

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Michelle Oxley / Linda Christie
Type of Inspection	Random

Date of last inspection	13 January 2010
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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 unit is managed by a local authority. It is located in a residential area near to the city centre.

The unit is registered as a secure children's home and is approved by the Secretary of State to provide secure care and accommodation. The unit is currently providing placements for up to 10 young people aged from 10 to 17 years. At the time of the inspection there were nine young people of mixed gender resident, all of whom are currently placed on a welfare basis. The unit's contract with the Youth Justice Board has recently ended. Young people can be accommodated on a spot purchase basis through the Youth Justice Board, should it be identified that they would benefit from a placement at the unit.

Formal education for all the young people at the unit is provided on site. There is an indoor gym and sports hall, external recreation areas, a music room, garden and poly-tunnel for horticultural use. There is also a vocational kitchen on site which is all available for use by young people.

Summary

The purpose of this unannounced interim inspection is to assess the unit's performance against key national minimum standards under the Every Child Matters outcome area of staying safe. The recommendations from the previous inspection carried out in January 2010 are also followed up.

The strengths of this service include the positive and creative approach to managing the young people's behaviour. The management team has implemented and continues to improve and refine the unit's approach to restorative justice. This has been embraced by the staff team which means that young people have benefited from a significant reduction in the number of physical interventions used.

Areas for development include additional recording of physical interventions and a more comprehensive recording of Regulation 33 visits.

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 five recommendations made following the last inspection in January 2010. Four of these have been addressed by the management team. One recommendation is met in part, following this inspection, an associated recommendation is made.

A more consistent approach to dealing with child protection matters was recommended. The management team has introduced a revised system for managing child protection concerns in a consistent way. All concerns for child welfare are now recorded on a safeguarding referral form and a clear audit trail is held in a dedicated file. This helps to ensure that young people are protected.

Since the last inspection the procedure for consulting with young people about the day-to-day running of the establishment has been improved as recommended. Young people are consistently and actively consulted and their views have informed development and improved practice in a number of areas. Young people are consulted on the day-to-day running of the unit through regular weekly group forums. From these, two young people are then nominated to attend the weekly managers' meetings to raise concerns and share ideas for further improvement of daily living routines. For example, young people are involved in the recruitment of staff and are regularly consulted about menu planning.

Each young person is also allocated a key worker on admission, whom they meet with regularly. The key worker listens to the young person's views and provides individual support. The majority of young people named staff they felt they could talk with about their concerns and confirmed they are regularly consulted about matters that affect them and the running of the unit.

A more coordinated and consistent approach to resettlement and discharge was recommended. There are a wide range of resources to help young people prepare for adulthood and for discharge from the secure setting. Excellent progress has been made to ensure more consistency of practice and all young people are offered the same level of preparation. Young people are well supported to prepare for discharge back into the community. Mobility trips outside of the secure unit are used well to assist young people in developing practical life skills, attending educational facilities and developing interests to improve self confidence.

A wide range of life skills programmes are available and the majority of young people actively participate in them. Young people's practical skills are assessed upon admission and they are encouraged to participate in accredited programmes such as the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) and the Certificate of Personal Effectiveness (COPE). The excellent range of programmes includes; horticulture, care of chickens, basic maintenance, cooking, budgeting, and parenting courses. Considerable efforts have been made to ensure a consistent and coordinated approach to preparing young people for adulthood and for successful reintegration back into the community.

The introduction of individualised development plans for staff was recommended. All staff now have development plans in place. These are completed as part of the local authority's annual appraisal process. There continues to be a good range of training and development opportunities for staff. The training and development strategy for the unit also includes individual staff members' training and professional development needs.

