

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Malcolm Stannard / Linda Christie
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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 home is owned and managed by a local authority community and social services department. It is registered to provide full-time secure care and education for up to 20 young males between the ages of 10 and 17 years. All the young people placed at the centre are referred by the Youth Justice Board.

The centre consists of three living units, a school unit, a gymnasium and administrative offices. Each of the units is purpose built.

High walls and fencing prevent the young people from leaving the site without authorisation. Each of the three units has at least two communal spaces, a kitchen area and single lockable bedrooms for each of the young people. There were 19 young people resident at the time of the visit and all had the opportunity to participate in the inspection.

Summary

This was an announced inspection to evaluate the quality of care and security at Barton Moss secure centre. All of the key standards in the every child matters outcomes were inspected as well as the arrangements for management at the centre. Formal education provision was not inspected on this occasion.

Major strengths of the centre continue to be the positive relationships and skills of staff members when working with the young people, an outstanding activities programme ensuring that young people are able to undertake a wide range of experiences and the preparation of young people leaving the centre. Areas for development are related to health and safety training for staff members.

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 May 2009, management at the centre were asked to consider three recommendations. All have been fully addressed.

It was recommended that the recording of incidents was reviewed to ensure that young people had the opportunity to comment on and sign incident records. Young people are now routinely spoken with regarding incident recording and offered the chance to countersign all entries. This ensures that young people are able to indicate any concerns regarding the accuracy.

The recruitment process undertaken for new staff members was recommended to include the requirements of the Disqualification from Caring for Children Regulations 2002. This is to assist in identifying those who are disqualified from working with children prior to employment. The human resources department of the local authority responsible for the operation of the centre now routinely includes checks on possible disqualification during recruitment checks. It was further recommended that information given to inform parents, staff and visitors about arrangements for equality and diversity were reviewed. There is now information for parents and young people available in the packs they receive at the time of admission.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

There are excellent arrangements in place to provide meals at the centre. Young people have a choice of varied, nutritious and healthy food which meets their dietary needs. Specialist diets are catered for and young people are able to cook their own meals with healthy eating guidance provided by kitchen staff. A chef meets regularly with the young people to discuss their views and suggestions on the meals provided. young people are encouraged to take part in activities in the fresh air to promote their health.

The health needs of young people are identified and met thoroughly. Excellent arrangements are in place for access to a doctor, dentist, optician and other health professionals. A dental surgery is available within the centre. A healthcare plan is in place for each young person which contains all known information. Medical records are obtained from the relevant previous Primary Care Trust and a discharge summary is produced when young people leave the unit. A nurse is available on site each day to see that the health needs of young people are met and she also undertakes, jointly with care staff, a programme of personal health education. Mental health support for young people when required is good, timely and supportive. The access to the range of health provision has dramatically improved the health of a number of young people.

The arrangements regarding medication are robust, with up to date policies and procedures in place for guidance. Staff receive training in the administration of medication, storage is secure and all recording is carried out diligently. Policies and procedures are in place to support the self administration by young people when assessed to be appropriate of their medication. Substance misuse sessions are carried out as part of the health promotion. All health needs of young people are addressed holistically ensuring an outstanding provision for young people.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The privacy and dignity of young people at the centre is respected by all staff. Prior to entering bedrooms staff ensure that they announce their arrival. Observation hatches within bedroom doors can be covered with privacy curtains when required. All confidential information is handled sensitively and stored securely.

There is an effective complaints system in place which young people understand how to access. They are able to raise concerns without recourse to staff. All formal complaints are seen by a local authority officer who consults with managers regarding any investigation required. Advocacy arrangements mean that young people are able to make representations freely to an external independent advocate who visits on a weekly basis.

Robust and transparent child protection procedures are in place. These help all staff in their work to ensure that young people are kept safe. Any concerns are dealt with appropriately and advice is sought from external professionals including the Local Safeguarding Children Board on a regular basis. There are good professional communications in place with the local authority designated officer. Comprehensive records are held of any formal referral which has been made. All staff members undergo training in safeguarding recognition and procedures.

