

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Linda Christie / Gaynor Moorey
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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 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 sports area with an artificial surface and two vocational workshops.

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 23 young people were in residence, three of whom were young women. Young people contributed to the inspection by speaking to inspectors.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This is an unannounced interim inspection to monitor progress against the recommendations made at the last inspection in August 2010. All of the key standards in the outcome area of staying safe were assessed during this visit.

Progress is apparent in the unit's work with young people, particularly in the behaviour management and individual support offered to them. The unit is well managed with an effective and experienced management team who continually strive to provide a high standard of care and service to young people.

Monitoring and quality assurance checking is excellent, as is the transparent partnership working with external safeguarding partners. The area for development in this report is related to managers being clear about the outcome of actions identified during the internal monthly safeguarding meetings.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were four recommendations made following the last inspection in August 2010. Positive action has been taken regarding all of these which have led to improved practice and provision.

The recommendation related to providing appropriate training for staff in

understanding and dealing with self-harm has been well met. All staff have received training as recommended. The content of the training was based on a survey of staff perceptions and understanding of self-harm. This in turn has led to a review and further improvement of the self-harm procedures and practices.

A recommendation related to increasing opportunities for young women to participate in physical exercise has been met. Young women are now able to exercise away from the young men, choosing enjoyable activities which will improve their health.

It was recommended that young people receive sufficient individual support and guidance to encourage healthy lifestyles and diet. A new healthy living programme has been introduced, with the support of a qualified dietician and nutritionist. This has resulted in a complete review of menus and monitoring of young people's eating habits. The new approach is now embedded at the unit and is beginning to change and improve the young people's lifestyles.

The recommendation related to ensuring all new staff receive twice monthly formal supervision has also been addressed. New staff confirmed this supports them during the early months of their role in the secure unit.

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 privacy is protected and promoted. Staff knock on bedroom doors before entering and observation panels have curtains to further enhance privacy. Young people are able to make telephone calls in their own bedrooms. All sensitive and confidential information is held securely in locked offices.

There is an effective complaints system to ensure young people can raise any concerns. The forms available to young people give them opportunities to give a compliment, raise a concern or make a complaint. These forms can be posted into a box which is only accessible by the unit manager, who investigates all issues raised by young people. All complaints are addressed fully and within appropriate timescales and records include the outcome. All complaints in the past six months have been dealt with at the first stage of the process. Young people have an opportunity to confirm they are satisfied with the action taken to resolve their complaint or concern, but only approximately 50% take up this option. Although not routinely done, the manager is considering a more consistent verbal feedback of the outcome to young people to supplement the letter they receive. Young people have private telephone access to external agencies, should they wish to raise a concern.

The visiting advocate is also available to assist a young person to make a complaint if required.

Young people's welfare and safety are well promoted. Good links exist with the Local Safeguarding Children Board and the local authority designated officer. There are robust and transparent procedures in place for the referral of potential child protection matters to the local safeguarding team. A monthly safeguarding meeting takes place which includes the local authority designated officer, during which all significant incidents and restraints are discussed. If available, closed circuit television footage is also viewed and consideration given as to how effectively the situation was managed and whether there is a need for further staff development, training or guidance. Although records are kept of decisions from the safeguarding meeting, the log does not indicate if the actions identified are addressed and ratified during the next meeting.

Young people are effectively protected from bullying. The unit operates a policy of zero tolerance towards bullying and the young people are made aware of this expectation upon admission. Young people's behaviour towards others is identified and risk assessed and appropriate strategies are put in place to deal with any concerns. Young people confirm that they are able to discuss any issues or concerns about bullying with staff, who will support them and deal with matters promptly.

The behaviour management of young people is good. Young people are encouraged and supported to avoid confrontation and the possible need for restraint by the use of good behaviour management strategies. An incentive scheme is in place that promotes positive behaviour. Young people understand the system and engage with it. Staff receive training in physical interventions and behaviour management. When a physical intervention occurs there is a procedure in place to examine the incident with a view to avoiding this in the future. Good progress has been made in reducing the use of restraint and time away from the group. The fluctuation in the use of physical restraint when analysed is usually related to a particularly volatile young person. There are effective and efficient systems in place to monitor, collate and analyse a wide range of data with a view to identifying trends and patterns. There is some evidence of the positive impact of this analysis upon service development.

The unit has clear and concise strategies to deal with incidents of absconding and young people who present a risk of absconding. The risk of absconding from the secure environment is well managed. Young people are protected through transparent and thorough notification procedures. Appropriate authorities are routinely notified of all significant events. There have been no incidents of absconding since the last inspection.

Policies for both the searching of young people and their belongings have been revised. This is now a risk led process which rarely results in the full personal searching of young people. Staff are aware of the procedure, which includes a level of senior management approval for a full search to be undertaken after a detailed assessment of risk.

Health and safety matters are managed well. Areas of potential risk for the young people are assessed and they are safeguarded from harm. The unit has clear and comprehensive documentation related to risk assessing activities, fire risk and the environment. Young people live in a safe environment. Safety is further enhanced by checks from other agencies and by the unit's very effective systems to monitor potential risks. The unit operates a robust system to monitor visitors.

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?

Recommendations

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

- ensure any actions identified during the internal monthly safeguarding meetings are fully addressed and reflected as completed during future meetings. (NMS 17)