

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Malcolm Stannard / Gwen Buckley
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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 secure children's unit is situated on the outskirts of a city in the North of England. It is managed by the Children and Young People's Directorate of the local authority. It is a detached two storey building situated in its own secure compound.

The unit is registered as a children's home and is approved by the Secretary of State to provide secure care and accommodation for up to eight young people of both genders aged from 10 to 17 years.

At the time of inspection there were eight young people resident at the unit. The provisions available at the unit for young people's use include a sports hall, outdoor courtyard area, aerobics suite and a life-skills kitchen.

Summary

This is an announced inspection, the purpose of which is to evaluate the quality of care for young people at the unit. The key standards in the Every Child Matters Outcome groups were inspected along with progress against the action and recommendations from the last inspection. The formal educational provision at the home was not inspected on this occasion.

Strengths of the home include the individual basis on which young people receive care and the high standard of mental health support available. Young people are also able to have a say in how a number of areas of the unit's operation occur. A weakness of the unit is the evidencing of ensuring that local authorities are reminded of their legal obligations to young people.

Management and staff members have good relationships with external agencies and consult positively with them.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection there was one action and four recommendations made which the management team were asked to consider. Work has been carried out to address almost all of the required areas.

They were required to produce a more formal planned and structured activities programme to increase the opportunities for young people. A written plan is now in place meaning that young people know what is on offer and when, with improved delivery occurring.

The management team were asked to ensure that all medication administered was properly recorded. A good medication administration system is now in place and is monitored by managers. This helps to ensure that young people's welfare is safeguarded. A further recommendation was made that the fire risk assessment should be completed in line with current legislation. The risk assessment was amended promptly following the last inspection and now takes account of all legislation. This helps to ensure that young people who live in the unit are provided with physical safety.

It was recommended that all bedrooms were maintained to a safe and domestic style provision. This recommendation related to one bedroom which had been damaged by a young person. The bedroom has now been returned to a position which is consistent with all other bedrooms in the unit. This means that all young people can experience safe and homely accommodation.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people benefit from good home-cooked, well-balanced and nutritious meals which include vegetarian options and provide daily choices. Meals meet cultural and medical dietary needs of individual young people and take account of their likes and dislikes. There is a good relationship between the cooks in the unit and the young people and specific meals are regularly provided for young people on request. Meal times are social occasions with special occasions celebrated.

The unit promotes healthy eating and a healthy lifestyle. Young people engage in a variety of activities and exercises and they are actively encouraged to try new healthy foods, training programmes and sport. Healthy snacks are provided and fresh fruit is freely available. Young people help to run a tuck shop system that provides opportunity to them to buy sweets. The unit holds the healthy schools award and the nurse provides healthy eating and lifestyle advice to staff and young people.

Drinks are freely available in the unit throughout the day. Young people have opportunities to cook on a regular basis. Young people enjoyed a fund raising event where they organised a restaurant 'Aldinios' for an evening. The meals were planned, prepared and served by the young people. The evening was used as a fund raising event and entailed a subsequent visit to the hospice to present the money raised.

Systems help to ensure the health needs of young people are assessed on or shortly after admission. The assessments cover; physical and mental health, immunisations, substance use and misuse, disability and vulnerability. A medical examination of all young people is undertaken within four days of admission.

Staff support young people to access external health professionals for example, the dentist, optician and the Genitourinary Medicine Clinic. Young people can be confident staff ensure confidentiality is considered and information is shared appropriately.

Young people's medical needs are promoted, and their physical and emotional wellbeing is assessed and action taken throughout their stay to ensure appropriate treatment is provided. Monthly case management meetings take place and these monitor and review medical issues. However, within the care planning system used, whilst all information is available, there is no specific health care plan in place to ensure young people have a documented health care plan available that specifically identifies targets and who is responsible to progress actions needed.

A good medication administration and recording system is in place at the unit. Clear policies exist concerning prescribed, non prescribed medication and the receipt and disposal of medication. Homely remedies are provided for young people's use. Medication is securely stored. A first aid trained member of staff is on duty each shift. Young people have confidence in the arrangements made to manage their general health needs, provide care for them when they are ill and ensure any medication needed is available.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The privacy and dignity of young people at the unit is respected throughout all areas of daily life. Young people are able to take private time, staff make sure they announce their arrival if entering rooms and keep all young people's information confidential.