Young people are protected from bullying by use of a comprehensive anti bullying policy. This includes individual and group work sessions. Young people are made aware of a zero tolerance

approach to bullying. All young people are assessed as to their vulnerability and need when arriving at the centre. Appropriate procedures are in place to recognise and support young people who may self harm or who are anxious.

There are effective behaviour management strategies in operation. Negative behaviour is challenged and an incentive scheme is used which rewards displays of positive behaviour by young people. The use of formal sanctions is minimal. Any sanctions that are used are appropriate and a record is held and monitored. There is positive implementation of negotiation with young people and often alternative methods of dealing with indiscretions are used without recourse to a formal sanction. The number of restraints occurring at the centre is extremely low; staff members have excellent professional relationships with young people and are adept at using diversion techniques. Young people are able to be routinely seen by a nurse following the occurrence of a restraint. There is minimal use of single separation at the centre and when used there is effective monitoring of the time young people spend in their rooms. All staff members receive training in young people's emotional health and wellbeing and diversion tactics, including the techniques of physical restraint.

Appropriate records are held of all behaviour management. These are kept in well maintained record books. An opportunity is available for young people to comment on the recordings made relating to them. A good overview of all areas of behaviour management is taken by the senior management team, which includes formally auditing every incident record which has been completed.

There are good security and health and safety procedures in place to ensure young people are protected from harm, including the completion of regular building risk assessments. Fire procedures are well established, including evacuation drills. Night care staff are provided with regular opportunities to practice the procedures during night-time periods. All tests of the fire alarm system and drills are recorded. However, a record is not kept of the staff on duty when the drills take place. It is therefore not possible to ascertain if all staff have had opportunities to receive practical training in evacuation drills.

All new staff receive training during their induction period on health, safety and security procedures and practices. However, they do not receive regular refresher or update training unless there is a particular change in the procedures.

There are effective and efficient mechanisms in place to ensure the safe recruitment and vetting of new staff. Another department in the responsible authority had previously failed to ensure that staff applying to posts to work with young people in a residential setting were not disqualified from doing so. However this has been rectified. The centre manager and his deputy oversee all recruitment and ensure all vetting checks, including references, are carried out as required to safeguard young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

There are excellent working relationships in place between all disciplines of the centre. This backed up by some effective support from external agencies, which enables an individualised approach to young peoples needs. There is strong support from the care staff for young people's formal education, including giving them assistance in the classroom and formalised homework periods on the living units.

There is an outstanding structured programme of activities and enrichment. This is strengthened by opportunities to experience vocational activities, including roofing, paving and decking sessions. This area of provision is currently been enhanced with the building of a new workshop area and protected outside work areas. There is a good mix of subjects undertaken which ensures there is something of interest available to everybody. Structured activities such as a football club and a climbing wall, enable young people to learn about working as a team and self discipline. A full timetable is produced each week, from which young people are able to choose which sessions they would like to attend.

A highly motivated staff group run the activity and enrichment sessions, many of them have appropriate qualifications in football coaching, use of the climbing wall and cardio-vascular gym equipment. Qualified external facilitators with specific skills are also used on occasions.

The use of formal activities and enrichment ties into a centre wide approach to facilitate the achievement and learning of young people. This includes personal and social education. They are all designed to ensure that young people gain some learning from the session in a relaxed and enjoyable fashion. The overall provision available assists in the promotion of positive behaviour of young people.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people's needs are effectively and comprehensively assessed. The range of assessments undertaken include a review of their emotional well-being, physical health, education, their understanding of offences committed and their ability to form relationships. The assessment also includes consideration of offence related behaviours and effectively informs placement planning and the range of planned interventions.

