedures. They are knowledgeable about them and follow them in order to help safeguard young people. The centre has safeguarding managers who monitor and advise staff on child protection matters. Practice is underpinned by a procedure that has been endorsed by the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Staff and safeguarding managers at the centre liaise with other agencies to ensure responses to any

concerns are robust in safeguarding young people and the promotion of their welfare. Records kept of incidents show how all matters have been managed and concluded. Young people who spoke to inspectors and who completed surveys stated they feel safe at the centre.

Bullying is robustly and effectively challenged and addressed by all staff at the centre as and when it arises. A policy is in place and regular programmes are run that educate young people on bullying and its effects. Forums are held with young people to discuss how bullying is managed and addressed at the centre.

The centre has a policy and procedure in place regarding young people who maybe absent without authority. There have been no absences since the last inspection. Young people's mobility programmes are risk assessed. These ensure that there are, when appropriate, planned and agreed opportunities to enable young people's gradual re-integration to the community.

Positive relationships exist between young people and staff. The behaviour management approach of the centre is one of positive reinforcement where young people are rewarded for achievement through a points system. However, there is on occasion, a negative approach to the rewards and sanctions applied. For example points earned for positive behaviour are sometimes withdrawn or deferred as a result of negative behaviour. Sanction records are in place and each incident is fully recorded and monitored by managers. Young people have the opportunity to write comments or sign their name against these records. This helps them develop understanding and responsibility.

Restraint and single separation records are in place and each incident is fully recorded and detailed. Staff are trained in physical intervention and their practice is underpinned by the centre's policies and guidance. This helps to keep young people safe. However, young people are not routinely offered the opportunity to see a registered nurse or medical practitioner within 24 hours where there has been a physical intervention. This does not fully promote their rights. The centre has recently introduced a restraint minimisation strategy, the purpose of which is to reduce the number of restraints that occur across the centre through a range of different means. The strategy is in it's infancy and it is too early to state what impact this has had.

Young people's safety and welfare is appropriately promoted by a consistently rigorous staff recruitment and selection process. Staff personnel files held include all the information required by regulation.

Risk assessments relating to young people's likely and known activities are in place and regularly reviewed as necessary. There are effective measures and processes to assess and manage self-harming behaviour. Reviews take place regularly, which inform risk assessment processes and guide staff practices to help keep young people safe. Generic premises risk assessments are also in place. These help staff to safeguard young people. Health, safety and security matters are managed well. For example, regular testing of fire equipment is carried out, as is fire instruction and evacuation drills. This helps to ensures young people and staff remain safe.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The individual support provided for young people is good. Evidence to support this is found in records of key worker sessions, minutes of unit meetings and young people's planning

documentation. Young people recognise and acknowledge the range of people available to them who actively provide them with support. This includes key workers, specialist staff and independent advocates.

Young people attend the on site school. There are good links between the school and units which help young people access activities and leisure pursuits. For example, four young people recently completed a piece of art that is about to be submitted externally in the hope of gaining a national award. The enthusiasm, self esteem and pride felt by those involved with the project has generated additional positive outcomes for them, both at school and in the residential units.

Young people speak positively about the range of activities and leisure pursuits they experience. Activities are planned in advance and form part of the daily routine. Good facilities exist within the centre allowing for the provision of sporting, cultural, artistic, educational and general interest activities to take place. However, the evening activity programme can on some occasions suffer from a lack of staff enthusiasm.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The care planning systems are good, with comprehensive, detailed records held on file. Young people's needs are fully assessed and reflected in the detailed planning documentation. Records reflect the reasons for admission to secure care and the plans formulated to meet identified, individual needs. For example, any religious, cultural and ethnic needs are clearly identified.

Effective and well managed procedures to formulate and review placements are in place. Placement objectives, action points and general planning are reviewed regularly. Young people are given every encouragement to attend and participate in their own reviews, confirming that staff provide them with good levels of support and encouragement.

Initial planning meetings are used to collate an approved list of appropriate contacts for young people and to promote and encourage them towards maintaining contact. These details are held on each unit, with young people confirming they are encouraged to have regular contact with family and other people important to them.

