

Inspection report for Children's Home

Unique reference number	SC035648
Inspection date	30/01/2008
Inspector	Malcolm Stannard / Andrew Hewston
Type of inspection	Random

Date of last inspection	04/09/2007
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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

Aycliffe Secure Services is managed by Durham County Council. It is located in grounds belonging to the council, which it shares with other council facilities.

The provision cares for boys and girls and is registered and approved by the Secretary of State to provide accommodation for up to 43 young people, between 10 years and 18 years of age.

Children under the age of 13 years placed under section 25 of the Children Act 1989, may only be placed after prior approval by the Secretary of State.

The establishment has a contract with the Youth Justice Board (YJB) to provide thirty five placements. Accommodation is provided to young people for whom the period of restricted liberty has been deemed necessary by a court.

There are four main admission routes to the unit: Young people remanded into secure care by a criminal court, young people convicted of offences and serving the custodial element of any Detention and Training Order (DTOs), young people convicted under Section 90 and 92 of the Powers of the Criminal Courts (Sentencing) Act 2000 and young people subject to Section 25 of the Children Act 1989, who are a risk to themselves or others.

Aycliffe Secure Services comprises four different residential houses which are Heron, Siskin, Merlin and Royston. There is also a school, swimming pool, gym and play courts on site for use by young people.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This interim inspection was carried out on an unannounced basis. The purpose of the inspection was to focus on development in relation to actions and recommendations made at the last inspection visit and to assess progress and the current operation of the home. Formal education provision was not inspected on this visit.

The key standards in the every child matters outcome groups were not inspected on this visit and so no new quality judgements are made. There was no evidence found during this inspection that any area of care available for young people had deteriorated. The overall judgement rating of good is carried forward from the previous inspection report findings.

Young people spoke positively in regard to their relationships with staff members and

the support they are offered. The staff team care for young people with varied and challenging behaviours in a positive manner.

Management of the home have demonstrated a commitment to ensuring that actions and recommendations are addressed. Some made previously have now been met whilst some are still outstanding.

Work is continuing to extend the secure perimeter of the home. This work is intended to increase the area available to undertake vocational and leisure activities.

Improvements since the last inspection

Actions and recommendations were raised in a number of areas following the last inspection of the home.

The registered person was required to make sure that staff members on Royston unit are able to supervise young people safely when they are in their bedrooms. Funding has now been agreed by the DCSF to enable this work to be carried out, however, at this time the requirement remains and is carried forward.

A further action required that the personal alarms used by staff members are reliable. A trial to improve the reliability of communication which involves the use of a combination of radios, telephones and pagers is presently underway, however, no permanent solution has yet been introduced. This requirement remains therefore and is carried forward.

An action was required to ensure that the young people in Royston unit have a reliable method of alerting staff if they need attention whilst in their bedrooms. A high noise level alarm has now been fitted which alerts staff in the unit to the fact that a young person requires assistance.

The number of staff available and movement between units of some staff members has meant that the number of staff deployed on the residential units does not fall below the minimum agreed level, this was a requirement made at the last inspection. Some further staff movement may be undertaken to ensure that sickness levels do not affect the ratios available. The availability of sufficient staffing means that young people's needs can be met.

Following the last inspection the home's management were required to ensure that records in relation to any child protection concerns are appropriately maintained. The records held are in order and maintained in a concise and organised manner. They are can be cross referenced with the record of complaints where appropriate. This means that any concerns raised by young people can be traced and actions taken verified.

An action was made following the last visit that the daily log held in the units should be written to reflect events of the day but avoid including confidential information regarding young people. The logs held in the units are inconsistent in their style, all

now record events occurring, however, some still contain a large amount of information which relates to a young person as an individual and contain entries of a confidential nature. This requirement remains and is carried forward.

At the last inspection an action was made to ensure that formal supervision available to staff members was undertaken as described in the relevant national minimum standards. A comprehensive auditing of staff supervision is now undertaken and this enables gaps in the supervision system to be identified. Support from management via a panel is made available where it is found that there are difficulties achieving the required frequency of supervision. Whilst there has been an improvement in the amount of staff formal supervision taking place the level is not as high as stated in the national minimum standards and this requirement remains and is carried forward.

A recommendation was made that the responsible person should consider the installation of cameras in the bedroom corridors of the residential units. Funding for this work has been agreed by the DCSF, however, no work has yet commenced on this particular recommendation which therefore remains and is carried forward.

The registered person was recommended to make amendments to the critical incident form to include a section in relation to notifications to the relevant authorities. The form now contains such a section however not all of the residential units are in possession of or use the amended form.

Clarification of the nursing staff role in offering medical assistance following a physical restraint was recommended at the last inspection. There is now some clarity in this area with all young people being offered the opportunity to see a member of the nursing staff the same day or the following morning should a restraint occur on a night time. Recording of information and discussions between nursing staff and young people in relation to any safeguarding issues is now consistent, meaning young people can receive appropriate attention if required.

Improvement to the system for young people to be able to make complaints without referral to staff was recommended at the last inspection. A post type box has been purchased with the intention of placing this in an area where young people can confidentially leave a form or note for the attention of senior staff members should they wish to. Until this recommendation is complete it is carried forward.

