

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Gwen Buckley / Paul Taylor
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Date of last inspection	7 May 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

The home is a secure unit, managed by a local authority and is located in a small town. A secure unit on the same site was partially replaced with purpose-built accommodation, which opened in April 1997. It comprises three separate living units, providing a total of 18 secure places, catering for children and young people aged between 10 and 17 upon admission.

Two of the units provide care for six boys and the other unit caters for six girls. The home has education on site and internal and external play recreation areas are available. The home also has a large gymnasium, and a range of other accommodation, 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 and agreement with the placing authority.

Of the 18 places, three are for children placed on welfare grounds and 15 are commissioned by the Youth Justice Board for those serving sentences or remanded by the courts to a secure setting.

Young people participated in the inspection by talking to the inspectors and their views contributed towards the inspection findings. There were 15 young people resident at the time of the inspection and all those present had the opportunity to talk to inspectors.

Summary

This was an unannounced interim inspection. This inspection focuses on developments made against the recommendations and action following the last inspection. The staying safe outcome area was inspected, with the exception of staff vetting and recruitment checks, as completed files are not located at the home. The remaining outcomes were not inspected fully and only reflect the progress made in relation to any recommendations previously made.

There was nothing in this inspection that would indicate that the service delivery or provision had deteriorated. The overall judgement ratings are carried forward from the previous report findings.

Young people are confident staff will listen and take action to address concerns they have. Management shows commitment to developing practice and keeping young people safe.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Five recommendations and one action were made at the last inspection; four of the recommendations and the action made have been met.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The recommendation to ensure that consent for the administration of first aid is sought from a person with parental responsibility has been addressed; this is now obtained and maintained on file.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Within the context of a secure unit and the need to keep young people safe, their privacy is respected. There is clear guidance in place for staff to follow with regard to privacy and searches and the circumstances in which these may occur. Records are well maintained when there has been a need to search the premises or young people.

The right of the young people to make complaints is promoted and respected. Young people are made aware of the complaints system at the time of their admission. The young person's handbook gives clear guidance about to whom they can complain and provides contact details. Young people confirm that they feel confident and are able to voice their opinions about any issues and they have the opportunity to do this during house meetings, key work sessions and informally to the staff or to the manager. They have access to an independent visitor who will support them to make representation if needed; this helps protect young people.

Staff receive training in complaints and whistle blowing as part of their induction. The results of any complaints are recorded, including whether the complaint was founded and whether the complainant was satisfied with the outcome. However, the date when a complaint is made is not consistently recorded, at times making it difficult to know how long the home took to respond to a complaint.

At the last inspection the manager was asked to maintain routine links with other agencies concerned with child protection and discuss allegations against staff with the Local Authority Designated Officer. This has been addressed and staff report good working relationships have developed with the Local Authority Designated Officer which help ensure the safety of young people. Good records are maintained if there is a concern about a young person's welfare and the relevant agencies are promptly informed of any issues, for example, the Local Authority Designated Officer, Ofsted and Police.

Staff have a good awareness of child protection issues. They receive child protection training when they are first in post and are provided with updated training regarding child protection procedures. Staff have access to local safeguarding procedures and all members of staff, including support staff, are clear about what to do if they have concerns about a young person's well-being.

Instances of or potential bullying are managed well by the staff team who are very aware of the sometimes volatile dynamics between the young people. Young people understand that bullying is not tolerated and this is made very clear in their handbook. Staff encourage young people to resolve any issues by meeting with each other and by addressing causes of tension in the group in community meetings.

There is effective liaison with the local police to determine what steps are needed if a young person absconds. The home has a clear policy in place for the staff to follow in the event that a young person goes missing. Each young person has it clearly recorded in their care plan what course of action will be pursued should they abscond and this is explained to the young people

so that they understand the consequences. No young people have absconded from the home's secure perimeter. There has been one incident, since the last inspection, of a young person going missing while attending an external appointment. Recording of this incident was clear and robust and lessons were learned from this incident and practice developed to reduce the risk of a young person going missing in future.

Good quality assurance systems help senior managers identify trends and patterns relating to the use of restraint. The last inspection recommended that the home develop the monitoring and analysis of restraint practice. The home now has a good quality monitoring process which enables managers to see trends and patterns in restraint across the three units. They have used the information from the monitoring to challenge and develop practice. This includes information about staffing and diversity which is used to help develop practice.

The number of restraints in the home varies depending on the needs and challenges presented by the young people. There has been a rise in restraints in the six months prior to the inspection compared to the preceding six months. Young people stated restraint is only used to keep them or others safe and staff will talk to them after an incident to see how they feel. They also say the home is a good place to be to get help and the staff are good at keeping you safe.

Detailed records of restraints and sanctions are maintained including comments from young people on any incident they are involved in. Restraint records show that the criteria for restraining a young person was met prior to any restraint. Single separation observation records are well maintained for directed and enforced time out of the group. However, periods of elected time out are recorded, but the observations staff undertake to ensure young people are safe during this time are not always recorded as required.

The majority of young people report good relationships with staff. They say the incentive bonus scheme and key work sessions make them look at their behaviour and how this may affect others. For a few young people at the time of the inspection, the scheme showed limited success and where this is the case, plans are in place and targets set to help the young person engage in the process, achieve and progress to the next level on the incentive scheme.

There are good systems in place to ensure the physical safety and security of the building. Recently cracks have appeared in a corridor in the older part of the building but a report from the council shows the building remains sound. The home is working with the council's structural engineers to continue monitoring the problem and find the cause, for example, establishing if large trees next to the unit or drainage issues could be causing the cracks.

Good procedures at reception ensure children's health and safety is protected. Vetting and escorting visitors, as well as effective use of cameras, ensure staff are aware of the whereabouts of visitors and entry is refused to those people not deemed suitable. Good systems are in place to ensure lessons are learned and practice developed following any serious incident. Reports of internal investigations show a good level of critical analysis and learning which will help reduce risks for the future.

Young people contribute to the selection process for new staff. They are involved in interviewing candidates; they influence the staff selection process and feel valued as individuals.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is not judged.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

After the previous inspection a recommendation was made to ensure targets set in care plans, relating to preparing young people to leave care, reflect the individual needs of a young person. To take this forward, target setting has been discussed with staff to ensure it is precise and detailed and training planned in line with the Youth Justice Board's recording system. The home has also taken action to develop the transition programme for young people to ensure that there is a strong focus on individual needs, both within the care plans and transition planning.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

A recommendation made at the previous inspection was to provide all staff working in the home with monthly supervision unless they are new staff, when this should be fortnightly. The frequency of supervision for staff across the unit still varies and is not in line with national minimum standards.

The action raised to ensure regulation 33 visits take place monthly has been met. A regulation 33 visitor sees young people when undertaking the visits and produces individual reports for each unit. This is good practice and enables practice in each unit to be highlighted. However, the reports produced after these visits, for the three months prior to the inspection, had not been received by the Registered Manager or Ofsted as required. This does not enable the manager to take action to address any developments needed or concerns raised, within a reasonable timeframe.

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 Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
34	ensure reports from Regulation 33 visits are provided to the Registered Manager and Ofsted (Regulation 33. 5)	26 February 2010
28	ensure that all persons employed receive appropriate training, supervision and appraisal at appropriate intervals. (Regulation 27.4)	26 March 2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure the complaints record held by the home includes the date the complaint is made (NMS 16.3)
- ensure consistency of records kept relating to the date and time of any occasion on which a child is locked in on their own, other than usual bedtimes, and ensure that records are maintained in line with the regulations. (Secure Accommodation Regulation 1991, 17 g)