

Inspection report for Children's Home

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You can obtain copies of The Children Act 2004, Every Child Matters and The National Minimum Standards for Children's Services from: The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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 centre is set on a large secure site in a suburb of a large city and comprises living accommodation, administration areas, education and recreational facilities. The centre is approved by the Department for Education to provide accommodation which restricts the liberty of young people.

The centre is registered to enable up to 36 young males to be accommodated and provided with care and education in one of the four residential houses available. At the time of inspection 25 young people were resident at the centre.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was an announced inspection to evaluate the quality of care and security at the centre. The key standards in the Every Child Matters outcome groups were inspected along with progress against the actions and recommendation from the last inspection which took place in January 2010. The formal education provided on site was also monitored during this visit by an HMI education inspector.

Strengths of the centre include a comprehensive resettlement planning process, imaginative group work and a well planned enrichment programme. Areas for development include consistency of recording, staff guidance relating to medication administration and the development of the formal education at the centre.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection in January 2010, managers at the centre were required to carry out two actions and asked to consider one recommendation. The recommendation related to the development of formal education at the centre and progress in this area is covered in the enjoying and achieving section of this report.

Managers at the centre were required to ensure that complaints are appropriately identified to prevent them being confused with child protection allegations. All complaints are now reviewed and signed off by a head of service or senior care officer. The complaints form has been reviewed to include that this has occurred to be recorded. All child protection issues which had arisen from complaints have been appropriately identified and referred. This ensures that the welfare of young people is protected and promoted.

A further requirement was that risk to the health and safety of young people and staff were identified and eliminated as far as possible. All risk assessments have been reviewed and areas of concern addressed. There are now in place a comprehensive set of risk assessments which cover all activities and buildings across the site. This helps to ensure the safety of everybody at the centre.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Staff at the centre promote healthy eating and a healthy lifestyle well. The centre has been awarded the advanced healthy schools' award. Young people receive a balanced and varied diet that takes account of special dietary needs whether for medical, religious or cultural needs. Dieticians are consulted, when needed, to assist care and catering staff provide individualised support to young people.

Menus are compiled in consultation with the young people and diversity is celebrated through regular participation in different cultural events. Families are welcomed at the centre with specific times set aside for them to have meals with their child when they visit. The young people are also able to invite their families for a meal on a monthly basis.

Meal times are very well organised, social occasions which help to develop a young person's social skills and provide them with opportunities to expand their food preferences. Young people report that they are able to make drinks, have access to fresh fruit throughout the day and always have a choice of good food. Great emphasis is placed on young people's engagement in regular exercise and outdoor activities to promote healthy living. Participation is supported by staff who encourage the young people to take daily exercise each day both during and after school.

The management of health care in the centre is good. On arrival, all young people are assessed as to their needs, including physical, mental health, immunisations, disability and vulnerability. The health care of young people is well promoted and they receive services to meet their identified needs. Young people access dentist and optician within six weeks of admission and can see a nurse or doctor of either gender as requested. Staff support young people who need treatment. For example, where young people are anxious about seeing the dentist and refuse treatment, staff keep up their efforts to arrange appointments and try to allay any fears young people may have.

Nurses undertake medical and mental health screening when young people first arrive. A new service level agreement with a local mental health team ensures the young people have access to appropriate support when needed. This includes one-to-one sessions and access to drama and art therapies.

Staff are well aware of the vulnerability of young people and ensure relevant information is shared to keep young people safe. Staff encourage young people to

discuss issues and concerns through their daily contact, in young people's meetings and during key worker sessions. Young people report that they are able to speak to a member of staff of their choosing about any worries they may have.

There is a very good level of first aid training and this ensures that there is always a member of staff with first aid training on duty. Written permission is routinely obtained from those with parental responsibility, regarding the administering of first aid and non-prescribed medication. An effective monitoring system is used and medication administration records are completed to a high standard. Staff track medication stocks and cross reference these to the medication dispensed, to further ensure correct administration takes place. Staff receive training on the medication policy. Although there are no concerns relating to practices at the centre, a minority of staff do not feel that the medication training provided is sufficient to meet their needs.

A 'self-administration' medication policy is available and enables young people take responsibility for some of their own medication. Staff assesses a young person's ability to safely handle their own medication, enabling them to administer their own creams when it is considered safe to do so. However no other form of medication is presently allowed. This limits a young person's ability to develop responsibility for, and experience in, managing the complete range of their medication.