The quality of planning and target setting is excellent. All targets and direct work identified is individualised, clear and specific. Young people say staff have helped them during their stay at the centre. Two young people said the unit was 'much better than the other secure unit I was placed in'.

The efforts to understand the emotional needs and previous traumas experienced by each young person are excellent. All staff are trained to understand the impact of previous experiences on a young person and to take these into account in their approach.

Staff clearly acknowledge the importance of a holistic approach to addressing identified needs and this informs planning. Individual plans take into account all ethnic and cultural factors. A format has been developed for recording all the different interventions with young people including: individual work done by key workers, group work carried out by the programmes team, life-skills and vocational opportunities. This is referred to as 'building brighter futures' and is a process that pulls together all the work done with a young person into an evidence package they can take when leaving the centre. This serves to build self-confidence and improve self-esteem. The aim is to prepare each young person for a purposeful and crime free existence upon resettlement in the community.

This is a relatively new process and some aspects of the work done with individual young people are not yet recorded in sufficient detail to fully reflect the focus and outcome of specific sessions.

Consultation with young people is good. They are consulted about matters related to the day-to-day routines of the centre and encouraged to make suggestions as to how any aspects of the service can be improved. Records show young people are listened to and action is taken to implement their suggestions, where feasible.

Case reviews take place in keeping with expected national standards. There is a clear focus on reviewing agreed actions and targets and there is evidence that young people's views are taken into account. Parents are considered an important stakeholder in the decision-making and reviewing process and are encouraged and enabled to attend reviews. Young people also receive support from staff to make their views known.

Parents are very positive about the care and service their children received during their stay at the centre. Staff are aware of the importance of young people maintaining contact with their families and significant others and actively seek to ensure this is the case.

The admissions procedures ensure that introduction to the centre for young people are carried out in a predefined and sensitive way. Young people receive an admission pack when they arrive. The pack contains essential information about day-to-day life and expectations, advocacy and how to complain. The pack can be made available in different formats and languages. A staff member is available to explain the contents of the pack and to help the young person familiarise themselves with the daily routine and procedures. All of this is done at the pace of the young person. Staff understand that for some young people placement in a secure setting can be frightening and the staff ensure they are comfortable with each step of the admission process, so as not to overwhelm them.

The support to young people and their parents post discharge is excellent. Staff within the programmes team attend at least the initial community review for each young person and will continue to attend for the duration of the licence period if they are made aware of the meeting dates. They will also offer up to four sessions to the young person and their family, should this be required and deemed appropriate. This is excellent practice and serves to ensure the young person and their parents are fully supported during the early period of discharge into the community.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are very well prepared and supported for reintegration back into the community. Planning for discharge and resettlement is considered throughout the young person's stay, even for those serving a long sentence. Placing agencies are continually reminded of their responsibilities in relation to planning for release. External child advocate groups become involved with individual young people, if required, to ensure appropriate accommodation and education arrangements are in place.

A clear and specific resettlement protocol ensures consistency of practice in relation to the work done with young people prior to their release. Each young person has a carefully planned and considered package of preparation which includes being taught practical skills to help them cope in the community and prepares them for adult life. A comprehensive range of life-skills packages are available for staff to use with young people. Some are provided as part of the education curriculum, others are done individually and in groups during evenings and weekends.

One young person said the work being done with him to plan, budget, purchase and cook meals is very useful and will make it easier for him when he eventually has to live on his own.

The centre understands the challenges for young people outside of the secure setting, particularly those who have been in custody for a long period of time. Young people are able to participate in a carefully planned and delivered mobility programme in the community to help prepare them for resettlement. Young people benefit from this programme which enables them to experience community activities in a structured way with support and direction from staff.

A comprehensive range of vocational opportunities is available at the centre; however some of this is presently restricted due to the building of a new workshop and development of covered external work areas.

Young people are able to make choices about the purchasing of clothing, toiletries and other items which are obtained by their key worker if they are unable to leave the secure setting.

