

Inspection report for children's home

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<b>Inspector</b>	Gwen Buckley / Gaynor Moorey
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<b>Provision subtype</b>	Secure Unit

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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 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the *Inspections of children's homes – framework for inspection* (March 2011) and the evaluation schedule for children's homes.

### The inspection judgements and what they mean

**Outstanding:** a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

**Good:** a service that exceeds minimum requirements

**Satisfactory:** a service that only meets minimum requirements

**Inadequate:** a service that does not meet minimum requirements

## Service information

### Brief description of the service

This is a local authority residential secure children's home for up to 16 young people of either sex. It is owned and managed by a local county council. The home is situated in a small village approximately 10 miles from the centre of a large city. At the time of the inspection, 12 places are allocated for use by the Youth Justice Board and four for young people placed for welfare reasons.

The home is subdivided into two units, each accommodating up to eight young people. There are a number of communal areas which include a large and small lounge, dining areas, games room, gymnasium and a fitness suite. There are educational facilities within the home as well as various offices, family, therapy, and conference rooms. Secure outdoor space is available one of which is split into a grassed and landscaped area beside a hard-standing court. There is also another large outside area for various ball games and activities.

### Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **outstanding**.

The overall effectiveness of the home is outstanding. Staff routinely make very good use of a range of rigorous monitoring arrangements to improve the quality of care provided and for young people. Senior experienced staff review all incidents through the closed circuit television recording. They take any learning from this and share with the relevant staff as development points if needed.

A particular strength of the home is the positive relationships between young people and staff. The staff ensure that individual needs are identified and met through care planning that actively involves the young people. Young people commented on how they are cared for by staff who want them to achieve and succeed in life. Young people know that all the staff care and feel very safe at the home. During the inspection none of the young people could make any suggestions on how the home could improve the way they are supported and cared for. Young people feel the home is a great place to be where they get the help and support needed.

Some very good work is done to help young people prepare for adulthood. Staff help young people develop skills needed to look after themselves and develop their self-esteem and confidence. Care and teaching staff provide young people with information on how to lead a healthy lifestyle and develop job application and interview skills. However, the home needs to further develop joint working between the school and care staff to prepare young people for adulthood to ensure this work is not duplicated. Young people are kept safe. The staff are excellent at consulting young people about all areas of their care. However, there was one exception noted

where a young person at risk of self-harming was not consulted in the development of their support plan. The staff need to ensure young people are consistently consulted when formulating a young person's self-harm management and support plan.

## **Areas for improvement**

### **Recommendations**

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

- ensure there are effective policies and procedure that effectively counter risks of self harm. This specifically relates to the ensure management strategies enable young people to be routinely consulted in the development of their self harm management plan (NMS 23.4)
- ensure young people receive care which helps them prepare for adulthood and independent living if needed. This specifically relates to the need to ensure school and care assessments and practices compliment each other and provide clear guidance to staff on areas to be addressed. (NMS 12)

## **Outcomes for children and young people**

Outcomes for children and young people are **outstanding**.

Young people enjoy excellent individualised support which helps them to develop and grow. Young people have named key-workers who work with them regularly on a one-to-one basis. They look at the young person's views and choices and help to guide them in becoming self-motivated, confident and grow as individuals. Young people are enthusiastic about trying new experiences and learning to develop new talents and skills. Dance is one of the activities promoted at the home. One of the young people said 'it's really brilliant and I had not been involved in dance before'. Staff actively support young people moving on from the home and ensure their particular interests are planned for in their future placement. Dance sessions in the community are arranged for young people who leave the home, if they have enjoyed it during their stay.

Young people all talk about feeling safe and cared for at the home. They said 'the staff are good and everyone gets on and I feel safe', another said 'the home has been a real help to me and people should keep that in mind!'. Excellent trusting relationships with staff allow the young people to discuss their history and look at any problems their past may raise for them.

Staff are committed to supporting the young people's mental health needs and offer each young person individualised holistic support in order to address these specific areas. The young people have prompt access to a wide variety of external professionals such as psychiatrists, psychologists and therapists. The home offers the young people a well rounded, comprehensive service to ensure they can receive assistance to move on with their lives from the time they are placed at the home. Young people report they are getting help to understand the issues that brought them into secure care, whether for welfare reasons or for offence related reasons. This helps them develop strategies to keep themselves safe or out of trouble when they leave.

