

## Inspection report for Children's Home

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| <b>Unique reference number</b> | SC046524                        |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 14/09/2010                      |
| <b>Inspector</b>               | Malcolm Stannard / Gwen Buckley |
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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**

The secure children's centre is situated on the outskirts of a city. It is managed by the Children and Young People's Directorate of the local authority. It is a detached two storey building situated in its own secure compound.

The centre is registered as a children's home and is approved by the Secretary of State to provide secure care and accommodation for up to eight young people of both genders from 10 to 17 years of age.

At the time of inspection there were seven young people resident at the centre. The resources available at the centre for young people's use include a sports hall, outdoor courtyard area, aerobics suite and a kitchen for helping to develop life skills.

## **Summary**

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection. This was an announced, full inspection to evaluate the quality of care and security at the secure children's unit. The purpose was to advise the Secretary of State regarding approval of the centre's fitness to continue to offer secure accommodation to children and young people. All the national minimum standards and the additional licensing standards under each of the Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes were inspected.

The formal education provision at the centre was also inspected on this visit. In addition, an architectural advisor visited the centre to conduct an inspection of the premises.

Particular strengths of the centre are the appropriate relationships between staff and young people. The staff's encouragement and engagement with young people throughout the day promotes positive behaviours. There is a good activity programme in place and staff work hard to support young people after they have left the centre. An area for development is the frequency of formal support meetings for staff.

As a result of the inspection, a recommendation will be made to the Secretary of State for a three year approval to be given for the centre to operate as a secure unit.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last inspection in November 2009, the management of the centre was asked to consider one recommendation. This has been fully addressed.

It was recommended that all communication with a placing authority regarding the transition rights of young people is recorded on their individual file. Any communication is now recorded on a contact sheet on individual young people's files. This helps all staff to see the extent of any interaction with a placing authority when advocating for young people in relation to their transition rights.

## **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

The centre promotes healthy eating and a healthy lifestyle. Young people engage in a variety of activities and exercises and receive encouragement and assistance to try new exercise and training programmes. Catering staff work with individual young people to help them understand the impact different foods have on their ability to achieve the fitness levels they are aiming for.

Meals meet the medical, cultural and dietary needs of young people. There is a choice of food at each mealtime and staff are aware of the likes and dislikes of each young person. Young people's views and needs influence the preparation of meals and records are kept of foods consumed. The menus are not routinely prepared in advance to show young people what is on offer that day or over the next few days. Young people consider the food on offer varies between satisfactory to good.

The centre's kitchen is clean and well organised. Domestic style furnishings provided in the dining room promote a homely environment. Mealtimes are social occasions for staff and young people to sit together to discuss how the day has gone, as well as their plans for the rest of the day. Teaching and care staff provide good opportunities and support for young people in preparing and cooking meals.

The management and monitoring of health care in the centre is excellent. The health needs of young people are assessed on, or shortly after admission, and assessments cover their physical needs, mental health, substance use and abuse, disability and vulnerability. A nurse sees all young people shortly after admission and they are registered with a local General Practitioner.

Young people have a documented health care plan that identifies targets and the person responsible for making sure the targets are met. Guidance, advice and support are provided appropriately? to meet their individual needs. While young people are at the centre they can access dentists and opticians as needed, and their immunisations are brought up-to-date.

Young people and the staff who care for them receive guidance, advice and support from external health care professionals such as the nurse, substance misuse and abuse advisor and mental health consultants. There is a comprehensive system of

monitoring of young people's progress, which includes reviews of the effectiveness of care plans already in place. It also includes the identification of any further support needed to help the young person. As a result, the care plans for young people remain relevant and action is taken to support them in a timely manner, according to their individual needs.

External professionals report that they are impressed with the commitment, skills, knowledge and ability of care staff to meet the diverse and challenging needs of the young people they care for. When young people leave, care staff and external health professionals take appropriate action to support them. For example, to enable continuity of care and services, the mental health consultants and substance misuse advisor liaise with, and share, relevant information with professionals in the young person's new authority.

