

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Malcolm Stannard / Elizabeth Taylor
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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 situated in the North of England. The centre can, when fully operational, offer secure accommodation for up to 17 young people between the ages of 12 years to 18 years, whose behaviour has placed themselves or others at risk. There are three residential units at the centre, however one unit is not presently operating and, at the time of inspection, twelve young people were accommodated.

Facilities at the centre for young people include outdoor exercise areas and a sports hall. Furnishings in the living units are as domestic in nature as is safely practicable.

Summary

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

Strengths of the centre include the individualised work and support available for young people and physical health provision. A weakness of the centre is the difficulty encountered acquiring suitable external mental health support, this is very important given the significant needs of many of the young people.

There is a dedicated management and staff team at the centre who work hard to keep the young people safe.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection there were two actions and nine recommendations made which the management of the centre were asked to consider. Both of the actions and three of the recommendations have not been addressed and are carried forward. Work has been carried out to progress six of the recommendations.

The management team were asked to develop a process, to ensure that risk assessments in the case of pregnancy or for asthma sufferers were written. This relates to possible restraint situations where certain holds may not be suitable. Whilst it has not yet had to be implemented, a process which is included as part of the initial assessment is now available for use. This means that conditions which may affect young people during physical interventions can be recognised. A further recommendation was made that written permission for the administration of first aid and non prescribed medication should be held. These permissions are now in place ensuring that appropriate consents are obtained.

It was recommended that best practice guidance was followed relating to the use of controlled medication. The relevant guidance is now available for staff members and assists them to protect young peoples welfare.

Consideration of allowing mixing of young people from the units at the centre with a view to expanding social contact was recommended. Management at the centre have looked at this and, whilst identifying that there are benefits to working with joint groups, they do not consider that the behaviours of the young people who are currently at the centre would ensure a safe environment when mixing. It was also suggested that television and music equipment should be integrated into young peoples bedrooms, negating the need for removal to ensure young peoples safety. The management at the centre have made enquires in regard to a satisfactory system and continue to investigate cost and building requirements.

It was further recommended that NVQ level 4 training be made available for team leaders and senior staff. The completion of this qualification has been considered. However, it is not felt to be practical as there are some management practices which are not carried out by team leaders, meaning they would not be able to complete certain modules of the qualification. The manager of the centre is identifying a more appropriate qualification for the senior staff to undertake.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people are provided with a balanced diet. They are encouraged to try new foods and their health is closely monitored to ensure that any limited diets by choice do not compromise their health. The three week rolling menu offers them a good level of choice and variety. Fresh fruit is available at all times and young people have snacks and 'tuck' at appropriate times during the day and evenings. Young people are generally complimentary about the quality of meals served from the main kitchen during weekdays. However, meals served by different agency staff employed at weekends receive conflicting comments ranging from 'great' to 'really bad'. Young people are supported to learn about healthy foods and to cook. Both units have a kitchen which young people can access, in accordance with their individual risk assessments. A programme of planned weekly activities incorporates regular opportunities for young people to cook and bake. Cookery is also offered as part of the school curriculum. Staff promote mealtimes as social occasions and an opportunity to support young people to develop their self care skills.

Young people benefit from effective health screening and support from nursing staff, to address their physical and mental well-being. Nursing staff are well qualified to assess young people's varied needs. They visit young people on a daily basis during weekdays to discuss any health matters and provide treatment. Nursing staff are also actively involved in delivering health education to young people, both in small groups and individually. Nurses work in close partnership with other health professionals to provide a coordinated service to young people. For example, an optician and dentist visit the centre regularly as well as providing an emergency service. All of the above helps to meet young people's health needs in a positive manner.

Many of the young people placed in the centre have a history of, or emerging evidence of, serious self harm or suicidal tendencies. Young people's emotional and mental well-being is thoroughly assessed on admission. The assessment process has been further developed to include a comprehensive risk assessment. This contains clear strategies to try to keep young people safe. Nursing and care staff act to support the psychological welfare of young people. However, managers acknowledge that the current arrangement for external, professional support for young people with complex mental health issues is not sufficient to address their needs.

Local resources are limited and a great deal of managers' time is currently spent seeking alternative support or provision for young people from across the country. Positively, the centre's General Practitioner is proactive in supporting managers to gain appropriate mental health services for the young people.

Relevant health agencies are notified of arrangements for the discharge of each young person. Appropriate information is forwarded to try to ensure continuity in the services young people require.

Appropriate arrangements are in place for the safe storage of medicines in each unit; none of the young people hold any medication due to serious concerns about their suicidal/self-harming behaviours. All staff are trained to safely administer young people's medication. Records are generally well maintained of all medication held, administered and disposed of. However, staff do not always sign young people's medication record at the actual time of administration and practice here could be improved.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people are treated with respect and dignity and their privacy is protected as much as possible given the constraints of security needs at the centre. There are policies and procedures in place which guide staff in ensuring practices carried out are respectful of young person's needs.

