

Inspection report for children's home

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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 home is a secure unit, managed by the local authority and is located in the small town just outside the city. An earlier secure unit on the same site was replaced by a purpose built establishment, opening in April 1997. It comprises of three separate living units, providing a total of 18 secure beds between them, catering for children and young people aged between 10 and 17 upon admission.

Two of the units cater for six boys and the other unit caters for six young women. The home has education on site and internal and external play and recreation areas are available. The home also has a large gymnasium, and a range of other accommodation to support the operation of the home, for example, offices, kitchens, medical, and meeting rooms. High levels of security are maintained within the building, and outside where there is access to a BMX track. Mobility away from the unit is provided subject to risk assessments.

Of the 18 places, 15 are commissioned by the Youth Justice Board (YJB) for young people serving sentences or remanded by the courts to a secure setting.

Staff and young people assisted in the inspection process by talking to the inspectors during the inspection.

Summary

The announced full inspection assessed all the key National Minimum Standards (NMS) and gauged the home's success in addressing the recommendation from the previous inspection.

The home provides a highly individualised level of care and support to young people which is focused on meeting the needs of the individual young people to ensure their wellbeing and the safety of the community. Although some young people present with challenging behaviour young people speak well of the staff who care for them and relationships between staff and young people are good. Comments from young people say staff respect them and do not judge them.

The home is managed and organised well to help keep young people safe and secure and staff have access to excellent training opportunities to help them meet the needs of young people. The management team is committed to improving practice and have good systems in place to monitor individual progress. One action and a few recommendations have been made as a result of this inspection.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There was one action from the last inspection which required the Regulation 33 monthly visit reports to be sent to the home within a reasonable time frame to enable the home to action any points raised. A system is now in place that enables this and the home responds to actions raised within one day.

The manager was asked to ensure action was taken to address the performance of the agency used to vet new staff. Pre-employment checks and records seen during this inspection show this has been addressed and ensures young people are protected by the recruitment process.

The manager was also asked to ensure young people were made aware of the home's emergency fire evacuation procedures. This has been addressed as a key worker goes through the induction pack with young people when they first arrive, providing them with details of fire procedures. This recommendation has been met.

The manager was asked to ensure monthly supervision for residential staff. The frequency of staff supervision varies, supervision sessions for some staff is monthly or more frequent and staff report feeling supported from peers. However, all staff do not receive monthly supervision routinely. This recommendation is carried forward.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The cook is aware of individual's dietary needs and excellent systems in the home ensure young people are consulted over and provided with meals they like. A good nutritious menu is provided where young people have choices on a daily basis and they benefit from good home-cooked food. The meals provided take account of medical, cultural and religious dietary needs. Young people can request specific meals and the cook when possible will provide them with individually prepared meals. The home promotes healthy eating, healthy lifestyle and exercise.

The management of health care in the unit is good. Systems ensure the health needs of young people are assessed on or shortly after admission and assessments cover; physical and mental health, immunisations, disability and vulnerability. The GP or nurse undertakes a medical examination of all young people within a few days of admission. Young people have access to male and female doctors and are supported to access the dentist, optician and other health care professionals as required, for example, mental health services and substance abuse and misuse support.

Detailed health care plans are in place for each young person detailing any medical need and how this is to be progressed and health care plans are made available to take with them upon discharge. Staff ensure medical information is shared appropriately and young people's privacy is respected while receiving treatment. Effective management monitoring systems in the home ensure any medical treatment from external professionals needed is sought and accessed by young people. Staff have support from local mental health professionals to help them work with and support individual young people in their care. Young people can access appropriate advice and support such as drama therapy and practice supports individualised care and effective safeguarding, ensuring their health needs are met.

Medication administration, recording and monitoring systems are good. Records of prescribed and non-prescribed medication are well maintained. Medication training is provided for care staff and a clear medication audit trail is in place ensuring young people receive appropriate medication when they need it. However, there are various forms used to obtain medical consent to treatment for different professionals and consideration is given as to whether a person is competent to give their own consent to medical treatment. None specifically cover the administration of first aid.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

There are good arrangements in place to ensure that confidential information related to young people is protected, and the staff team routinely respect and promote young people's privacy and dignity.

The home's complaints procedure is transparent and easily accessible. It actively seeks to ensure that young people are protected and their concerns are heard. However, although there is no evidence to suggest that young people's complaints are not well addressed, the young people do not express confidence in the system. The procedure does not require immediate referral of any complaint alleging abusive or inappropriate behaviour by staff members to the local authority safeguarding team. Whilst it is evident that the complaints are dealt with robustly, this does not promote the safety of young people by including an independent review of these allegations.

The home promotes the welfare of young people and seeks to protect them from abuse through improving child protection and safeguarding procedures. Allegations or suspicions of abuse are promptly shared with the appropriate safeguarding agencies.

Young people are well protected from bullying or inappropriate attention from other people by clear procedures and care practices which are firmly enforced by the staff team. There is also very clear guidance for staff to ensure that young people are protected from any potential recrimination following episodes of absconding.

