

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Shaun Common
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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 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

This secure children's unit is managed by a local authority and is situated in a rural location. It is registered as a children's home and approved by the Department for Education to restrict young people's liberty. There is living accommodation and facilities for administration, education and recreation available on the site.

The children's home in two separate units, can accommodate up to 12 young people both male and female, who are aged between 10 and 17 years.

There were six young people resident at the time of the inspection.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This unannounced interim inspection looked at the progress the setting has made with the statutory requirements and recommendations made at the last inspection in July 2010. These related to staff supervision, recruitment and monitoring processes, development planning, educational provision and medication policy implementation. The provision has taken appropriate action to resolve two of these matters and work is ongoing with the others.

Being healthy, enjoying and achieving, positive contribution, economic wellbeing and organisation were not assessed during this inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

The registered persons were asked to make improvements at the last inspection. They were asked to: ensure recruitment processes are robust with all required checks being completed and information in place; to implement the policy called 'Administration of Medicine Lead Role'. This relates to the responsibilities of those staff who audit and monitor medication administration and recording systems in the home. It defines the tasks they must carry out to help promote young people's health and wellbeing. These matters have been addressed and ensure the right people are recruited to work with young people and that young people are kept safe.

The registered persons were asked at the last inspection to ensure all staff receive an appropriate level of formal supervision. Although this has improved, supervision is still not to a satisfactory level for all staff. They were asked to devise a development plan for the home and ensure monitoring processes comment on the quality of practice or recording. This work has started, but is not yet completed. The registered persons were also asked to improve educational provision for the young people.

These included activities that assist in their transition to the community and in reviewing and extending the learning resources and curriculum for those with low levels of literacy and numeracy. Progress is being made in these areas; however work is ongoing and not yet fully completed. A statutory requirement and recommendations will be made in this report.

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.

Young people's information is stored safely and securely, which promotes and protects their rights. They are afforded privacy and treated with dignity. For example, staff knock on young people's bedroom doors before entering and viewing panels are always closed unless they need to be open to assist in the safeguarding of the young people. Young people have access to a telephone to keep in touch with people important to them.

A policy and procedure is in place for the searching of a young person's possessions and the home's environment, commensurate with maintaining security and promoting young people's safety and welfare. Robust searches are carried out very regularly of all areas of the home in line with the policy and these are fully recorded.

Young people know how to complain if they are ever unhappy with any aspect of their care. They are provided with good information that is suitable to their needs about the home's complaints procedure. A young person stated that staff usually sort out any concerns they have, but if need be they can go to the manager or complete a form and someone from outside of the home will come and see them. The forms are available and accessible to young people. They also have access to advocacy services for additional support if needed. There have been two complaints since the last inspection and these are fully recorded. They demonstrate that complaints are dealt with in a timely manner with clear outcomes indicated. The home's policy and procedure on complaints is accessible to staff who understand it and they can therefore provide support to young people as needed.

A copy of the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedure and the home's own child protection procedure are available within the home. Staff are knowledgeable about these and understand what to do to keep young people safe. There have been no child protection concerns or referrals since the last inspection. Young people stated they feel safe at the home. There are established links with the Local Authority Designated Officer who provides the home with independent advice and oversight relating to any child protection concerns.

An anti-bullying policy is in place that is known and understood by staff to help them keep young people safe. Young people stated they have no concerns over bullying. There are good staffing levels at all times that ensure appropriate supervision of the young people. This ensures that any bullying issues are identified and addressed quickly.

A policy and procedure is in place for dealing with any absconding from the home or during visits into the community through mobility programmes. A clear plan and risk assessment process is in place. Staff understand these plans and the procedure and know what action to take in order to safeguard young people. There has been one occasion recently where a young person absconded whilst out with staff on a planned visit to the local community and appropriate procedures were followed with a record made. Relevant authorities were quickly informed. However, on their return the young person was not asked the reasons why they ran away and was not seen by someone independent of the home to ascertain the reasons for their absence. Additionally it is not clear in the absence record what action was taken; for example a review of care and mobility plans and whether a professionals meeting was undertaken.

Staff have excellent relationships with the young people. One young person said that staff go out of their way to support and help. A range of behaviour management policies are in place that underpin staff practices including a restraint minimisation strategy. These are focused on positive methods of encouraging young people to develop socially acceptable behaviour and to reduce the need for physical intervention. The incentive scheme is clear and understood by the young people. It is a system whereby young people earn points for objectives set and agreed with them. It includes different levels enabling young people to benefit from additional rewards at each level for socially appropriate behaviour.

Sanctions, restraints and single separation are used appropriately and staff are measured in their use. Young people stated they are treated fairly and equally. Records are kept, which are monitored by managers. Additionally, restraints are scrutinised by external professionals to ensure practice is appropriate and improved. However, sanctions records do not include all required information, for example the effectiveness of the measure imposed.

The bound restraint book does not include all required information, but instead links to a separate loose leaf form that includes detailed information about the event. Processing of these forms through the home's checking and monitoring systems is lengthy and convoluted, meaning the record of the event can take some weeks to be fully completed and finalised. Records therefore do not meet regulations and could compromise young people's rights.

Risk assessments are in place for young people at risk of suicide and self harm. Staff implement these and communicate effectively to ensure they are updated and any risks to young people addressed and minimised. Risk assessments of all young people's likely and known activities are carried out. These are kept up to date and reviewed very regularly. Staff understand these risk assessments and the importance

of their robust implementation in order to safeguard young people in a secure environment. Health and safety matters are managed well. For example, maintenance is carried out on portable electrical appliances, gas and electrical installations and fire equipment to ensure young people are kept safe. Regular fire drills are carried out and fully recorded to ensure that young people and staff know what to do to stay safe.

Clear procedures are followed and implemented for the vetting of visitors to the home. Rigorous checks are carried out to ensure young people are safeguarded. A safe recruitment policy is in place and is followed to ensure those employed are the right people to work with children. Required checks and information are kept on recruitment files.

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/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Std.	Action	Due date
22	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any physical restraint or sanction that a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose which shall include the matters set out in this regulation and NMS 22.9, 22.11 and 22.14 (Regulation 22(4))	01/04/2011
28	ensure that all persons employed receive appropriate supervision; specifically provide all staff with supervision to the level set out in NMS 28.2. (Regulation 27)	01/04/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure that written records are kept of any absconding incident that detail the matters in NMS 19.6; ensure when a child returns to the home after an episode of absconding, they are seen if possible by his/her social worker or a person independent of the home to consider the reasons for the absence without authority (NMS 19.4 and 19.6)
- help young people prepare more effectively for the transition to the community by extending opportunities for them to learn in larger groups with lower levels of supervision and taking part in activities that increase their understanding of the skills needed for employment (NMS 14)
- review and extend the learning resources and curriculum for those young people with low levels of literacy and numeracy (NMS 14)
- revise the system for monitoring the performance of the home under Regulation 34 so it comments on the quality of practice and recording (NMS 33)
- devise a written development plan, reviewed annually, for the future of the home, identifying any planned changes in the operation or resources of the home, or confirming the continuation of the home's current operation and resourcing. (NMS 33)