

Inspection report for children's home

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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 a registered children's home which provides secure accommodation for up to 24 young people between the ages of 10 and 18 years, eight of whom may be female. The unit is situated on the outskirts of large city and is operated by a county council.

There are two residential units available, one containing 16 beds and the other eight beds. All bedrooms are single accommodation and contain en-suite toilet and shower facilities. A formal education facility is available on the site. Recreational facilities available include a gymnasium, an outdoor sporting facility with an artificial surface and a vocational workshop.

The unit accommodates children and young people who may have been sentenced, remanded or require secure accommodation following an assessment of vulnerability. During the inspection 20 young people were in residence.

Summary

This was an announced inspection to evaluate the quality of care and security at the unit. The key standards in the Every Child Matters outcome groups were inspected, along with progress against the recommendations from the last inspection which took place in February 2010, including those related to the education provision. The education service was inspected by a Her Majesty's Inspector for education.

This is a well managed secure provision with an effective and experienced management team who continually strive to improve care and services to young people. This is clearly an establishment that is continually striving to improve. There is a consistently high standard of monitoring and quality assurance checking of all aspects of practice.

Young people are well protected by robust and effective recruitment and selection procedures.

There are good arrangements in place to offer young people a varied range of recreational and enrichment activities. Care and placement planning is good, as are the interventions to help young people address their offending behaviours and other issues that resulted in them being placed in a secure setting. The opportunities for young people to develop practical vocational skills are excellent, as is the practical preparation they receive for adulthood.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding and this is evident in all aspects of care planning for, and delivery of, services to the 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 seven recommendations made following the last inspection; five of those were related to the provision of education.

Overall, good progress has been made in meeting the five recommendations related to the education provided to young people. Opportunities have been made for staff to share good practice and improve the quality of teaching, training and learning. Although is in the early

stages. A process is now in place for an annual planning and evaluation cycle with agreed roles and responsibilities for all staff by drawing on the expertise and resources of the local authority. Steps have been taken to improve even further risk assessment of practical learning areas such as home economics, which has doubled in size. Teaching and vocational training staff have developed practice which has resulted in closer collaboration in the more practical classes.

Since the last inspection the forms to record all incidents have been amended. These now record that staff have been debriefed by the duty manager following every incident of physical restraint. Staff sign to confirm that this has occurred.

The staff induction programme has been reviewed and improved to ensure staff are inducted to the work of the secure setting and children's residential care in general.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The unit provides young people with a balanced and nutritious diet. They can choose from a good range of meals, including three main meals or a salad for lunch and dinner. There are three choices of dessert, two of which are healthy options. A continental style breakfast is provided during the week and a cooked option is available at weekends. Young people decide what they would like to eat a week in advance. Food is plentiful with large portion sizes, and second helpings freely available. Young people are consulted about the food and can raise issues through their unit representative. The unit can cater for dietary needs particularly those relating to culture, religion or health. A vegetarian option is always available. Although healthy food is available, young people do not always make choices that are beneficial to their health. On occasions this has resulted in weight gain for some young people, which has a potentially negative effect on future good health.

There are good systems in place to ensure that young people's health needs are supported. Prompt health screening programmes are in place for new admissions. Young people are referred to relevant health professionals within and outside of the unit when a need is identified. Young people have access on request to nurses and the visiting General Practitioner. The unit provides an onsite drug and alcohol worker, psychiatrist and psychology service. An optician visits the unit and young people have access to a dentist off site. Senior staff and health professionals attend a weekly practice meeting which focuses on the care and good health of each young person. Each young person has a health plan setting out their health needs and when they leave the unit they take a personal health record with them. Good health is promoted through life skills work with individuals and through the provision of group work to address issues such as drug misuse.

Robust procedures are in place to manage medication at the unit. Staff follow good practice guidelines in relation to dealing with all prescribed and non-prescribed medication. There is some excellent practice to ensure that potential errors in handling medication are reduced. Each young person has a medication administration sheet which includes their photograph. All medication is signed for twice and a separate overall record is maintained. The number of staff who handle medication is limited to shift leaders who are senior care officers. Sufficient numbers of staff are trained in first aid and medication administration to ensure there is always someone on duty who can carry out these duties. Young people who are able to deal with their own medication are permitted to do so subject to risk assessment. A strict quality monitoring

process is in place which ensures that protocols are adhered to and that quantities of medication held are correct.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people's privacy is protected and respected at the unit. They are able to receive approved visitors in the visitor's room without unnecessary interruptions and can make approved phone calls in the privacy of their own room without being routinely monitored. Policies relating to privacy and confidentiality are in place. Sensitive information is held securely.