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 as far as possible within the restrictions of security and safety. Staff members announce their arrival prior to entering a young person's room and curtains are available to cover bedroom door windows. Confidential information is stored securely within a locked office. Staff members are aware of when this information may be shared and with whom.

Young people are listened to and are able to raise concerns using the "Can I have a word", complaints' forms. These are freely available to young people. They have recently been amended to improve user friendliness. The forms can be given to staff or posted in internal post boxes if preferred. Records are held of all complaints, the investigation undertaken, and the outcome. Young people are able to indicate their satisfaction with the conclusion of a complaint, or otherwise, and are informed how they can take an issue further if they wish. Independent advocates visit the centre on a regular basis and young people are able to access them by phone should they wish.

Child protection practice at the centre is good. Procedures have been amended to ensure that all staff have appropriate guidance to follow. Referrals to local safeguarding services have been made appropriately and where a formal referral is not required, advice is sought from the local authority designated officer for child protection. Safeguarding training is undertaken by all staff and additional refresher training is being introduced to ensure that knowledge and practice is fully developed.

There are good links in place with the Local Safeguarding Children Board and further development in line with 'Working together to safeguard children' has been identified.

An incentive scheme is in place to encourage acceptable behaviour from young people. The effectiveness of the scheme has been reviewed and steps taken to align this more closely with the attainment of young people receiving education. Sanctions are used only where necessary and most occurrences of inappropriate behaviour are dealt with by mediation, reparation and reflection on the part of the young person.

All staff are trained in the use of physical restraint techniques and receive regular refreshers and guidance in behaviour management practice. Six good practice guides relating to areas of practice have recently been developed and provided for staff. Managers are also looking at the frequency and use of restraint and have planned further training and guidance on the use of diffusion and diversion. There was an increase in the use of restraint, single separation and sanctions at the centre during July and August 2010. Managers state that this was due to an increased turnover rate and an influx of older young people, who demonstrated extremely challenging behaviour. The centre was asked to accommodate these young people while a nearby provision was closed for refurbishment. The numbers of incidents rose sharply during this period, however incidents have now returned to previous levels.

Records of behaviour management are held, however some of these are variable in quality and content. The duplication of recording and management information means that some of the records lack clarity and content. This was especially the case at the time when incidents of challenging behaviour rose sharply. A review of behaviour management at the centre has been undertaken and managers have put in place a plan to address areas identified that require attention.

Health and safety matters at the centre are addressed fully. Risk assessments have been reviewed and there is now a range available to cover all activities undertaken on the site. Fire prevention is monitored, and equipment checks and drills are undertaken on a regular basis. Service contracts are in place for all electrical and gas equipment and installations.

Young people are protected by the systems in place for recruiting and vetting staff members. Relevant checks are undertaken which meet with regulatory requirements. Visitors to the centre are required to prove their identity and are monitored appropriately to ensure young people are safe.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people's needs are identified through a range of sources such as officers from youth offending teams, psychiatrists, parents and the young people themselves. Individual programmes have been developed to enable young people to discuss issues with their key workers, such as offending behaviour, anger management and

peer relationships. External advice and guidance are available for the staff and young people if there are specific areas which need to be addressed, such as substance misuse or sexual health. Good staff supervision of the young people enables them to have immediate advice and support in managing their behaviour. The individual support offered to the young people is of a good standard.

School and education is embedded into the ethos of the day-to-day routine of the setting. There is a clear expectation that young people will attend the education provision and staff work hard to encourage them to do so. Education is seen as an opportunity for the young people to develop both academic and vocational skills and their achievements are celebrated. Good liaison is achieved between care staff and education staff. This ensures that any issues or incidents of note are quickly shared between the two disciplines. This enables a good level of support for the young people to be available across the site.

There are some very good activities and enrichment sessions provided. Subject matter is varied and caters for all young people giving them an opportunity to learn new skills while enjoying leisure time. There are a number of activities which involve the local community, such as football sessions led by police officers, animals which are brought to the centre and connections with a local horse sanctuary. All of the sessions enable young people to develop confidence.

Since the previous inspection, satisfactory progress has been made in improving the quality of education. There have been recent appointments of an acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher, both seconded from the local authority. They have a clear vision for education and a thorough understanding of the key areas for improvement. Importantly, they have identified what actions need to be taken in order to address the weaknesses in provision. The acting headteacher has prioritised the areas for improvement very effectively and a formal action plan is being drafted. There has been a relentless focus on improving learning and raising standards. A cycle of lesson observations is now in place. There are some signs that standards across the department are already rising and there is good capacity for them to rise further. There is now an education management committee in place whose members consist of a range of experienced professionals.