There is a transparent and robust complaints system in operation. Any concerns are dealt with quickly with young people being informed of the result of any investigation. There is an opportunity for young people to record their satisfaction or otherwise with the final outcome. Young people can access visiting advocates and the person carrying out Regulation 33 visits. They are able to talk freely to them should they wish to.

Safeguarding procedures at the unit are strong and comprehensive records are made of any referrals which have been undertaken. There is good management feedback in relation to any safeguarding recording undertaken and evidence of good relationships with external partners.

The anti bullying procedures in place help to protect young people. Appropriate action is taken in regard to any instance of bullying which has been identified.

The unit uses mobility imaginatively to assist a young person's return to the community. There are workable and appropriate procedures in place, which are understood by staff, should a young person abscond whilst away from the unit.

Required notifications of any significant events are made as required to the appropriate external agencies.

Programmes are in place to encourage positive behaviour from the young people. Incentives can be received by earning points for positive behaviour and attainment throughout the day. Young people understand how the system works and what is expected to enable them to achieve. All staff undertake training in using physical intervention safely should this be required. The training has recently being increased in length to include a wider range of diffusion and diversion techniques. Refresher training is undertaken with every staff member on a yearly basis. Recording systems for any sanctions, single separations and restraints are of a good standard and evidence any action taken and the reasons why this occurred. All of these records are audited and information is monitored as part of the quality assurance system. The information held means that any trend in behaviour can be identified at an early stage.

The fire safety risk assessment has recently been updated to ensure it covers all requirements of current legislation. A record of drills and tests is held and this is completed fully with the details of date, times and persons present all available. Fire drills have been held at varying times to ensure all staff and young people have the opportunity to take part in one.

No personnel files for staff members were viewed on this visit, however, satisfactory recruitment and selection procedures are in place which cover the undertaking of all appropriate clearances. Personnel files are held off site in a local authority provision. The unit holds copies of clearances and identification evidence for staff members. Visitors and escorts have their identification checked prior to any access to the unit and young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

There is a good, structured programme of activities and enrichment in operation at the unit. Individual teams are given responsibility for arranging formal enrichment clubs and unstructured activities for the periods when they are working. Clubs presently operating include an art group, vehicle maintenance, physical fitness group and meal and event planning. An accreditation process for some of the pursuits is currently being implemented and there is a continuing development of the interests available. Young people can contribute their ideas to the make up of the activity programme and have also taken part in event planning. They were able to link many of their ideas to equality and diversity issues by ensuring appropriate access for all was maintained.

Where young people demonstrate a particular aptitude or interest, arrangements can be made for them to follow this externally. There is a range of good resources available including a sports hall and fitness suite. Young people can partake in cooking and motorcycle maintenance groups. An evaluation of each session is undertaken which informs any further development of the activity. Young people's participation in any enrichment group or activity is recorded and the information used to inform review meetings. The information is not yet held on a database so collation can be time consuming. The structure and range of activities available ensures that all young people can take part in a leisure and learning experience.

A large amount of positive work is taking place to establish links with external contacts for education and training provision. This has been necessary following the reallocation of budgets within the external providers. The unit staff have good, positive links with a number of community contacts, many of which can assist young people with training and employment when they leave the unit. Young people receive support to complete school work and staff members impress upon them the importance of prompt attendance and behaviour whilst taking part in formal education.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children have their needs comprehensively assessed. Placement or training plans have clear targets set on how individual needs are to be met and these are agreed and prioritised by visiting professionals, the unit's staff and young people. Young people are legally placed in the unit and work is undertaken with them to address reasons that brought them into secure care.

There is a good system in place to monitor the effectiveness of programme delivery and how the young people are engaging in the process, including the progress they make while at the unit. Placing professionals are expected to attend monthly meetings to review individual progress against targets set at the initial placement meeting or subsequent reviews. If needed, targets are then renewed or amended. This is very good child focused practice and prevents 'drift' in the care of the young person.

The unit places an emphasis on enabling a young person to leave in a planned and sensitive way. The unit expects the transition and future placement of individuals to be discussed at the initial placement meeting and subsequent reviews. They will work with the advocacy service and others to support young people. Excellent systems ensure effective support for young

people in their new placements, when very little time had been given by the placing authorities for transition work to be undertaken, prior to release. A system is in place which is used to remind local authorities of their responsibilities. However, it does not fully allow for the level of concern in the case of negated responsibilities to be communicated. Staff from the unit will support a young person in their new placement to ease the transition when needed. They also liaise with others to ensure the educational need of young people is given adequate consideration when planning for their discharge.