There are effective systems in place to deal with complaints. Young people can make complaints directly to the Registered Manager using the post box on each unit. Young people can also use the phone in their rooms to contact external agencies. The visiting independent advocate will assist young people to make complaints if required. The complaints log records a copy of the investigation outcome and a letter is sent to each complainant. Young people know how to use the complaints procedure and feel that their complaints are taken seriously.

Young people are protected by robust safeguarding procedures. Staff receive safeguarding training and know how to proceed and who to contact should they suspect that a young person is being abused. There are good links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board and the Local Authority Designated Officer. Monthly meetings take place to consider safeguarding matters with a view to improving practice. A record of all matters notified to other agencies is held with a record of the outcome. The procedures in place are transparent and serve to promote young people's welfare.

Young people who self harm are well supported by established team members who have developed positive practice in this area. A number of strategies have been developed through the psychology team to help staff understand the issues associated with self harm and to protect young people. Although risk management plans are in place these are not always reflected in the young person's care planning documentation.

There is a clear strategy in place to protect young people from bullying. Nominated staff are designated bullying coordinators. Incidents of bullying on the units are recorded and fed back to the coordinators. There is a scheme to deal with bullying behaviour which involves participation in sessions designed to educate young people and to provide an insight into personal behaviour and its impact upon others. Young people who are victims of bullying are well supported and protected.

Young people are assisted and encouraged to develop socially acceptable behaviour. An incentive system is in place that promotes positive behaviour. Young people understand this system and are fully engaged in it. Relationships between staff and young people are generally positive. Staff respond constructively to unacceptable behaviour using negotiation to promote positive behaviour.

Sanctions used are reasonable and proportionate to the behaviour. There has been a recent decline in the number of physical restraints used at the unit. Staff receive training in physical intervention from two in-house instructors. Restraints are recorded accurately and there is a process to analyse and collate data with a view to identifying trends and patterns. There have been some positive developments concerning the monitoring of restraints. Incidents of physical

interventions are closely examined by senior staff and safeguarding professionals from outside of the unit. Where potential for improving practice is identified the matter is discussed with individual staff members, although there is not a whole team approach to developing practice in this area as yet. Nevertheless, young people are further protected by the unit's transparent approach to monitoring restraint.

Single separations used are reasonable and appropriate. A central system automatically records the frequency of checks on young people in their rooms. When young people are singly separated this is only for short periods of time. Written records are monitored by senior staff for quality review purposes.

The recruitment and selection procedures are excellent. The process is managed by the secure unit with support as required by the authority. There are excellent systems in place to ensure only suitably experienced, qualified and capable staff are appointed to work with the young people. During the past year there has been a complete review and revision of the recruitment and vetting process. Everyone who works at the unit, care staff, teachers, escorts and casual staff, are all subject to the same level of scrutiny. Young people are increasingly more able to contribute to decisions about the appointment of staff.

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

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The management of the unit and the local authority have a very strong working relationship. They have developed a new two year plan, updated in June 2010. The plan picks up on the main themes of the previous one and links well to the secure unit's overall development plan for this current year. The revised education and training provision model explains the need to bring the education theory and practical training closer together. The plan has been communicated to education staff.

The unit manager and the local authority Director of Children's Services meet regularly to ensure continuity in communications and clarity about roles and responsibilities. The unit and the local authority work well with a range of relevant external agencies. The local authority has established formal monitoring arrangements with regular reporting to the unit manager. The local authority has rightly formally recognised improvement in the management of the education provision. The daily management of education is good and the new head of education attends all young people's reviews to ensure consistency of approach and to achieve an overall understanding of the young people's individual needs.

Tutors now have allocated time scheduled for one-to-one tutorial meetings with young people to review their learning progress. The young people are shown their personal record of individual learning points achieved during their stay. This helps young people recognise their progress and to identify areas for improvement.