A complaints system is available which is understood by the young people, comprehensive information is made available to them which explains the procedures. The written guidance available relating to the system contains timescales for when it is expected that a complaint investigation will have been completed. A record is made of satisfaction or otherwise with the outcome of a complaint. A senior staff member talks to all young people to explain how they can take any issues further should they be unhappy with the response.

Written child protection procedures are in place at the centre. Members of staff are aware of how to proceed should an allegation be made. There are good links with child protection services and the external manager for the centre is a member of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Staff at the centre undertake relevant training during their induction period and this is supplemented by refresher courses.

Members of staff receive training in relation to dealing with bullying. The information given to young people states that any form of bullying will not be tolerated. An anti bullying policy is available and this contains details of the logging forms which are used to record any issues that arise. A good initiative is in place which involves members of the police service visiting to talk with young people about bullying situations in the community.

An advocate from 'Voice' visits the centre each week and young people have free access to her. She also attends the young people's forums if she is on the site when they are held. The advocate is made aware by staff of any young person who they feel may benefit from speaking with her and she is made aware of any child protection issues which may be ongoing. Telephones which enable young people to directly access advocacy services are in place on the residential units, although they are on occasion damaged and can be out of use. The availability of the

visiting advocate allows young people the opportunity to raise with a person external to the centre any concerns they may have.

Any significant events are notified in writing to the appropriate authorities. A procedure is in place to guide staff should there be any unauthorised absences, it includes a system to ensure that young people can access an independent person following their return to the centre.

An incentive scheme is in place which is understood by young people. The scheme rewards instances of positive behaviour displayed. Staff members are imaginative in their use of the scheme, ensuring that all young people can achieve and receive rewards despite limits which may be present due to individual risk assessments. Staff members are trained in 'Protecting Rights In a Caring Environment', this would be used should physical intervention be required. Staff also undertake emotional health and wellbeing training which assists them to use diffusion techniques in their work. Records are held of any sanctions imposed following unacceptable behaviour. There is little imagination used in the types of sanctions imposed and these tend to be one of only a few options. For example, young people may lose the use of electric for damaging a book. This can make it difficult for the young person to associate their action with the sanction received. Some of the records held of physical intervention are incomplete or do not contain details of the whole event from start to finish. This can make it difficult to be clear about what actually occurred.

A manager at the centre is responsible for health and safety issues. All electrical and gas systems are inspected under service agreements. Fire prevention equipment checks are undertaken regularly and practice drills are held. The practices tend to occur during the middle of the day, however, and do not enable all staff, especially those who work nights, to experience a drill.

Appropriate staff recruitment checks are undertaken prior to any person starting employment in the centre.

Visitors and escorts have their identification checked prior to any access to the centre and young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people's individuality and diversity is respected and promoted. Staff strive to increase young people's self-esteem and help them develop their potential. This is supported by detailed planning for young people's daily care, including their health and education needs. Young people's physical health needs are effectively addressed and they are assisted to learn about health related matters. This enables them to make more informed choices. Staff act to keep individual young people safe from harm and work hard to ensure their mental and emotional well-being is effectively supported on a day to day basis. All young people have a key worker allocated, although all staff are expected to support young people and help them work towards targets in their plan. Staff work closely together to ensure all relevant information about young people is shared and that young people are managed consistently. The key worker system works well and positively supports young people.

Young people are supported to achieve positive outcomes in education. Care staff provide practical, physical and emotional support to maintain young people in education whenever possible. For example, care staff support teachers in the classroom setting at times. This enables

care staff to become familiar with individual young people's level of ability and their preferred style of learning. This assists care staff to plan leisure and recreational activities which support young people's learning. Young people's achievements are celebrated and they are praised or rewarded for their efforts.

Progress has been made in the planning of leisure and recreational activities for young people. There is evidence these are linked to young people's personal interests and skills, at times. More equipment has also been obtained which offers young people a wider choice of activities. The development here enables young people to experience a wider range of pursuits. However, the actual delivery of activities remains inconsistent. Some activities previously enjoyed by young people are no longer available as qualified instructors have left. For example, the use of a trampoline. There are some occasions when a programme of meaningful and enjoyable activities is not available to engage and stimulate young people.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Plans for young people's care are detailed and cover all areas of their need. Targets are identified to address young people's needs. However, the targets are not always expressed in practical, measurable terms. For example a target recorded as 'improve self esteem', does not detail the measurable actions to be carried out to achieve this. This makes it difficult to assess whether young people have made progress towards, or achieved, a target.

There is a good established reviewing process which ensures young people's changing needs are identified and addressed. Young people's placement plans and risk assessments are reviewed at least weekly or following a significant event affecting their care or welfare. A key working system operates in the centre although all staff are expected to support young people. Records held do not fully reflect staffs' efforts or achievements in engaging with young people about everyday matters and future plans. However, good work was observed in this area. Young people's progress is also independently assessed in their statutory reviews.