Young people are consulted over key decisions in their life within the unit and where possible their wishes and feelings about future placement whether in the community or another secure setting. Exit interviews are arranged by the advocacy service and findings help the staff to review and develop practice in the unit. Young people have ample opportunities to influence the running of the unit, they are involved in choosing meals, activities, and when needed the décor of their rooms.

Children enjoy sound relationships with staff based on honesty and mutual respect. Humour is used appropriately by both young people and staff to defuse situations. Young people report feeling cared for and that 'staff respect them so they respect the staff'.

Clear contact arrangements are set out in placement plans and provide details of approved and restricted contacts. Suitable resources are available to facilitate contact within the unit and advocates are available to young people. Systems for prioritising telephone calls in the evening are in place. Suitable arrangements are in place for young people to call social workers, legal representatives and other professionals. Contact can also be undertaken by letter. Internet access is available at the unit and this is closely monitored by staff. Staff support young people to manage their feelings prior to and after visits or phone calls.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The unit staff work positively with young people towards independence and adulthood. There are guidance and programmes in place to assist key workers to undertake individual work with young people. Daily life at the unit and key work sessions help prepare a young person for adulthood. Resources are available to use with young people to help prepare them for independent living in line with their assessed needs to enable them to develop and carry skills with them when moving on to independent living. The programme is available to all of the young people but is individually planned according to age, ability, diversity and culture.

Young people live in a pleasant unit providing sufficient space. There is a large external play area and decked area. Internally they have access to various rooms, a large gym, two lounges, computer games, an IT room, an independent kitchen and a graduate room subject to rewards scheme level. Young people enjoy homely accommodation that is well decorated and furnished and provides adequate facilities for their use. Young people spoken with confirmed they had access to a telephone that could be used in private. Each young person has their own space.

The unit is well-maintained and ensures that the young people have a warm and comfortable place to live in. The unit is subject to regular health and safety risk assessments and has certification relating to gas, electrical, fire alarm testing and fire equipment checks.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

There is a good range of information about the unit available. Young people, parents and carers and professionals each have access to a booklet which is tailored to their needs. The information can be made available in varying formats should this be required. A statement of purpose is available which sets out clearly the aims and objectives of the unit.

Whilst some qualified staff have left employment at the unit, the majority of the staff group hold a formal qualification. A training plan is in place for the next twelve months which contains training needs identified during individual staff supervision sessions. Refresher training in statutory areas is undertaken by all staff. A comprehensive induction package is available which is completed during the first two weeks of a staff member starting employment.

Care staff receive formal supervision on a regular basis with minutes of sessions available.

The manager receives regular formal supervision and support from an external line manager. Appropriate numbers of staff members are available to care for the young people on each shift.

There are good quality assurance systems in operation at the unit. All information is made available to management on a monthly basis, who then use it to identify any development needed or changes which may be required to practice. Management team members audit various records within the unit on a random basis and request that action be taken to remedy any discrepancies found. An independent person undertakes visits on behalf of the local authority in line with Regulation 33 on a monthly basis. A report is compiled following these visits.

Comprehensive records are held in relation to each young person which identify their individual needs and development. Records are monitored and audited by a member of the management team. Regular updates are made to young people's needs when these change or new areas are identified.

Staffing at the unit is used at an appropriate level when working with young people. Rotas are in place which meet the needs of the young people whilst still enabling staff time for attendance at meetings and training. There is a good balance of gender and experience within the staff team ensuring young people receive care from staff members who are able to forge positive relationships.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Respect for individuals' and ensuring access for all is discussed with young people at every opportunity. Discussions regarding activities and events organised by young people include consideration of individuals needs. Good advocacy arrangements are in place for those who may require them.

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 health information held for young people is collated into a written health care plan (NMS 12.2)
- record young people's participation in activities in a manner which allows easy identification of any pattern of involvement (NMS 15)
- further develop the systems in place to ensure young people, leaving the home, are provided with information regarding the services they are entitled to, from their placing authority, in a timely manner (NMS 5.5).