A newly established framework of staff and management meetings provides the opportunity for education staff to share good practice although it is too early to make a judgement on the impact on improvements in teaching and learning overall. Most teaching is good but is not fully

consistent in some areas and the role of some learning assistants remains unclear. There are no agreed targets to improve the standard of teaching and learning.

The local authority locality manager and the education manager complete lesson observations and the outcomes are recorded appropriately although this is not fully embedded in performance management systems. The education manager undertakes informal 'drop in' observations and records outcomes on individual teacher's supervision notes rather than specific teaching and learning feedback documents. Formal recording of lesson observations is planned from September 2010.

Target setting with some young people has improved, but some targets record the same national curriculum target over a long period of time and there is no clear plan to review these or consider how progression is planned and understood by the young people.

The unit maintains useful data on individual learner progress and achievement. However data is not always presented in a format that provides a coherent overview of all the young people's achievements.

Risk assessments are completed for all education and work rooms and reviewed on a quarterly basis. Weekly risk assessment meetings are held. There are clear boundaries regarding young people's behaviours and their access to education and training and the young people understand these rules. Health and safety practices in relation to clothing and work are fully considered and young people understand their personal responsibilities.

The new and well planned provision that provides education in the mornings and vocational work experience in the afternoon is effective and provides young people with a range of appropriate subject options. A well planned booklet outlines the learning options and records the young people's choices. The young people are assured that they will receive their chosen vocational work experience subject which will be allocated over three afternoon sessions. Staff work well together to ensure that literacy and numeracy is included in vocational workshops training. Further work is planned to ensure that teachers include literacy and numeracy, linked to a vocational element, in their classroom teaching. The range of qualification awards is suitable for young people wanting to access further education and training and some generic skills, but it is too narrow for direct entry into employment. A few young people are working towards GCSE and National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ). A new system to monitor attendance and behaviour is working well and generally the unit demonstrates good behaviour management across education.

A good range of activities and enrichment sessions are available to young people. Since the last inspection a skills audit of the staff team has been carried out in order to promote additional evening activities. Staff demonstrate a range of skills in areas such as sports and fitness, hair, beauty and fashion, arts and craft, DIY, drama, music and poetry, gardening and animal care. The audit is now being used to embed further the provision of meaningful evening activities. The unit is well equipped with facilities to promote leisure and enrichment. Facilities include a gymnasium, two football pitches, two trampolines, a beauty room, pool table and access to computers and computer games. Arts and crafts material, books and games are provided. However, young women at the unit did not feel that they had sufficient opportunity to participate in organised sports. Although equipment is available they feel uncomfortable using this in front of the boys.

A recently established photography project provides a good example of the positive impact of the unit's enrichment programme. Framed photographs taken by the young people are displayed with pride along the corridors of the education department and include enlarged images of everyday objects and images from the local zoo.

Under the co-directorship of a residential care officer and a young person, the photography project is being developed into a business and enterprise initiative. A range of items have now been produced for sale, including mugs, key-rings and coasters. This has provided good opportunities to develop personal attributes such as negotiating skills and working to deadlines, a better understanding of marketing and business, and technical skills such as using a commercial digital photography package. The project has also helped to improve numeracy through the research involved, including calculating costs, profit-margins and market-price. The young person involved told inspectors how much the project had helped to strengthen her confidence and self-esteem while making her more determined to make the most of educational opportunities in the future.

Young people have also benefitted from opportunities to develop a range of skills through their work with a professional documentary maker. For example, one group produced a one minute film, 'The Good, the Bad and the Goalie', which captured the moment when the decisive penalty was scored during an imaginary world cup final. This enabled the young people involved to practice camera skills and interview techniques and to make editorial judgements about content. It also provided good opportunities to develop personal skills, such as working together, taking turns and accepting boundaries.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All young people are admitted to the secure unit as sensitively as possible. Admissions procedures ensure that young people are protected by means of a thorough initial assessment of vulnerability or of any particular risk they may present to others. Young people are encouraged to contact family and let them know they are alright and in a safe place.

All young people have their needs comprehensively assessed and individually addressed. The assessments carried out on admission are initially linked to, and informed by, the Youth Justice Board 'asset' documentation. Health, education, mental health and substance misuse assessments all also inform care and sentence planning.

Each young person has a unit care plan which reflects their individual and diverse needs and this is regularly reviewed within the weekly case management planning system. They are also reviewed at monthly formal care and sentence review meetings. Reviews generally take place within the timeframe expected by national standards and regulations.

