

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC039673
Inspection date	20/04/2011
Inspector	Graham Robinson
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	18/01/2011
--------------------------------	------------

© Crown copyright 2011

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

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* (March 2011) and the evaluation schedule for children's homes.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Satisfactory: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's residential unit provides care for up to six young people of either sex aged from 13 to 18 years. The unit takes emergency placements. Placements are also available for young people bailed or remanded by a court, or when family or previous placement break down occurs. A minor variation application has been received to change the age range to 11 to 17 years. This is ongoing.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people make excellent progress in relation to their starting points both socially and educationally. They thrive in a nurturing, supportive environment underpinned with clear and consistent boundaries. Individual needs are identified with plans and strategies put into place to address them.

Young people are cared for by an experienced, highly motivated staff team, who work positively in a none-punitive way. The management and organisation of the home is outstanding and the manager understands the strengths and areas for future development of the unit. Excellent relationships and a feeling of mutual respect between young people and staff enhances the progress made by young people.

The ethos and working practices adopted by the unit encourages and allows young people to re-engage positively with their education, families and social contacts. The unit is well established and respected in its local community; for example, they participate regularly in community projects. This gives young people a sense of pride, confidence and a feeling of worth.

Although comprehensive and child focused, the young person's guide does not contain all the information about contacting specified people. Recording is generally good, but lacks detail in the central missing from home records.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure the contact details for the Children's Rights Director and a young person's independent reviewing officer are included in the young person's guide (NMS 13.5)
- ensure the central missing from home records are fully completed to include both time and dates. (NMS 5.10)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for children and young people are **outstanding**.

The units ethos and working practices, which are influenced by the social pedagogy model, are designed to assist young people to settle quickly into the unit. This encourages them towards respite from a chaotic lifestyle many have experienced, prior to admission. Young people benefit and thrive on the individualised support provided which allows them to refocus and make more positive decisions about their own futures. This support may centre on judicial, family, health and educational issues, although more usually, it is a combination of any number of these factors. Achieving this is viewed as a particular strength for the unit with the vast majority of young people being placed experiencing positive outcomes in their lives. For example, it is possible to chart considerable progress for each young person currently living in the unit by reviewing planning documents, risk assessments, general records and by the positive feedback provided by the young people themselves.

All young people have contact with family, friends and other appropriate adults, which staff are skilled in helping to maintain when difficulties, problems and rejection arise. By doing so, young people and their families are given a clear message that staff will support and look to overturn barriers that may prevent improved contact to taking place.

A number of young people were either rejecting of formal education or had their education stalled to due to various factors on admission. Others had active, ongoing formal educational arrangements in place which are being supported positively. Currently, each young person is attending and engaging positively with their current educational arrangements. The support systems put in place by the unit are outstanding and unique. For example, the unit benefits from having input from an educational consultant who has responsibilities for young people placed in residential care.

Excellent links have been developed with an educational establishment that provides oversight of any educational work undertaken by young people not receiving formal community based education. In addition the unit has a designated education champion who liaises regularly with schools and colleges as well as ensuring the every day arrangements required to get young people to school on time, with the necessary equipment, are in place.

The educational outcomes for young people based on their starting points when first admitted, are outstanding. School attendance is regular with young people actively engaging in their education. Excellent links are place with schools and other educational facilities, with high levels of communication taking place. Evidence to support this can be found by talking with enthusiastic and committed staff and motivated young people along with reviewing the high standards of work being produced by young people on site. For example, it is reflected in projects linked to gardening and the production of a glossary of texting language for social workers. Three young people are also preparing to take their GCSEs next month. On admission, there is an expectation that young people will get up, attend and engage in their educational arrangements and the unit has excellent support systems in place to encourage this.

The health of young people is promoted positively. All are appropriately registered and receive the full range of health services available to them in the community. A number have access to more specialised services such as psychological and mental health services. Health plans form part of the planning documentation and are updated regularly. The unit stores and records the administering of both prescribed and non prescribed medication efficiently, with staff being trained to administer medication.