At the last inspection the registered person was asked to find an alternative means of advising young people who may have limited literacy or communication skills about the expectations of and life at the unit. Some work has begun on the production of a DVD to be shown to young people and a staff member has been allocated the task of leading an information team. The DVD is not yet ready for use in the admissions process however and therefore this recommendation is carried forward.

A recommendation was made that the resources available in relation to the quality assurance work carried out at the home are adequate. It is apparent that more and

more work is being undertaken by the staff member responsible for quality assurance, however no physical increase in the resources available has yet been made. Identification of the further provision needed in this area has been carried out by the manager of the home. This recommendation therefore remains and is carried forward.

It was recommended that all staff members have access to a copy of the practice manual for the home. The procedures for the home are now available in electronic format and can be accessed by all staff. There are five hard copies held which helps to ensure that all copies are immediately brought up to date following any changes. This means that staff can be sure they are reading an up to date copy of the practice manual when they look for information in relation to caring for young people.

The management of the home were asked at the last inspection to ensure that staff members receive appropriate training in dealing with the range of safeguarding matters that they may need to deal with in a secure setting. All staff members now receive appropriate tuition during their induction training. An e-learning package is also available for staff to access when requiring to update their knowledge. Access to this training for staff means that young people can be protected.

A recommendation was made that requests to placing authorities in relation to missing information be evidenced by recording the request on a young person's file. The practice in the home remains inconsistent with some requests recorded whilst on other files there is no record of this work being carried out. This recommendation remains and is carried forward.

The management of the home were asked to consider the provision of a case file audit sheet for all young people's records to allow for missing information to be more easily identified. An audit sheet is not available on all of the young people's files. Some files contain a different version of the audit sheet. This recommendation remains and is carried forward.

It was recommended at the last inspection that minutes were held of all young people's meetings. The system of young people's meetings has undergone a large amount of change. Investors in children meetings are now undertaken in individual house units. Previously there was one large meeting held which young people's representatives were invited to. The new system means that all young people have a first hand opportunity to put forward their views on the running of the home. The minutes of these individual house meetings are recorded.

The statement of purpose for the home and the pack of information given to young people is still not up to date. A staff member has been identified to be responsible for this work but it has not yet been carried out. This recommendation remains and is carried forward.

The management at the home were asked following the last inspection to consider the enhancement of the life skills and preparation for independence work carried out with young people. Some identification of the staff roles and resources required has

been completed however there is no increase in the life skills provision available to young people. This recommendation remains and is carried forward.

A recommendation that health plans of young people include the contribution made by care staff was made following the last visit. This is now contained in the health information relating to young people. This means that everyone is aware of what needs doing to ensure the good health of young people and whose responsibility it is.

The management of the home were asked following the last visit to consider how the views of the young people in regard to food provision could be increased. The provision of meals at the home is been looked at as part of a review of how food is prepared, transported and served within the units. As part of this review full consultation with young people is planned. To date, however, there has been little change in the process for young people to contribute to this area and the recommendation remains and is carried forward. The management were also asked to ensure that young people are aware of any vegetarian option which may be available at mealtimes. A menu is now available which means that everyone has prior knowledge of the food which is made available.

There were three recommendations made at the last inspection in relation to the formal education of young people. The formal education provision was not inspected during this visit and whilst evidence was made available that some work has been carried out in these areas the recommendations remain and are carried forward.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is not judged.

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?

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 Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Std.	Action	Due date
26	ensure that staff on Royston unit are able to supervise young people safely when they are in their bedrooms (Regulation 31)	30/04/2008
26	ensure that the personal alarms used by staff are consistently reliable (Regulation 23)	30/04/2008
28	ensure all staff receive formal supervision as described in the National Minimum Standards for children's homes (Regulation 27)	30/04/2008
35	maintain the daily log record to reflect events of the day, but avoid including confidential information about individual young people. (Regulation 28.2)	31/03/2008

Recommendations

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

- continue the work identified to provide cameras in the bedroom corridors on the residential units (NMS 26)
- ensure that the critical incident form is available and used by staff in all of the residential units (NMS 20)
- ensure that young people can access the internal complaint procedure without the need to access staff members (NMS 16)

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- consider alternative means of advising young people being admitted who may have limited literary or communication skills about the expectations of Aycliffe (NMS 5)
 - review resources allocated to quality assurance within the centre to ensure they remain adequate (NMS 33)
 - record evidence that any missing information on case files from placing authorities has been requested (NMS 35)
 - provide of a case file audit sheet for each young person's file (NMS 35)
 - review and update the statement of purpose and the information pack for young people to reflect changes and include current information (NMS 1)
 - review life skills work and training towards independent living for young people on the residential units to see how it might be enhanced (NMS 6)
 - ensure young people are fully consulted in relation to the provision of food at the home (NMS 10)
 - ensure that the senior staffing structure for education is agreed and implemented as a matter of urgency (NMS 14)
 - review and evaluate the roles and responsibilities of the teaching and learning assistants to ensure that they are used effectively to support learning (NMS 14)
 - review and evaluate the timetable in consultation with all education staff to make best use of the new accommodation; to create stability in teaching groups; to reduce the movement of young people between lessons; to integrate the curriculum for young people with special education needs; and to take account of planned developments in vocational provision (NMS 14).