There is a clear admissions process which is sensitive to young people's needs and feelings. They are involved in discussions about their health and care and are helped to understand how the centre operates. This is achieved through discussions with nursing and care staff and appropriate leaflets which are given to them. The majority of admissions are unplanned but a few recent admissions were planned. This was positive in that it enabled staff to visit young people in their previous placement, to gain valuable information to assist them in providing continuity in care. Plans for young people leaving the centre take account of their need to be re-integrated back into community living. Good use is made of mobility and young people are supported to visit local shops and other community facilities as part of their preparation for moving on, in accordance with their risk assessment. Staff work hard to ensure firm arrangements are identified for young people leaving the centre. However, some placing local authorities have not always identified adequate provision at the time of leaving.

Contact arrangements for young people are clearly established on admission and any restrictions on contact are clearly recorded. Young people are supported to maintain relationships with their parents and family members. Young people can receive visits, make telephone calls, send and receive letters and cards, in accordance with their risk assessment. The assessments are comprehensively completed. This ensures young people's welfare is promoted by ensuring visitors and contacts are appropriately vetted.

Consultation and negotiation with young people is used to good effect most of the time. Staff seek young people's views and wishes about everyday matters, whilst still ensuring appropriate control and boundaries remain in place to uphold the safety and welfare of all. Young people's forums are planned weekly but do not always take place, in accordance with young people's wishes or due to events taking priority. An independent advocate visits regularly and is a familiar figure who the young people can speak to in confidence. The advocates acts on behalf of young people to resolve any concerns they may have, whilst maintaining their confidentiality where appropriate.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Some good work is undertaken by staff in relation to young people learning life skills and preparing for transition. All young people are provided with an internal 'pathway plan' which details life skills learning needs and how these can be met. Key workers undertake individual 'preparation for leaving' work with the young people. The behaviours which some of the young people exhibit prevents the work being carried out in a more group style method. This is because there could be safety issues given the need for staff to manage any self harming behaviours shown, however, as much opportunity as possible is provided. Staff members work hard to ensure that placing authorities have put in place appropriate arrangements for young people who are leaving the centre. On occasion however the planning is not considered early enough beforehand or local authorities can be unprepared for the move. Positively the staff at the centre will remind local authorities of their duties.

Despite the age of the building and the requirement to ensure safety and security for young people, the units are furnished and decorated in a manner that is domestic in nature. There is good natural light and young people can see outside from the windows. Individual bedrooms are well decorated, presented to a good standard and as homely as possible.

The centre is well-maintained and ensures that the young people have a comfortable place to live in. The centre 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 satisfactory.

There is good information about the centre available to young people, professionals and guardians. Parents also receive an individual letter from the manager when their child goes into the centre. 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.

The majority of the staff group hold a formal qualification. Those who do not are registered and undertaking an NVQ level 3 course. A training plan is in place which contains details of training courses which are available to staff. A deficit in the area of training, given the number of young people the centre works with who have mental health needs, is specific mental health knowledge for staff. A suitable course has now been identified and funding obtained and training is planned into the duties of the staff team. It is imperative that this training commences as soon as possible. Staff require this knowledge to help them look after the young people.

Formal supervision for staff is undertaken and records are held of sessions. There has been continued improvement in the frequency of supervision, however, there are still instances of sessions being cancelled due to other demands on the provision. There are a number of informal supervision sessions undertaken, however, they are not always recorded as having taken place. Support available for staff members is appropriate, however formal supervision is not always consistent for all staff. The manager of the centre receives supervision from an external line manager.

Appropriate numbers of staff members are available to care for the young people on each shift. Some members of agency staff are utilised for cover when required, but this is not excessive and the management team try to use staff who know the centre and it's work. 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.

Staff meetings generally take place weekly though are deferred when the school is closed. Young people's plans are reviewed every meeting, as well as planned activities, incentive bandings and any planned building or repair work needed.

Members of the external management board undertake visits on behalf of the local authority in line with Regulation 33 on a monthly basis. A report is compiled following these visits. Although an internal monitoring system is in place, the level of auditing undertaken does not ensure that a range of records are detailed or concise. Where records are audited, there is often no signature to evidence this nor any record of actions which are required to bring the record up to the required standard.

Comprehensive records are held in relation to each young person which identify their individual needs and development. Regular updates are made to young peoples needs when these change or new areas are identified.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The needs of every young person are identified at admission and recorded. Young people at the centre take part in celebrations of a wide range of festivals and celebrations from cultures around the world.

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
12	ensure each child has access to such psychological and psychiatric treatment as they may require (Regulation 20(2)(b))	18 September 2009
22	ensure that behaviour management records, including restraint and single separation logs, accurately reflect the incident and the actions taken (Regulation 17(4))	18 September 2009

28	ensure that all staff receive formal individual supervision in line with the minimum frequency set out in the national minimum standards. (Regulation 27(4))	18 June 2009
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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):

- explore and employ a range of alternatives to the present sanctions in place (NMS 22)
- vary the times when fire drills are undertaken to ensure all staff have the opportunity to take part (NMS 26)
- ensure opportunities for young people to engage in a range of appropriate leisure activities are followed through in practice (NMS15)
- ensure plans for young people's care and other records contain measurable targets demonstrating the individual support received (NMS 2)
- offer direct training in mental health issues that impact on young people to all the care team (NMS 29.1)
- further develop the system of internal monitoring to assist development of practice. (NMS 33)