

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC035409
Inspection date	9 March 2010
Inspector	Malcolm Stannard
Type of Inspection	Random

Date of last inspection	9 September 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 secure children's unit is situated in a rural location. It is registered as a children's home and also approved by the Department for Children, Schools and Families to restrict young people's liberty. There is living accommodation and facilities for administration, education and recreation available on the site.

The unit can accommodate up to twelve young people, both male and female, who are aged between 10 and 17 years upon admission. Ten young people were resident at the time of visit, all of whom had the opportunity to participate in the inspection.

Summary

This was an unannounced inspection to monitor progress against the action and recommendations made at the last inspection in September 2009. All of the key standards in the staying safe outcome area were also looked at during this visit.

Strengths of the unit continue to include the robust systems in place to encourage positive behaviour amongst young people and the wide ranging medical assessment and support available. Areas for development are the full implementation of a system to remind placing authorities of their legal responsibilities to a young person leaving the unit and a procedure and policy relating to self-medication.

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 in September 2009, management at the unit was asked to consider four recommendations. Two of the recommendations have been fully addressed.

It was recommended that behaviour management programmes in use were kept up to date and applied consistently across the unit. A wide ranging review of how management plans are used at the unit has been undertaken and this has resulted in an alternative method of structured support being adopted. This enables specific and targeted areas of work to be undertaken with young people. The new system ensures that plans are up to date, relevant and consistently applied across the unit.

There is a wide range of resources in use at the unit to help develop life skills. It was recommended that a plan was put in place to ensure that work carried out with young people was not duplicated and all staff were aware of the resources available. Initial assessments are now undertaken to identify the life skills work required and by whom this will be delivered. An additional record sheet is now used so that progress relating to each area of life skills work is recorded and shared with all staff. This ensures that the work is relevant to the young person and is not duplicated.

Some progress has been made in regard to the other recommendations made. These relate to a system to remind placing authorities of their legal responsibility to young people preparing to leave the unit and the development of a procedure and guidance for staff pertaining to the self-administration of medication. Progress on both of these areas has been hampered by work

required with a particularly difficult group of young people which placed constraints on available resources.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

At the last inspection managers were asked to develop policy and procedural guidance, for staff, to support the assessment of young people to safely administer and store their medication. Initial progress has been made and a permission and approval form has been produced for consultation. There are plans for further work to be undertaken, with general practitioners and nurses, to agree protocols for contact and advice requests; these will then be used to inform the policy and procedure being developed.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The dignity of young people is respected in the unit. Staff are good at balancing the requirements of security with the need for privacy.

There is a well-established complaints system available. Young people know how to access the system and can do so without recourse to staff members. There have been a low number of formal complaints made and all are referred externally for investigation, ensuring transparency. A comprehensive record of complaints is held by the unit and the managing authority. This includes details of the complaint, the investigation, outcome and whether the young person is satisfied with the outcome. Advocates visit the unit regularly to speak with young people, who are able to express their views freely.

All staff receive training in safeguarding and a policy and procedure is in place detailing actions to be taken in the event of an allegation. Appropriate records are held of all instances of child protection referrals. Safeguarding meetings are held regularly to audit incidents and allegations to make sure that a child protection matter has not been overlooked. Police and local child protection services representatives attend these meetings, ensuring transparency of practice.

The unit promotes a zero tolerance approach to bullying. Positive and targeted work is undertaken with young people, in groups and individually, to raise the profile of this issue. Staff are clear what action to take if bullying is suspected or taking place.

The personal success management programme which promotes positive behaviour amongst young people works well. The programme supports young people in looking at their behaviours and identifying areas for improvement. Continued and sustained positive behaviour is rewarded as part of the unit's incentive scheme. There are good appropriate professional relationships between staff and young people, and staff act as positive role models. There has been a major positive development in the manner in which negative behaviours are addressed. Behaviour management plans are no longer used. These have been replaced with structured support plans when a young person is identified as requiring help to modify behaviour. The support plans are time limited and enable staff to address issues with young people on an individual basis. The format of the plans is consistent across the unit and the short life span ensures that they are up to date and relevant to the young person at any particular time.

A record is held of all incidents of restrictive physical intervention, single separations and sanctions. These records are well maintained and audited. They detail all of the events surrounding incidents and actions taken to negate them. Young people are able to countersign all entries should they wish to do so. All staff undergo regular refresher training in the method of physical restraint used at the unit.

All young people are individually risk assessed upon admission to the unit. The assessments are continually updated to identify anyone who may be at risk of self-harm. Information is shared with all staff and a traffic light system enables early identification of any potential risk.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Some progress has been made in regard to a formalised system to remind placing authorities of their responsibility to meet a young person's transition needs. An identified lead officer is now in place to oversee all resettlement and transition issues. An initial agreement is put in place at the first planning meeting. This requires the representative of the placing authority to commit to ensuring that appropriate educational and residential provision will be in place for when the young person leaves the unit. A letter template is sent to the Director of children's services when there has not been suitable provision found for a young person nearing the end of their stay at the unit. Staff members advocate for young people in the period that they are at the unit; however, there is no formal method of recording the contacts made during this time.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

The preparation for independent living and the teaching of life skills continues to be good. Use is made of both the structured Princes Trust XL award and less formal life skills learning. The delivery of the programmes is now much more joined up. An initial needs analysis is carried out and actions required for each young person are delegated to a particular staff member. When life skills work has been carried out this is recorded on a separate form. This method of identifying who is responsible for the work ensures that duplication of sessions is minimised. Staff members are also made more aware of the range of resources available to carry out the work meaning that young people benefit from an increase in practical life skills sessions.

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 Children's 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):

- develop policy and procedural guidance for staff to support the assessment of young people to safely administer and store their own medication when appropriate (NMS 13.9)
- ensure a robust system is in place to remind a placing authority of the rights of young people and the need to ensure young people are able to leave the unit in a planned sensitive manner (NMS 5)