An informal review of accreditation, prior to the planned formal review, has taken place and has resulted in young people being registered for more substantial and challenging awards. This prepares them better for their return to mainstream education or training. Many more young people are enrolled for GCSE qualifications than previously, and one young person is now following an AS level course. Behaviour in lessons is at least satisfactory and sometimes good, although behaviour management is variable. Only a few young people are returned to the residential units due to poor behaviour. Attendance in education is good and punctuality has improved and is now satisfactory.

Standards across different subjects are currently too variable. The standard of young people's work in art and graphics is very good and matches easily that found in mainstream schools. Young people also achieve good standards in food technology.

In other subjects standards are less good and young people do not achieve to their full potential.

The quality of teaching and learning is also variable. Some lessons, such as in art and graphics, challenge young people very effectively through a range of interesting tasks and activities. Young people respond well and learning and progress are good. There is a purposeful and productive ethos in these lessons. Expectations are high and young people are skilled at evaluating their own work so as to work out what they need to do to improve. Young people are very keen to meet the challenges set by achieving as well as they can. In less effective lessons, tasks are unimaginative and too simplistic and do not offer sufficient challenge. The pace of lessons is too slow and the learning outcomes are too vague, making it hard for young people to judge their progress. In some lessons young people are allowed to play computer games, which is inappropriate as they do not relate to the subject of the lesson. Initial assessment of young people's abilities in literacy and numeracy are carried out but further work on this is required so as to make the results of assessments more informative.

The curriculum is based on an appropriately adapted version of the national curriculum and meets young people's needs satisfactorily. However, there is no provision for religious education and drama and this is a missed opportunity. Currently, lessons are too long for all young people to maintain concentration but a new timetable will be introduced very shortly to address this and other issues relating to the school day. While information and communication technology (ICT) is taught as a separate subject there is little evidence of it being used in other subjects such as science and literacy to enhance learning. At present, young people do not have access to the internet.

Relationships between teachers and care staff are good, as they are between teachers, learning support assistants and young people. The points system is already working relatively well and complements the system used on the residential units, although there is a little inconsistency in the department as to how points are awarded. Some students are extremely proud of the simple but very effective student planners. A weekly assembly, attended by teaching and care staff is used well to celebrate young people's achievements.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Good arrangements exist for the admission of young people. Information is collated appropriately and the young people are supported with settling into their living units. Routines, rights and rules are explained to the young people verbally and are also available in written form. A statement of acceptable behaviour expected in the centre is part of this process.

Reviews occur on a regular basis. They include input by key workers and education staff on young people's progress and attitudes. The young people are encouraged to

attend and are given the opportunity to express their opinions, with support from an independent advocate if they wish. Reviews are used as part of a process to measure progress. They are also used to inform future plans, such as resettlement and the potential need for specialist support once a young person has returned to live in the community.

Contact arrangements with family and friends are made clear at the point of admission and encouraged and facilitated. Members of staff are very sensitive to the fact that the young people who are placed away from their communities have the potential to feel isolated. Additionally, once a month, families are encouraged to visit the home for meals in the dining room. Young people value these visits and see them as relaxed and sociable events.

Planning for resettlement and moving on is of a very high standard. Young people are encouraged to plan for the future from the point of admission. A member of staff is responsible for gathering the young people's thoughts and aspirations for the future, and to plan activities which will assist them in returning to the community. Young people are able, when appropriate, to partake in some projects in the community. These projects enable them to develop life and employment skills as well as giving them an opportunity to invest in constructive activities which benefit the community. Examples of these projects include work in a horse sanctuary and helping the local police clear up graffiti.

Arrangements for the young people to have a voice in the running of the centre and their care are good. They have numerous opportunities to voice their opinions about their care. Structured opportunities for them to express their views include a young person's council, house meetings, key work sessions and access to an independent advocate. Additionally the young people can voice their opinions to members of staff on an ongoing informal basis during the day-to-day routine of living in the home. Young people are able to have an influence on some of the decision making in the centre. This includes making choices about introducing activities, such as some games consoles. They have also been able to successfully request that particular areas of the residential units are refurbished.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Life skills, such as budgeting and cooking can be undertaken by the young people. Opportunities for developing some life skills, such as laundry are limited due to design of the building.