Staff are well aware of the individual needs of young people and the challenges they present. Young people are supported to address care and sentence targets as set out in their care plans through regular one to one work with their key workers and during group work sessions. This work although recorded is not consistently linked directly to targets set out in the care plan. There are a wide range of packages available for staff to work with young people individually and in groups that raise awareness of their offending patterns, and help them develop good social skills and understanding of consequences.

There are a range of opportunities for young people to express their views including meetings chaired by the secure unit manager, regular sessions with the independent advocate, and regular access to the Youth Justice Board performance monitor and the Regulation 33 appointed visitor. Young people play a part in influencing changes to rules and procedures.

Young people have good contact with family members and this is encouraged by staff. Parents spoken too during the inspection gave very positive feedback about their contact with their children. They felt welcomed and informed and described staff as approachable and helpful. Young people also have access to a mentor should they wish to use this service. There are six carefully recruited and trained mentors available to spend time with young people, as appropriate. The aim is to link a mentor with a similar background or culture to the young person concerned. One young person talked positively about contact with a mentor who visited weekly, except during holiday periods.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

The unit is very committed to ensuring young people are appropriately prepared for discharge and resettlement into the community. A designated staff member takes the lead in resettlement work with young people. She works very closely with the teacher in the education provision and between them they provide a range of personal health and social care sessions to young people. Key workers also carry out practical life skills work, although this is not consistently recorded as evidence on care plans.

The resettlement coordinator undertakes a thorough assessment of young people's life skills competencies at the point of admission, and produces a report outlining their skills and areas requiring further improvement. This forms part of the overall comprehensive assessment and informs care plan targets. A mock kitchen and bedroom area has been created to help recreate a bed-sit environment for young people. They have opportunities to develop basic skills in furnishing and decorating these areas. The whole area was built by young people under the direction of one of the vocational instructors and is an excellent resource.

The importance of preparing young people for future education and work experiences is central to planning for individuals and in the range of practical and vocational opportunities made available at the unit, and whenever possible in the community. These include general building skills such as brick laying, plastering, plumbing, carpentry and roofing, and other skills like mechanics, gardening and care of animals. Young people are very responsive to these opportunities and make certain they do not behave in such a way as to be excluded from them. One young person said he had learnt that he is very good with a range of building skills and has a college course with work experience set up for the new term in September. He said he now believes he can earn a good living once he has obtained further qualifications.

Each young person has a portfolio of work undertaken with the vocational instructors and the resettlement worker with certificates and photographic evidence kept from each piece of work done. They are also provided with testimonials of their skills and commitment. All of this is very useful for them in the job market and when applying for further education courses.

Case managers and the resettlement coordinator work well together to ensure that planning for discharge commences shortly after the admission and they hold local authority youth offending teams and social workers to account for this. If planning is poor the unit writes to

senior managers within the local authority to remind them of their legal duties towards the young person concerned. The resettlement coordinator attends all initial community reviews held within the first month of discharge and when appropriate also makes an additional visit to see a young person, particularly if she has worked intensively with them. The aim is to ensure the young person continues to feel that support is available should this be necessary.

Young people are able to make a choice when purchasing items such as clothing and toiletries. Young people with specific hair and skin care needs are very well catered for with good quality products bought in consultation with them. If young people are not able to leave the secure unit to go shopping their key worker will shop on their behalf, purchasing the items specified.

The building is very well maintained and efforts are made to ensure as homely an environment as possible within a secure setting. There is an ongoing development plan for the maintenance and upgrade of the building to ensure that the facilities available are appropriate to service delivery and improvement. Each bedroom is very individual to the young person and they are able to decorate their rooms with posters, photographs and other personal belongings. Young people are happy with their rooms and confirm that if they have any issues, for example with showers, they know who to inform and are reassured any problem will be resolved as soon as possible.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

There is a comprehensive Statement of Purpose available that effectively describes the aims and objectives of the secure unit. This is a well written document, includes all the details required and it is regularly updated. The information available to parents is sent to them shortly after their child is placed in the secure unit and copies are freely available in the reception area.

There is clear and informative young people's booklet which is easily understandable across a range of abilities. Newly admitted young people are well supported to ensure that they are at ease and understand the routines and what is expected of them. Young people view an informative DVD as part of the admission process.