Young people speak positively about their own experiences when first admitted to the centre, particularly in relation to the sensitivity shown by staff. A good range of verbal information is provided to young people, regarding life in the units and their individual rights. This is underpinned in the young person's guide, designed and written in an appropriate way. The guide is given to them following admission to the centre.

Consultation with young people is good. They have regular opportunities to put forward their views either collectively during unit meetings or individually, with their key worker. Young people's views and opinions regarding the way they are treated are taken seriously and are reflected in their planning documentation.

The relationships between staff and young people were observed as good. They are at ease within each others company and a positive atmosphere existed throughout the centre.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Plans are in place for young people preparing for adult life, independence, discharge and resettlement. These are developed quickly after admission and monitored closely by case managers. There are a variety of programmes to educate young people in life and practical skills. Case managers ensure that there is a clear plan in place for young people's discharge and where this is not the case there are processes for addressing this with relevant people and authorities.

The centre provides a satisfactory living environment for young people that is domestic in nature and conducive to their positive care. Although accommodation appears tired, with signs of wear and tear, living areas are clean, tidy and maintained as required. The living areas are reaching the end of their useful life and a new build has commenced which will replace all existing facilities.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

There is a well written and detailed Statement of Purpose, which details the aims and objectives of the centre. A range of user friendly information is available for parents and professionals. Young people receive an information guide that tells them what they can expect during their stay at the centre. There are written and cartoon style booklets which are accompanied by DVD presentations reinforcing this information.

The management structure at the centre was reorganised just over twelve months ago. It has now had time to embed and the benefits to staff and young people are apparent. There is joined up working in place with regard to planning and safeguarding arrangements. The centre's senior management team have identified development opportunities for all staff by introducing shift leaders to enhance the support further.

Good leadership is available from the senior management team. There are no staff vacancies at the centre following a recent recruitment campaign. Managers at the centre are careful to ensure the make-up of the staff team is both gender and culturally diverse. Appropriate staffing levels are maintained to ensure the centre operates safely. A centre development plan is in place which sets out the targets and aims for the next three years.

There is good formal and informal support available for staff. There is a consistently high level of formal supervision meetings held with individual staff, and the quality of sessions is audited by a workforce manager. Staff are able to identify development needs and opportunities during the formal sessions. The management information system in operation helps to ensure there are no shortfalls in the support offered.

A training plan is in place for staff. The frequency of sessions and range of training opportunities offered has increased for the current year. A large number of staff have obtained a formal National Vocational Qualification in Caring for Children and Young People. Staff members are able to identify training needs in conjunction with their managers and a training officer. The training packages available assist staff to work effectively with young people.

Visits by an officer of the local authority and elected members are undertaken in line with required regulations. Each of the individual residential units is covered and young people and staff are able to speak with the visitors. A written report is produced and any actions required to improve practice are indicated. These actions are then carried forward and the progress made is considered by the next visitor to the unit. This ensures the welfare of young people is monitored.

There are comprehensive internal quality assurance and management data systems in operation. Monthly management reports are compiled which contain data on behaviour management, safeguarding and staff development and practice. Information collected is considered by managers and used to improve outcomes for young people and develop practice. The authority responsible for the operation of the centre holds a monthly corporate parenting panel. Management data from the centre is submitted to this panel who, for example, challenge any peaks in behaviour management figures. A range of internal meetings are held weekly at the centre to evaluate the planning and progress in place for each individual young person. All of these measures ensure that the provision for young people is continually monitored and adapted.

All required records are in place. These are held both electronically and in hard copy. Access to information is available to all staff to assist them in their roles in caring for young people. Good individual records are held which document young people's progress and needs.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Planning for care takes account of individual cultural, medical and religious needs. A young person's awareness of diversity is raised in many ways throughout their stay. For example, themed weeks run throughout the year and cover various topics from disability and discrimination to religion and food. Traditional meals are celebrated from around the world providing different experiences for the young people.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, The Childrens Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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Recommendations

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

- ensure there is 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)
- ensure within 24 hours of any physical restraint being carried out with a young person that they are routinely offered the opportunity to be examined by a registered nurse or medical practitioner. (NMS 22)