Staff and young people actively participate in community activities which have recently included raising money for the Pakistani Flood Appeal as well as planting trees and becoming involved in Bobble Day, a local initiative to raise the profile of the elderly. Young people speak passionately about these and other events, obviously gaining much pleasure, prestige and confidence by doing so. They are raising funds for Help the Heroes by selling ducks they and staff had knitted, filled with a chocolate egg. Community based activities and involvement is an area of strength and is recognised by the locals. For example, a visiting County Counsellor provided nothing but positive feedback about the young people, staff and the unit in general.

Quality of care

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

When first admitted young people will usually be experiencing a period of crises in their life. They are often in conflict with authority, family or themselves. Many have experienced previous placement breakdown and had little recent positive experience of education. The immediate aim following admission is to stabilise young people by developing positive relationships, trust and attachments with them, whilst providing clear, recognisable boundaries to operate in. The ethos of the unit, coupled with its organisation and working practices are designed to address these issues and meet individual need. Something it does extremely well.

Young people understand how to make a complaint and are provided with both visual and written information. The guide to the unit provided on admission contains details about their rights, along with the contact details of a range of independent organisations and bodies that champion the rights of young people. However, the details of the Children's Rights Director and young person's independent reviewing officer are currently not available to them.

Staff are skilled in engaging young people positively, who benefit and thrive in a supportive and nurturing environment. Individual needs are clearly identified to form the basis of the comprehensive care planning systems that are in place. This includes identity, religious and cultural needs. Consistent monitoring and the updating of plans and strategies takes place regularly, with evidence available to show that staff, young people, their social worker and where appropriate, parents are aware of and agree with the changes made. This process has the benefit of keeping people informed, involved and contributes positively towards statutory reviews.

Young people confirm they are aware of their own plans and have input and access to them. They speak well of staff, with whom they have outstanding relationships. They have regular opportunities to contribute towards certain aspects of the units operation as well as influencing decisions affecting their daily life. For example this is achieved through regular young people's meetings and key worker sessions. Staff have an open, transparent way of working, which aids the high level of daily communication taking place between themselves and young people.

Upon entry, a visitor is faced with a lively, energetic environment with staff and young people mixing freely with each other. A calm, relaxed atmosphere in a bright, modern welcoming building gives an excellent first impression of the unit and the people in it. The unit has been completely redesigned and rebuilt to an extremely high specification with outstanding levels of equipment, fixtures, furnishings and décor. Each young person has their own bedroom which can be personalised to reflect the taste and interest of the occupant. The unit has numerous areas where young people can be either active or relaxed. This includes a suite of computers giving young people access to the internet. There is also a range of equipment that allows for the pursuit of more traditional hobbies and activities with construction kits and art being currently popular.

The dining area allows meals to be taken together, which are seen as enjoyable, social occasions. Whilst the unit has its own transport, its location means there is good access to public transport as well as a variety of community facilities. Young

people are relaxed and at ease in their environment and take pride in the quality of their living accommodation. The unit is festooned with recent photographs and mementoes of events and activities shared by staff and young people. This includes for example, a recent tree planting activity and a sponsored bicycle ride undertaken in conjunction with the fire brigade, which raised a substantial sum for charity.

Young people recognise the high levels of support given to them by staff and whilst acknowledging the pivotal role of their key worker, they include the whole staff group as being supportive. Staff are proactive and when necessary, imaginative, to allow the needs of young people to be met, for example, in arranging, organising and maintaining contact arrangements for young people. If agreed arrangements are in danger of stalling, staff will make every effort and can be quite creative to ensure they do take place.

Staff promote healthy lifestyles with young people actively engaged in wide ranging group activities as well as being encouraged to pursue their own individual interests and leisure pursuits. For example, young people recently enjoyed a group trip to the Lake District, culminating with a meal eaten in a restaurant. This is balanced with individual activities such as attending concerts, special events or just visiting friends and family.

Young people are encouraged to eat healthily with many able to recognise the nutritional values of eating a good diet. Whilst no young people currently have specific dietary needs, individual tastes are catered for along with encouragement to try unfamiliar foods. Most young people have an appreciation of different cultures and a range of international cuisine.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Outstanding systems are in place to safeguard and protect young people. Staff receive regular training to update their knowledge and have a full understanding of safeguarding policies, procedures and actions they should take, if an incident arises. Discussion undertaken with representatives from external agencies charged with specific safeguarding duties confirm the excellent links and high levels of ongoing cooperation that exist between themselves and the unit.

