

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC035500
Inspection date	19 August 2009
Inspector	Linda Christie
Type of Inspection	Random

Date of last inspection	5 February 2009
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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

This centre is a registered children's home which offers secure accommodation for up to 24 young people between the ages of 10 and 18 years, of whom eight may be female at any one time. The centre is situated on the outskirts of Bristol and is operated by South Gloucestershire Council.

There are two residential units available, one containing sixteen beds and the other eight beds. All bedrooms are single accommodation and contain en-suite WC and shower facilities. A formal education facility is available on the site. Recreational facilities available include a gymnasium and an outdoor sporting facility with an artificial surface, along with a vocational workshop.

The centre accommodates children and young people who may have been sentenced, remanded or require secure accommodation following an assessment of vulnerability.

Summary

This was an unannounced interim inspection, made to evaluate progress in relation to the recommendations made at the previous inspection. The standards included under staying safe were inspected in full and included two standards specific to a secure children's home, related to the management of self harm and tackling offending behaviour.

Standards related to the outcomes of positive contribution, achieving economic wellbeing and organisation were not assessed during this inspection.

One additional recommendation has been made as a result of this inspection and the recommendations related to education are repeated.

This is a well managed and organised secure children's home. Staff are supported in their task by a senior management team who strive to continually improve the care of and services to young people. The systems in place to quality assure practice and ensure the centre is a learning organisation are excellent.

The centre has recently been successful in obtaining an extension to their contract with the Youth Justice Board for a further three years. This has enabled the centre to advertise all vacant posts and 10 new residential care staff are in the process of being inducted into the establishment. New teaching staff and instructors are also anticipated to commence employment in September. A revised induction programme has recently been introduced which provides a good level of preparation for new staff prior to them taking on their caring role with young people.

Young people are generally positive about the care they receive at the centre and several gave examples of how being placed at Vinney Green has helped them deal with issues in their lives, including self harming and offending behaviours.

This secure children's home continues to provide a good quality of care to young people.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There were nine recommendations made following the last inspection, five of those were related to the provision of education. Three recommendations have been met and one has yet to be fully addressed. The recommendations made in respect of the education service were not reviewed during this inspection as an education inspector did not form part of the team. These will be repeated and carried forward to be reviewed during the next key inspection.

The three recommendations fully addressed included; the development of a procedure to enable young people to be able to safely administer their own medication, the refurbishment of bathrooms so that any potential ligature points are removed, and clarity about the identification of young people's identified religious and cultural needs. The one issue which remains outstanding is the review of recording procedures for incidents to avoid duplication and ensure appropriate cross referencing of records. This recommendation has not been fully addressed and is therefore repeated.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people at the centre had not previously been given responsibility for administering their own medication, even for less risky items such as skin creams.

A well thought through and tested procedure is now in place that allows young people an opportunity to hold their medication, if it is considered safe to do so. An assessment is undertaken of the young person's ability to do this, using a 'Fraser competency' tool. The general practitioner is involved in this process, including advising of the potential for harm of the prescribed medication. Young people are expected to sign a contract to confirm they will take responsibility for their medication and not place other young people at risk at any time. Two young people have been assessed as being competent and one young person was continuing to self administer medication.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people's privacy is respected and promoted and confidential information is carefully stored and handled.

Robust safeguarding procedures ensure that young people are protected from abuse. Good and effective links are in place between the centre and local safeguarding team and the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

Complaints procedures are managed effectively to ensure young people's concerns are heard and dealt with appropriately. Young people confirm that they consistently use the confidential complaints procedure to highlight any concerns they have. Only one young person said they were unhappy with the length of time it took to respond to the complaint.

Bullying behaviour is an ongoing risk at the centre, as confirmed by both young people and staff. However, there are good, clear and effective anti bullying procedures which are known to staff and young people. There is evidence of these procedures being appropriately implemented. Managers convey a firm expectation of 'zero tolerance' to bullying and there are well established strategies in place for staff to challenge such behaviours and minimise the risk

of young people being bullied. One young person said, 'I do not get bullied now, if someone is doing or saying something I do not like I will tell them I do not like it'. She said staff had helped her to become more assertive. There had been an increase in the number of assaults by young people on their peers in the month of July 2009, after a downward trend during the previous 12 months. This is being monitored by managers, who believe that an increase in the number of new admissions in July contributed to the increase in such behaviours.