The secure unit manager and his senior management team are well established and experienced in their roles. A new head of education was appointed in March and is part of the overall senior management team. A new manager has recently been appointed who will lead one of the two units on site, but he will not take up post for several more weeks. This appointment will complete the senior management team and allow those who have been covering gaps to return to their substantive duties.

Young people are supported by staff who are themselves supported and provided with guidance. The frequency of staff supervision is good and the quality of the recording of these sessions is now being monitored by the secure unit manager. However the process for sharing his findings with staff and their line manager has not yet been formally established. Managers are aware of the national minimum standard that recommends two-weekly formal supervision of newly appointed staff for the first six months of their employment, but this is not consistently provided.

The induction of new staff is good. This process has recently been refined even further to include relevant segments of the specifically designed induction workbook for residential staff provided by the Children's Workforce Development Council. Several recently appointed staff

were very positive about the induction programme and the support they have received from managers and staff. Those that had not received two weekly supervision confirmed they would like more opportunities for structured reflection on their progress.

All staff are subject to a formal appraisal of their progress which results in an individual professional training and development plan being produced. The importance of staff development is understood and considerable efforts are made to provide staff with opportunities to obtain a qualification. Over 73% of staff have achieved the National Vocational Qualification level 3 award in working with children. The percentage was higher but some qualified staff have left the unit. There are seven staff who are undertaking the award and five who have not yet registered as they have not yet completed their probation period. Staff are largely positive about the training opportunities available to them, although some would like to achieve qualifications in practical skills such as hair and nail care. The clinical psychologist and several staff confirmed that training in understanding and dealing with self harm has not been provided for at least 18 months. Given that there are a number of new staff working with the young people, many of whom present with complex mental health needs, this training is essential to them in their work with young people.

The staff team reflects a good balance of age, gender, experience and cultural diversity. Staff have a range of skills and utilise these in their work with young people. This is reflected in the wide range of enrichment and vocational activities available to young people. Staff ratios are clearly defined and do not fall below the agreed safe minimum levels. Arrangements are in place to cover for staff absence and this is done through use of overtime or by utilising casual staff to supplement the staff team when necessary. Some posts held vacant last year pending confirmation of contracting arrangements with the Youth Justice Board have now been filled. There are still a few vacancies, but for the time being there are being filled by appropriately experienced casual staff.

There is an effective system in place to ensure the external monitoring of the unit. Regulation 33 visits are carried out by suitably qualified professionals from the independent reviewing officers' team. The visitors are fully aware of their responsibilities and undertake thorough reviews of records and practices. Young people's safety and welfare is promoted by effective and efficient monitoring by appointed visitors.

All records held are done so securely. There are individual records held for all young people which reflect their development and the direct work interventions carried out with them. However this could be further improved by cross referencing of records. Although hard copy files continue to be maintained, all records are also held on an electronic case management system, as required by the Youth Justice Board. All records are regularly monitored by the quality assurance officer and case managers, and any discrepancies are raised with relevant staff.

Quality assurance checking processes are excellent and provide useful data for managers both internally and externally for planning and business development. Also, the care of young people is continually adapted in light of information about how the unit is operating. Managers are keen to ensure that any issues highlighted by the data collated and analysed informs practice at all levels.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Care and attention is paid to identifying young people's individual needs and addressing them. Young people's individuality, dignity, cultural and racial heritage are valued and promoted. For example contacts have been made locally with the Somalian community in order to ensure support is available for young people from that cultural background, should they choose to accept this. There are positive images around the building which promote diversity and awareness of different cultures. Staff receive training at least once a year in understanding equality and diversity. Young people have regular group activities to help them understand diversity covering the topics of racism, sexual preferences and disability. These sessions are provided throughout the year, and several include external facilitators. Any racist or discriminatory language or behaviour is tackled immediately.

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 young people receive sufficient individual support and guidance regarding healthy lifestyles and diet (NMS 10.5)
- increase opportunities for young women in order to facilitate further participation in physical exercise (NMS 15)
- ensure that all newly appointed care staff receive one-to-one formal supervision at least once every two weeks during the first six months of their employment (NMS 28)
- ensure that all staff receive appropriate training in understanding and dealing with self harm to equip them with the skills and knowledge to meet the needs of the young people. (NMS 31.1)