Information provided in various formats make it clear to young people that bullying is the subject of zero tolerance. Staff are alert to a young person's potential to bully or be bullied and work proactively to minimise the number of incidents occurring. Young people say that bullying is not an issue of concern to them and confirm that staff do not tolerate any form of bullying and are quick to intervene if it does. Bullying is monitored with the views of young people challenged regularly. For example, all young people work through a bullying booklet with their key worker, which defines bullying and asks young people to complete a survey about being a bully and being bullied.

The systems for dealing with young people missing from home are outstanding. The unit has an excellent working relationship with the local Police coordinator, who provided excellent feedback about the unit and its working practices. Staff understand the systems for reporting and the steps they should take immediately a young person goes missing.

Young people's care plans and risk assessments take account of a young person's potential to go missing and their vulnerability should they do so. Staff work intensively with young people to reduce incidents occurring. The Police coordinator was able to provide an outstanding example of the work currently being undertaken, which has significantly reduced the number of incidents of young people going missing. In addition, they are not placing themselves at as much risk as they were prior to admission. The unit is proactive in arranging interviews that are conducted by someone independent of the unit following the return of a young person. Appropriate missing from home records are in place, although some minor details were found to be missing in the central records.

Young people say that any sanctions or punishments are fair and confirm that rewards for good behaviour far outweigh the number of sanctions imposed. Staff say they work on developing positive relationships rather than imposing punitive measures and this is confirmed by both young people and in the records of sanctions and rewards. On the occasions when young people do challenge boundaries, the initial response of staff is to work through the issues positively, without immediately reverting to sanctions. Examples of this occurring were observed during the inspection.

Physical intervention is a rare occurrence, with only one incident taking place since the previous inspection. Indeed when challenged, many young people needed an explanation of what constitutes physical intervention as they had never witnessed any incident taking place. Staff are clear that it is very much a last resort and are more comfortable using the positive relationships built up with young people to

diffuse difficult situations. All staff receive regular and refresher training in positive handling techniques.

Young people benefit from a permanent, experienced and stable staff team. There have been no new appointments for over a year. Appropriate recruitment policies and procedures are in place and details of suitable checks showing that staff are re-checked every three years are available on site.

Staff and young people are protected with a range of risk assessments which are regularly updated. Service contracts for fire, gas and electrical equipment are in place. Young people participate in regular fire drills and understand the evacuation procedures. Regular checks are taking place to the fire alarm, smoke detectors and emergency lighting systems.

Individual risk assessments, coupled with coping strategies are in place for each young person and these are reviewed and updated regularly. All young people confirm that the unit is a safe place to live.

Leadership and management

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

The management of the unit is outstanding. A strong, child focused manager, with excellent communication skills, has a clear vision on how the unit should operate. A committed, energetic staff group are supportive of the management team and all work together in a team centred approach that puts the needs of young people first. The ethos and working practices of the unit meets the aims and objectives set out in the Statement of Purpose.

Young people benefit from having a well supported staff team, who receive regular supervision and appraisal in a format that identifies where improvements to staff's knowledge and working practice can be made. All staff have an appropriate professional qualification and all actively participate in the core staff training programme, which is ongoing. This allows staff to address the diverse needs of young people and ensures they possess the competences and skills required to work effectively with them.

The internal monitoring of the unit is outstanding with a comprehensive monitoring report being completed monthly. The report not only reviews the home's own performance but identifies areas for continued improvement. Regular, external monitoring of the unit is taking place and covers the required areas, which includes contact and discussion with young people.

The manager understands the strengths of the unit and areas where it could perform better. A written team plan is in place which charts the areas for improvement. The unit has an excellent record in compliance. Following the previous inspection, the unit responded positively to the recommendation made, resulting in improvement to the fire drill records.

Young people live in an energetic, lively, forward thinking unit that works individually with them to address their needs. The staff group bonds well, is enthusiastic and fully committed to the ethos, aims and working practices of the unit. They understand their role and responsibilities and work with a dedicated, team centred approach that provides young people with a high level of consistency and an outstanding level of care.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.