Young people are actively encouraged to lead a healthy lifestyle at the home. They receive support from staff to understand and learn about maintaining a healthy lifestyle which includes dietary information and the importance of exercise and keeping fit. They regularly use the fitness suite and gym, play sports and team games and their particular interests are promoted. For example, young people enjoy badminton on a daily basis. Young people are able to choose their own food from a wide range of choices. The cooks at the home are well aware of each young person's specific needs both dietary and cultural and consult with them about the food they want to eat. Young people's views on food varied, they feel the food is excellent or good and appreciate the choices they have for each meal.

Young people are encouraged to make choices about the lives they lead and are given individual guidance in the home and in preparation for when they leave. Support is provided from a range of people such as teachers, care staff, the home's nurse and outside agencies about the use of alcohol, illegal drugs, sexual health and social and welfare issues. Services for young people are continually developing. New initiatives around health and welfare are used to support the young people. When appropriate contraceptive implants are available to young women when they leave and the support of community and safeguarding midwives are available when

needed. The day-to-day management of self-harm is good and keeps young people safe. Young people are normally consulted when specific management support plans are needed to help them with situations they find difficult. However, in one instance this consultation process did not occur when a management support plan was being developed by care staff. However, staff did listen to the young person and the plan was amended when the young person stated they were not happy with it.

Young people have excellent access to health care professionals. A nurse is employed three days a week and a General Practitioner visits regularly. The young people have health plans that clearly identify their individual needs. Staff ensure all medical appointments are arranged so the young people receive the help they need quickly. Where young people have specific medical conditions staff are forward thinking and ensure plans are in place that show the support needed and what health professionals will be involved in their care. One social worker said 'staff were supportive and had put into place comprehensive plans when helping young people with their specific needs'.

Prior to being at the home some of the young people did not attend school on a regular basis. The nine young people resident at the time of the inspection have an excellent record of attendance at the on site school. Staff have a clear culture in the home that young people can and will achieve. As a result young people are making very good successful educational progress. Care staff support young people and encourage them to have a high expectation of themselves, their ability to achieve and discover what they can do rather than what they cannot.

Young people receive support to promote their learning by both teachers and care staff. Staff work well together to offer them a creative, imaginative way forward in their individual education and learning. Each young person has their own timetable. One young person said 'they have helped me to look at myself and find things I never thought would happen for me'. A high number of young people are taking exams this year. All seven young people wanting to or able to sit GCSE exams are doing so this year. Three of these will have left the home by the time of the exams and plans are in place for them all to return to take these at the home.

Young people are supported by staff who stress the importance of taking exams and how these could improve their chances of going to college or getting a job. One young person who is leaving and anxious about this appreciates the help, reassurance and support given to him to ensure he returns for his exams. One social worker said 'it has been a good and positive experience for them and staff have been very caring and committed to their care and progress'. Parents feel the young people are well supported at the home.

Young people are actively encouraged and supported to complete homework and revision. The staff run activities that young people say are interesting but know they are also educational. Activities include support and development courses and drama/dance groups, cooking and menu planning, thinking and discussing welfare and social issues, arts and crafts and celebrating cultural festivals. Activities during the school holidays compliment the educational work streams young people are



following which enables them to extend their learning while having fun.

Young people receive support to develop their independent living skills. When risk assessed as safe, as part of daily life young people routinely undertake various domestic chores and cooking. Young people are encouraged to help each other and keep the home and their own rooms tidy.

Transition planning is excellent and linked to the amount of time each young person spends at the home. Comprehensive plans are put in place to support young people move on. Some transitions start at the beginning of a young person's placement due to timescales and specific need. There is a clear commitment to find the best possible outcome for each young person as they move on. The staff go to great lengths to ensure continued support once young people have left. When needed and appropriate, they will liaise with and visit the staff caring for young people in their new placement. When agreed in the reviews staff will also visit young people in their new placement to assist them settle. This provides continuity of care for young people.