Good notification procedures and practice ensure that those agencies responsible for the welfare of young people are kept aware of their progress and any significant events involving them. This enables them to offer appropriate and timely support to the young people.

Young people are protected and encouraged to develop their internal controls and interpersonal skills through good child centred practice by staff, supported by good incident recording and management oversight. However, underdeveloped quality assurance limits the learning and evaluation that might otherwise take place to reduce the use of restrictive interventions by staff and promote equality and diversity.

Young people are well supported by staff to develop and maintain socially acceptable behaviour. This is managed through the skilled use of positive professional relationships by the staff team. The management of inappropriate behaviour from young people is constructive and proportionate. The work of staff is supported by the use of an effective incentive bonus scheme which young people value and actively engage in.

Recording of restraints and single separations is consistent and very detailed, but not all the records are centrally collated, analysed and evaluated in line with best quality assurance, planning and monitoring.

There are robust systems in place to ensure that young people are kept safe from hazards and they and the community at large are protected through well managed security procedures.

Young people are protected from the risk of abuse through the appointment of unfit staff by improved recording of the selection and vetting of all new appointments.

Young people are well supported to avoid criminal and antisocial behaviour, and to cope more successfully in the community, and thereby avoid conflict. There are good programmes and support systems in place to enable them to confront and explore their offending behaviour or behaviour that is causing themselves or other people's distress.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Systems in the home ensure young people receive support to communicate their views about how the home operates. They are supported to be heard in reviews enabling them to influence future planning such as education courses. They receive support to follow their culture and religion if they want this while they are at the home.

Young people have a range of adults to whom they can talk to and provide them with individual support. Each young person has a designated team of staff within the home, access to an advocate and various visiting professionals and report that 'staff listen to my views about my future' and 'staff respect me and my background and do not judge us'. Their special interests are supported for example, football, badminton and trampoline training which is provided by an external provider.

Education of the young people is given a high priority in the home and is actively promoted. A live skills programme has been introduced in the school in the past year. Weekly assembly celebrates achievement in school and young people are proud of their achievements. The rewards system in the home recognises the importance of education in a young person's life and rewards attendance and good behaviour in school.

A structured activities programme provides opportunities for young people to engage in active learning outside of the formal school day and provides interest and motivation. Enrichment opportunities provided both by internal staff and external providers enhance young people's experiences for example, sessions on African music and gardening. There is flexibility in the programme to allow a young person to opt to 'chill out' or to undertake individual work with staff. Children are able to pursue their particular interests, develop confidence in their skills and are supported and encouraged by staff to engage in leisure activities.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Initial assessments are carried out when young people arrive at the home. The assessments cover a range of areas including vulnerability, physical, emotional and social needs. These assessments are then used in conjunction with information supplied pre admission to produce a structured plan containing identification of a young person's needs and how these will be met. Each young person has an identified key working team who are responsible for ensuring that action is taken to meet the assessed needs.

Good systems are in place to ensure internal reviews are held of each young person's progress on a minimum three weekly basis. These reviews take a holistic view of the young person and enable any changes to be made to plans to be agreed and implemented quickly. Any planned work which has not been carried out can also be identified by this process. Managers also audit individual files on a regular basis identifying any actions which need to be carried out to ensure

the file is up to date and complete. Young people can be confident their individual progress at the centre is being monitored and action taken by staff at all levels if required.

The professional services team at the unit oversee the assessment, compilation of the plan and carrying out of required actions. This is good practice which ensures young people receive services for which they have been assessed.

Young people are able to attend their statutory reviews and planning meetings, to give their views regarding their care. They are consulted with prior to the meeting and given the opportunity to complete a written statement which is linked to the 'every child matters outcomes'. This means that they are able to state clearly their preferences for the future.

Managers and staff are pro active in ensuring local authorities meet their duties in relation to relevant young people. Any missing information is requested and work which may need continuing upon leaving the unit is identified and made known to the authority.

Excellent systems are in place for young people to access the phone. Contact arrangements are set out clearly and records of contact by young people with family or other people important to them are held. Young people are able to make contact via the telephone, by letter or to receive visitors. Records are held of people with whom contact is restricted. Encouragement is given by staff to young people to continue contact with their families.

There is a good induction programme in place to inform young people about the unit when they first arrive. Identification of resettlement plans and needs takes place at an early stage.

There are systems in place which are excellent in ensuring young people can contribute towards the operation of the unit. Young people are able to make comment on the running of the unit and their individual residential house on a daily basis. A house meeting is held each afternoon at the end of formal education. At these meetings, young people are able to state what activities they would like to take part in, book a time for using the telephone and make comments on their care and relationships with others in the group. Any other subject can also be aired and a record is made of the meeting by a young person.

A young person's council meets on a monthly basis. Representatives from all the house units attend the group along with senior managers and staff. Examples of some areas discussed at these meetings include specialist hairdressers, newspapers for the units, the incentive scheme, menus and activities. Minutes are taken of these meetings and any actions identified are brought back to the next meeting to clarify any actions taken. The minutes are displayed as well as circulated to the young people, they are accompanied by pictorial signposts to aid understanding of the issues.