Every effort is made to provide a homely and comfortable environment for young people and the centre achieves this very well. The living accommodation is well maintained and equipped to meet the needs of the young people. Young people say they enjoy the facilities at the centre and find it a comfortable place to live.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

There is a well written and detailed statement of purpose, reflecting the ethos and principles which underpin the work of the centre. There is a range of user friendly information available for parents and professionals. Young people receive information that tells them what they can expect during their stay at the centre and this now includes a statement about how their diverse needs will be addressed.

The centre is managed by an experienced and committed management team. The centre manager and his team are clear about the principles and values on which they base their childcare practice. The values they hold and the philosophy of approach is understood and accepted by all staff, who consistently work together to ensure the experience for the young people is the best it can be. There is an inclusive management approach, with responsibilities shared across all levels. Senior managers empower staff to contribute views and take ideas forward.

Managers are ambitious in their aspirations, encouraging development and creative approaches in all aspects of the service they provide. This centre has developed a number of innovative initiatives in its service provision, including providing vocational opportunities for young people. They are also encouraged to raise funds for charities, thereby giving something back to the community.

Managers are now ensuring a sound professional business base underpins the work of the centre. This includes being clear about business planning and objective setting that lead to improved outcomes for young people.

There are good and improving quality assurance monitoring systems in place. These are evident across all departments within the centre. However, analysis of the performance management

information gathered is not yet coherently collated and presented. A new post of business manager has recently been created. The post holder has been tasked with improving the collation and analysis of the wide range of statistical information gathered at the centre. The procedures in place for ensuring the quality of practice for staff and managers have significantly improved with good accountability. This is a positive development, although some monitoring systems, such as those related to formal supervision, are still relatively new.

A governing body, the Scrutiny and Strategy committee has recently been established to provide an additional external scrutiny of the centre's work and provide additional direction and support. The name given to the body is the Scrutiny and Strategy Committee. Committee members include elected members from the local authority and independent representatives, including a magistrate. This is a positive development for the centre, although the impact has yet to be evaluated.

Visits are undertaken as required by regulation 33. Each of the three residential living units are now visited each month. A comprehensive report is produced following each visit and made available to managers and staff. The reports indicate any areas where it is felt that changes are required. The visits contribute further to the external auditing of procedures and practice at the centre.

Staff are well supported in their role. They are encouraged to use the cardio-vascular suite at the centre and to join in the cycling club to improve fitness and help manage stress.

The frequency of staff supervision has improved considerably in recent months, with just fewer than 95% being undertaken monthly. The frequency and quality of supervision sessions are now being systematically monitored, with systems in place to deal with any shortcomings. All staff are subject to regular annual performance appraisal and support is provided to staff that require this.

The role of night care staff has been reviewed and recent steps taken to ensure they feel fully part of the centre team and are integrated into all aspects of service delivery. Arrangements are in place to ensure they have appropriate development opportunities with clear objectives to spend time on day shifts with a supervisor in a tutor role.

There is an excellent range of training and development opportunities for staff. Staff development is given a high priority and efforts are made to ensure they have the skills and competencies to meet the changing and often complex needs of the young people. For example, all staff have received training in understanding young people involved in sexually harmful behaviours. Also, a small group of staff are trained to a level where they can carry out direct work interventions with young people.

The induction programme for new staff is excellent. A comprehensive programme is available over at least a four week period. All staff have either completed or are participating in the National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in working with children and young people.

Recording systems used at the centre are largely electronic. The main system for recording information related to young people is on the Youth Justice Board E-Asset system.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. All young people are treated as individuals, their needs identified and they are encouraged to explore their backgrounds. Festivals from

around the world are celebrated and each living unit has an identified staff member who ensures that all provision is appropriate for individual young people.

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 that records of staff who participate in fire evacuation drills and practical training in the procedures are held (NMS 26.7)
- ensure that staff have regular opportunities for refresher training in the health, safety and security procedures at the centre. (NMS 26)