Young people said they have contact with family and friends at the home which is supported by the staff. If required, telephone contact is monitored and any negative calls are spoken about. Young people said any cancelled or stopped contact had been explained to them. Where young people do not have family contact the staff encourage visits from other significant people such as advocates.

### **Quality of care**

The quality of the care is **outstanding**.

Young people enjoy living in a caring supportive environment. They have comprehensive placement plans that identify their health, physical, social, educational, cultural and leisure needs. Key-workers spend time with the young people looking at their changing needs, meeting review objectives and preparing new review reports so they reflect the young person's views and achievements. Young people are helped by care staff to meet objectives and targets set at reviews. In the last year all reviews took place within expected timescales. Young people attend their statutory reviews and are consulted about any behaviour programmes, plans and transitions.

Staff have created an inclusive, reflective and participatory environment that encourages consultation and discussion. This is effectively balanced by realistic boundaries and risk assessments to protect young people while allowing them opportunities to have different experiences.

Young people at the home feel that their cultural and religious needs are being met by staff. They receive food in line with their culture, have appropriate personal items such as skin and hair products and know that they can access religious advice or services.

One young person was seen to complain and discuss an issue she disagreed with around a risk assessment. The young person was able to access both staff and management and this led to a change in practice and more understanding of the young person's needs. The young people confirmed that they are able to express their views and opinions and if needed staff explain why events or situations could not happen.

Guidance advice and support is given to young people in relation to health and social issues, including alcohol and substance misuse, sexual health, sex and relationships, education, protecting oneself, bullying and abuse. These issues are met both in school and within the enrichment activities in the evenings.

Young people report due to their good relationships with staff they could talk to them about anything and would get an answer. Support for the young people and their individual needs, including ethnicity and cultural needs, is woven through everyday life to ensure they have information that will help them at the home and to keep safe when they leave.

A tour of the building indicates that the home's location, design and size are in keeping with its purpose as a secure home. Records demonstrate that the home is subject to regular security, health and safety risk assessments and has certification relating to gas, electrical and fire equipment. Young people are confident they know what to do if there is a fire. Regular fire drills take place. Young people receive information about fire drills in the young person's guide and when young people are admitted staff talk to them about what is expected of them during fire drills.

The home provides an excellent standard of accommodation and facilities. The accommodation is clean and tidy and provides each young person with individualised

private areas, such as their bedrooms, where they can spend time alone. Young people have a wide range of communal areas to play and exercise in both outside and indoors. During out of school hours, young people can access some areas in the school to provide further facilities. The computer room and beauty therapy room in the school area are regularly used in the evenings. Young people said that they can decorate their bedroom with photographs and posters. Each room has en-suite bathroom facilities which enhance young people's privacy.

Staff who sleep in have their own dedicated accommodation close enough to the main area so they can be readily available to support night staff if needed. The home continues to have a rolling programme of renovation and repair to ensure a well decorated, homely and safe environment is maintained.

### **Safeguarding children and young people**

The service is **outstanding** at keeping children and young people safe and feeling safe.

There are excellent arrangements in place to safeguard young people. The manager is a member of one of the local safeguarding monitoring and effectiveness sub-groups. The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) receives a report on the use of restraint in the home and is aware of the restraint methods used. Senior staff ensure the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) is consulted when needed and referrals are appropriately made. The LADO states that the home has good links with the LSCB and staff work well with the Police and other external agencies to assist in any investigations.

There is very low use of restraint at the home. Over the last few years there has been a significant reduction in the number of restraints. During 2008/2009 there were 137 restraints, this decreased to 63 restraints during 2009/2010 and since 01 December 2010 until April 2011 there were only 15 restraints. Every incident is reviewed by senior managers which includes the use of closed circuit television recording. This helps the home learn and develop practice as individuals and as a team.

A particular strength of the home is the ability of staff to build a positive rapport with young people and maintain this through challenging times. These supportive relationships provide young people with a strong sense of safety and well-being. Staff are very aware of the impact they as individuals may have in any given scenario. They use this awareness to very good affect. Staff will spend time talking to young people who are agitated and threatening. They also redirect other young people away from potentially challenging situations, thus limiting the need to restrain. Young people report that they are seldom restrained, but if this does need to happen they are treated with respect and kept safe.