An independent advocate visits the unit on a weekly basis, young people know who this is and are able to access them to speak confidentially if required. Young people have also been able to participate in the recruitment and selection of new staff at the home.

A range of intervention work is carried out with young people both individually and in groups. All young people have their targets and relevant areas to be addressed identified individually. All identified work is linked to the training or care plan. Staff members from the professional services team ensure that young people are undertaking the correct intervention packages and deliver these in conjunction with the key work team.

As well as direct intervention subjects such as risk taking, offending behaviours and anti social behaviour, there is a large range of packages which enable young people to consider the social and moral aspect of behaviours such as drugs in sport, gender issues, equality and diversity and homelessness. The diversity of packages available, the provision of this in one-to-one sessions, mixed or in gender specific groups means that all identified needs of young people can be addressed.

Further work is carried out with external partners, including substance misuse, drama therapy and the opportunity to work with dogs. Evaluation is undertaken of all packages used and the information is made available to inform any amendments which may be required.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people receive help that assists them develop their self esteem, confidence and positive relationships along side independent living skills. The school has an independent living skills programme and young people have the opportunity, subject to risk, to cook, clean and undertake basic household tasks. Mobility is used to enable young people to shop for personal items and to help them develop independent living skills. The school also uses mobility to enhance learning by visiting museums or work experience opportunities.

Targets for independent living within a young person's care plan are not specific enough to prioritise and reflect the individual work undertaken and needed to assist them. The home offers placing authorities through-care and post-discharge packages to support and assist a young person's transition and success in their new placement.

Young people enjoy homely accommodation, decorated, furnished and maintained to a high standard. To keep the young people in the home safe and provide a homely environment while maintaining security, the home ensures that the environment and the health and safety processes are maintained in good order. A good range of facilities is available for young people's use. They have access to suitable rooms to play in whether it is in groups or individually and to meet family and friends in.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Good quality, information for parents, professionals and young people is provided informing them about how the home operates and services available at the home. Young people have a wide range of detailed information when they arrive at the home and have a thorough induction to the home, normally undertaken within the first three days. This ensures they know about the home and what is expected of them.

The home is committed to staff training and the staff team has an excellent level of training in child care, for example, 90% have the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in child care or higher with four staff holding NVQ 4 alongside social workers and psychology assistants on the residential team. All staff working with young people in the home have restraint training (MAPA) and other training is available to staff, for example, cognitive behaviour, solution focus and restorative justice principles.

Weekly support and training from Mental Health Consultants ensures staff are well supported. Young people are cared for by a well trained, competent staff team.

The staffing of the home ensures sufficient staff are on duty to meet the needs of the young people. A minimum of ten residential staff, work directly with the young people. When needed bank/agency staff are used from a group of staff known to the young people and staff in the home. The challenges presented by the young people, staff sickness, absence and holidays stretched the present staff team. The staffing situation has improved as the home recently recruited new staff and these staff are in the process of their induction training, with recruitment ongoing to fill the remaining vacancies.

Good systems are in place to ensure young people's records are stored safely and provide staff with both historical and up to date information. These records reflect the young people's individual needs and their progress at the home. For those young people about to leave, the support they may need is shared with other professionals as needed. Young people can be confident their individuality will be recognised by the home, this includes their culture and racial needs, and staff strive to improve their own knowledge to further develop services and their care practices.

The home makes good use of external and independent perspectives to improve outcomes for young people. The home has an established arrangement with the advocacy service to undertake exit interviews and use the findings from these to review and amend practice if needed.

The home has a diverse programme of monitoring systems which includes the above exit interviews, regular and effective individual case monitoring, and a good standard of Regulation 33 report, although the frequency of these visits is not in line with NMS. Monitoring systems in the home influence the development of policy and practice although there is areas where it could be developed further. The management team has an awareness of the home's own strengths and areas for development and action is being taken to develop practice where needed, particularly in relation to monitoring systems.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Care is taken to assess individual needs and ensure young people have access to services they require.

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
33	ensure monitoring visits take place once a month. (Regulation 33.3)	1 July 2009

Recommendations

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

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- maintain routine links with other agencies concerned with child protection, this relates to discussing allegations against staff with the LADO prior to determining whether or how they need to be pursued (NMS 17.9)
 - ensure the recording and monitoring of restraints and single separations provides detailed records for all young people placed at the unit, and include detailed evaluation to support good quality assurance, for example, gender, ethnicity, location, and the level of restraint (NMS 22.5, 22.11)
 - provide all staff working in the home with monthly supervision unless they are new staff where this should be fortnightly (NMS 28.2)
 - obtain and retain on file prior written permission for the administration of first aid and appropriate non-prescribed medication (NMS 13.4)
 - ensure targets set in care plans, relating to preparing young people to leave care, reflect individual needs of a young person. (NMS 6.6)