Staff are aware of the importance of providing clear boundaries for young people's behaviour and of encouraging socially acceptable behaviour to avoid conflict. There is an effective rewards and sanctions scheme which recognises efforts by young people to co-operate with staff and participate in the routines of the day. Young people are fully conversant with the rewards and sanctions scheme and have made some suggestions recently to enhance the range of incentives available.

There were some issues identified during the last inspection regarding the recording of sanctions, restraints and single separation. There is a very thorough and robust performance monitoring process in place, which includes the collation, analysis and reporting of data information at the centre, contributing to a lessons learned culture. However, challenges to individual staff in respect of their recordings are not so apparent. There continue to be discrepancies in how information is cross referenced between the written hard bound versions of the records, the incident reports and the details included in individual young people's daily logs.

A comprehensive range of programmes is in place to support young people to confront their offending behaviours and attitudes. The centre continues to develop innovative packages and approaches to dealing with offending behaviours and raise awareness with young people of the impact of their decisions and actions upon others. One particularly positive focus at present is a programme helping young people 'escape exclusion' from school. This package focuses on the behaviours that are expected in a classroom situation, with young people being taught strategies to deal with their frustrations when in the classroom and equip them to cope when under stress.

The staff team are well supported to manage and promote the emotional needs of the young people they care for, and training to address self harming behaviour has been provided by the centre's psychologist. Young people at risk of self harming are consulted about their plans, which are then developed with their agreement to identify the specific support they need to keep them safe. The psychologist has worked with staff to further reduce the incidences of self harming behaviours and there has been some success in this respect with individual young people.

Young people and the community are protected by robust security arrangements that prevent unauthorised absence from within the centre. There are also clear processes for assessing the risk young people present when they are taken outside of the secure setting. Good risk assessments are carried out and a process of authorisation is in place that ensures no young person leaves the secure unit without authorisation by the centre manager. There have been no unauthorised absences from the centre in recent years.

The centre has clear and explicit notification procedures which are working effectively and ensure that appropriate agencies are quickly informed of any significant incidents. No significant events have occurred since the last inspection.

Efforts are made to provide young people with a comfortable and homely environment, whilst also ensuring that appropriate safety and security systems are in place. The building is well maintained and there is an ongoing programme of improvement and building development. For example, the closed circuit television in the visitors' rooms has recently been upgraded to provide better coverage of the visit.

Appropriate steps have also been taken to remove taps from the two communal bathrooms at the centre, that potentially provide ligature points for young people who might be at risk of self harm. Sensor taps have now been installed.

There are robust recruitment and selection procedures in place that ensure only appropriately experienced and capable staff are appointed to work with the young people. These procedures have recently been further improved to include testing of staff both in written and moral reasoning capabilities prior to a decision being made about offers of employment. The recruitment and selection process conforms to guidance and recognised good practice in relation to the appointment of residential care staff, except for the involvement of young people in the process. Although young people have been involved in the appointment of staff internally, they are not usually involved in the selection of new staff to the centre.

Young people are protected by robust systems and procedures for the management of visitors to the centre.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The education provision was not reviewed during this inspection as an education inspector was not in attendance. The secure unit manager and head of education confirm that although they have made efforts to address the five recommendations made during the last inspection, these have not been fully met. Teaching staff appointments are currently being made and staff will take up positions in September 2009. These recommendations will be reviewed during the next key inspection, by an HMI education inspector.

Young people are clearly well supported in developing their identity and have their individual needs assessed and addressed. There are a number of examples of this as reflected in the records and this was also confirmed by the young people. The detailed care plan completed shortly after admission is based on a through assessment of need and now includes a section clearly setting out the work undertaken to address the young person's religious and cultural needs.

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 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):

- review recording procedures to ensure that all incidents of restraint, single separation and sanctions are appropriately recorded and that inconsistencies resulting from cross referencing are minimised (NMS 22.9 and NMS 22.10)
- review the procedures for the recruitment and selection of residential care staff and whenever appropriate involve young people resident in the process (NMS 27.7)
- broaden the range of accreditation and ensure all areas of the curriculum are accredited where appropriate (Education - NMS 14)
- review and improve the standard of all teaching to reflect identified best practice (Education - NMS 14)
- with support from the local authority, initiate and embed in house training, observation of teaching and learning, performance management and quality assurance systems to bring about continuous improvement (Education - NMS 14)
- establish and monitor targets for young people's academic and training progress (Education - NMS 14)
- ensure teaching staff have appropriate access to subject specific professional development (Education - NMS 14).