Young people have the opportunity to record their views in restraint records and can see a nurse if they wish following any restraint. They also know staff will take time talk to them after an incident to find out what could help them control their behaviour better in the future. During these de-brief sessions young people are encouraged to express a view on the incident, have this recorded and sign restraint records. For those young people who need extra support to help them manage and take control of their own behaviour, there are extremely good 'positive behaviour management plans' in place. These plans identify any limitations or conditions that need to be taken into account should any physical restraint be required including particular holds that should not be used due to a medical condition. The plans also detail any alternative preventative strategies to be tried in the event of unsettled behaviour. All these have been agreed with the young people.

Single separation records are very well maintained. Each unit maintains a bound book that records enforced and directed separations. These clearly evidence the reason for separation and staff observations of what young people are doing while separated and any conversations held. Individual single separation books are maintained when young people elect to go to their rooms. Again these detail the staff interaction and observations during this time. The frequency of separation varies depending on the needs of young people. In January 2011 there were six directed and one enforced separation, in February 2011 there were 12 directed and 6

enforced separations. Young people feel separation is not a punishment. They report 'staff tend to sit with you in a quiet area to reflect on your actions and not lock you up'.

All staff, including teachers, care and support staff are very clear about their individual responsibility to keep young people safe. Young people consistently report that they feel safe, well cared for and that bullying is not tolerated by anyone at the home. They say 'there is always staff around we can talk with and we have an independent advocate who visits weekly giving us access to another adult for support if needed'.

Young people are helped to address issues that brought them into secure care, either for criminal or welfare concerns. During the Easter holidays the staff had an activities programme for the young people which included a programme which is designed to look at the issues of violent crime with an emphasis on domestic violence. There was an emphasis on looking at developing empathy for those who may be victims of crime. Young people said that the course had been really good and helped them think about things saying it makes them think about what happens and the way others may feel after being hurt.

### **Leadership and management**

The leadership and management of the children's home are **outstanding**.

There is a strong sense of common purpose at the home through well known goals and aspirations and everyone takes responsibility for putting these into practice. Managers and care staff all want to ensure that the service they provide young people is excellent. They speak with pride of their intention to provide a centre of excellence that has the young person at the heart of all they do. All staff in the home are clear about what is expected of them as individuals, including support staff and all feel well supported by the management team.

There is an experienced stable staff team providing continuity of care and exceptional support to young people. The staff team is made up of a mix of very experienced staff and some newer to the role and male and female staff with different backgrounds and experiences. There are excellent arrangements in place for staff training that meets their needs and the needs of young people. Supervision training has been provided to all care staff new to the role of supervisor.

The aims and objectives of the Statement of Purpose are well met. Young people are integral to decision making and their views make a difference to the service provided. Young people are able to suggest specific education courses they wish to follow that were not initially on the curriculum. This resulted in the provision of specific language courses. Young people have influenced the provision of watches in the tuck shop and their views clearly influence the activities programme provided on both a daily basis and during school breaks. Young people are involved in the recruitment of staff either by interviewing them directly or composing questions to be put to prospective staff.

The senior management team has recently changed with the new Registered Manager starting earlier this year and the head of care starting in the last month. There was a good induction process in place to support the new manager take on her new responsibilities. The new manager had previous knowledge of the home through her role as a Regulation 33 visitor and she was aware for sometime that she was to take on the management post and worked with the previous manager prior to her officially starting. Managers are proactive in ensuring care provided continues to be and is to a high standard and are in the process of consulting staff over the home's future development planning. The manager is also considering ways to formally recognise the specific skills and abilities of staff working directly with young people. The management team are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the home and action has been taken to look at how the management of equality and diversity can be further improved.

Regulation 33 visits occur monthly as required. The visitor takes time to talk to staff and young people to elicit their views on the care provided. Records relating to the care of young people are well maintained, very detailed and reflect individual's needs. These records are kept securely.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.