A more robust approach to conducting Regulation 33 visits was recommended. There have been changes to the procedure for undertaking Regulation 33 visits. There is regular monitoring of the unit by the appointed visitor, which ensures that the care of young people and the service to them is good. There is now just one appointed visitor carrying out the Regulation 33 visits. There is good evidence of the monitoring of safeguarding arrangements at the unit, including the checking of complaints made by young people. It is apparent that pertinent points are raised by the visitor and responded to by the manager. However, the written summaries in the report do not provide a sufficient record of findings during the visit.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Since the last inspection there have been some changes in management arrangements at the unit. Young people's welfare and safety have not been comprised as a result of these changes. The Registered Manager left in April 2010. The remaining management team continue to operate the unit with support from external managers. The team has coped well and has continued to drive the service forward with vision and enthusiasm. Arrangements are in place for the recruitment of a new manager.

Young people's privacy is respected and protected. Staff deal with privacy and confidentiality inline with the units written policy guidance. Staff are respectful of young people's personal space and do not routinely enter their rooms without knocking. Bedroom observation windows are fitted with privacy curtains and covered as a matter of course. Young people have access to the unit telephone within the confines of their placement plan. Arrangements are in place to ensure that young people can speak in private to staff.

There are systems in place to deal effectively with complaints. Young people know how to make a complaint and are confident that their concerns will be listened to. Information about how to complain is given to young people in their induction pack and explained to them by staff on admission. Young people can post their complaints internally using a post box on the unit, or contact cards can be sent out externally to senior managers. Young people can approach staff or managers directly. In addition, complaints and concerns can be raised through the visiting advocate, through key worker sessions or at the weekly group meetings. Complaints are scrutinised externally through management meetings and the Regulation 33 visitor.

The welfare of young people is promoted and protected by the unit's response to allegations and suspicions of abuse. Since the last inspection the systems for making safeguarding referrals have been improved. New documentation has been produced which provides clear direction about who to contact. Staff have been provided with updated information and there is a referral flow chart in the team office. Matters referred for consideration by the local safeguarding team are recorded using specific documentation and an audit trail is held. All staff receive training in safeguarding young people and those spoken with know how to respond inline with the unit's new policy. Good risk management strategies are in place for each young person. These are updated in a timely fashion and inline with presenting issues and incidents. A system to monitor and risk assess self harm is in place. Some out of date information about making child protection referrals is still in situ. Retaining previous guidance could potentially confuse the referrals process and delay proceedings.

Positive strategies have been developed in order to counter bullying. The staff team have a good understanding of what constitutes bullying. They work with individuals and groups in a restorative way so that young people gain greater insight in to their own behaviour. A counter bullying policy is in place and staff have received training in how to deal with bullying. Young people who were spoken with said that they did not feel that bullying is a problem at the unit.

The approach to behaviour management is creative and beneficial. There has been an incremental approach to the implementation of restorative justice as a means of managing behaviour and enabling young people to develop an understanding of their own actions. The approach is now embedded and its positive impact is most encouraging. The overall decrease in the level of

physical interventions has been dramatic with a direct correlation to the introduction of restorative justice. The apparent cultural shift serves to benefit staff in that they are empowered to work more creatively with young people using their skills and experience to good effect. The approach continues to develop and is implemented through good management processes. Staff receive training in physical interventions and behaviour management. When a physical intervention occurs there is a system in place to examine the incident with a view avoiding this in the future. The team consult young people when drawing up their individual behaviour management guidelines. This means that young people are likely to be receptive to the methods employed. A log is in place to record sanctions, separations and physical interventions. However, physical interventions are not recorded in a bound, dedicated book as set out in national minimum standards.

There are good health, safety and security procedures in place that ensure young people are protected from harm, including the completion of regular building risk assessments. Fire procedures are well established, including evacuation drills. All tests of the fire alarm system are recorded. Appropriate service contracts are in place for fire, gas and electrical equipment.

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 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):

- ensure that all documentation relating to previous child protection policies and procedures is removed from the unit (NMS 17)
- ensure that all physical interventions are recorded in a bound and dedicated book (NMS 22)
- ensure the reports provided by the appointed visitor appropriately reflect the findings of the visit. (NMS 32)