Young people are encouraged to personalise their own rooms with pictures and posters. Living and dining areas are furnished comfortably.

A well-organised maintenance team responds to repairs promptly. This process is underpinned by a planned refurbishment program. The living environment is in an overall good condition.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

A recently updated 'Statement of Purpose' is available which clearly sets out the aims and objectives of the centre. A range of information is published to help parents, carers and professionals understand the work undertaken, as well as how they can raise concerns and contact staff. Young people receive their own guidance relating to how the centre works, expectations for their behaviour and attitudes, and the support they will receive during their stay. They are able to keep this information so they can refer to it when they wish.

The management team at the centre is experienced and individuals understand their specific responsibilities. Due to the absence of a member of the management team, some of the management roles have recently been reallocated which enables direction to be more targeted. The management team are supported on behalf of the local authority, by a strategic leader for improvement and development. There is a commitment by senior managers to affect change in practices where required and areas identified for continued progress include behaviour management and safeguarding. The support from external senior line managers is now much more visible and ensures that an overview of performance and practice can be maintained.

There continues to be a comprehensive staff development training programme and the addition of further safeguarding training is a positive development. Packages of recently revised induction and mandatory training are available, as well as additional individual training, depending on a person's role. The majority of care staff at the centre hold a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) or equivalent, others are registered on a relevant course. In addition, staff who work in the reception/security and administration areas undertake a customer service or business and administration qualification. Five staff are currently undertaking NVQ level 4 management courses and further staff are completing team leader qualifications. The level of training provided ensures that staff are provided with the knowledge needed to work with young people.

All staff receive formal supervision from seniors and managers. The level of actual supervision that has taken place, in relation to completed sessions, has seen a fall in March, April and May 2010 from figures of 100%. The largest drop in sessions was during the summer months when the centre was experiencing some extremely challenging behaviour from young people. The completion rates since then have risen to almost 90%. Records are kept of all sessions undertaken and a set format is used to ensure that all relevant areas are covered. There is increased auditing of supervision which helps to increase the quality and usefulness of the meetings. Formal appraisals are held at regular intervals which enable development and learning needs to be identified. Team leaders have recently relocated their offices to be closer to the units. This enables further support for staff to be accessible. Staff members state they feel well supported by their managers.

Ten care staff have left the centre in the last year, the highest turnover rate experienced for a lengthy period. Many of the new staff members have previously worked at the centre on an agency basis. The introduction of new staff means that the team is a mixture of new and experienced members. However, managers feel this has been of benefit and that it provides some fresh ideas and enthusiasm. Staff available are sufficient in number and young people benefit from the range of staff experience and individual skills.

A development and service improvement plan for the centre identifies areas the centre management wishes to progress. A good data collection and quality assurance system is available. However, managers are currently in the process of streamlining this to ensure a more rigorous integration of records and data. Regulation 33 visits are carried out on behalf of the local authority. Reports are provided of these visits and any areas requiring attention are identified. The manager of the centre is currently looking at how these visits can be made more focused, to aid development of the centre.

Both electronic and hard copy recording systems are used at the centre. Some of the practices in place mean that there is duplication of recording and the clarity and content of records are of variable quality. The duplication of effort is time consuming for staff and means that some records are not completed with a full version of all events, preventing managers from receiving robust information that enables them to develop good practice. The records of young people's needs and development are of a good standard and contain up-to-date and relevant information. This identifies the support young people need and how it will be delivered.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Planning for care takes account of individual cultural, medical and religious needs. Intervention programmes take into consideration individual learning styles. A young person's awareness of diversity is raised in many ways throughout their stay, for example, by raising money for charities, and through meals being celebrated from around the world. This provides young people with different experiences. Young people are aware that racial bullying and comments are not tolerated and that these will be challenged by staff.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Recommendations

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

- increase the rigour of initial assessment so as to inform strategies for learning and teaching (Education NMS 14)
- ensure consistency in behaviour management (Education NMS 14)
- produce a formal action plan for improvement which includes raising the quality of teaching to that of the best. (Education NMS 14)

- further develop the home's medication policy to enable young people, when assessed as safe, to take responsibility to self administer their own medication (NMS 13)
- ensure staff are competent in administering medication and feel confident to undertake this task (NMS 13)
- review the range of recording systems at the centre to ensure clarity, completeness and that all required information is available. (NMS 35)