Staff follow the centre's medication policies and procedures for administering medication to safeguard young people appropriately?. They receive training and are authorised as competent to administer medication. Good medication administration records are maintained and this includes a controlled drugs' register. Medication storage is secure and this prevents unauthorised access.

### **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 fully. Staff members announce their arrival prior to entering bedrooms and ensure that telephone calls can be made in private. Confidential information is stored securely and staff are aware of the centre's procedures regarding appropriate sharing of information.

There are effective mechanisms in place to enable young people to share any concerns or complaints they may have about their care. These are understood by young people. Investigations into young people's complaints are undertaken promptly. The complaint records include notes about whether the young person is satisfied by the response to their concerns, and any further action taken as result.

Advocacy services are also available to young people at the centre, providing a further avenue for them to raise any concerns. This means that young people are confident that issues will be dealt with.

Child protection procedures remain effective and robust. There is a good relationship in place with the local authority's safeguarding link person and training for staff has been accessed externally via the police and a sexual exploitation team. Referrals are made appropriately. They follow guidance and procedures.

Further work is now underway to strengthen the relationship with the Local Safeguarding Children Board with the intention of increasing the openness of practice. This includes 'reflective practice panels' for staff at the centre and

demonstrations of restraint techniques used to the LSCB. A zero tolerance stance to bullying is taken and information and education on the subject is available to young people. The welfare of young people is protected.

Relationships between staff and young people are very good. Staff act as positive role models and spend time engaging with young people at every opportunity. The level and quality of these interactions contributes to the promotion of positive behaviour in young people. An incentive scheme is in operation which enables the consistently acceptable behaviour and attainment of young people to be rewarded. The workings of the scheme and its expectations are clearly explained and understood by young people.

All staff members are appropriately trained in physical intervention techniques. However, these are used only as a last resort and staff training focuses on diffusing and diverting any incidents at the earliest opportunity. The appropriate professional relationships in place between staff and young people mean that discussion and diversion are employed regularly.

Sanctions are used sparingly and appropriately should they be required. All staff have undertaken restorative justice training and will always complete a 'resolve and restore' session with young people in order to avoid general sanctions for everyone.

Single separation is used appropriately and young people are not secured in their rooms inappropriately. The centre's staff occasionally use individual behaviour management plans to address challenging behaviour shown by young people. This might involve young people spending time in their rooms. However, the bedroom doors are not locked and each young person is free to leave their room.

All aspects of behaviour management events are recorded. The majority of entries are of good quality and indicate fully the reasons for the action taken, the antecedents and consequences. There are some inconsistencies in some of the records, mainly for the months of June and July 2010 when the quality of recording and some of the terminology used did not fully help other managers' understanding of events. Managers are in the process of addressing this and recent recordings are much improved. A robust method of auditing these records is in place with good management data produced to enable any trends and development areas to be identified.

Managers and staff at the centre report that there was a difficult period at the centre during the summer 2010 when there were some behavioural problems. External professionals confirm that this was an unusual period and a rise in the number of restraints, sanctions and single separations was noted. The centre's internal quality assurance data demonstrates that the numbers of these occurrences have now returned to previous levels.

There are good security, health and safety procedures in place to ensure young people are protected from harm. All systems are regularly tested and security checks are completed consistently across the whole site. Staff receive regular training in

safety and security and are made aware of any changes in procedure. Fire drills are undertaken at varying times to ensure that all staff know what to do in the case of a fire. An up-to-date fire risk assessment is available.

Recruitment and vetting procedures and practice are robust, with appropriate checks undertaken. Young people are protected by good practice surrounding appointments of new staff. Visitors to the centre are also vetted and monitored appropriately to ensure young people are safe.

## **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is good.

There continues to be a good structured activity and enrichment programme in operation. The range of opportunities available for young people has increased and as a result young people's attendance is good.

For a short period during the summer there was a temporary fall in the number of activities attended by the young people. However, this was related to some of the behavioural difficulties experienced at this time.

A member of staff is the designated coordinator for enrichment and good use is made of staff's skills and interests. The centre also uses external providers. The centre is well equipped with indoor and outdoor leisure areas. Vocational activities are limited.

Staff teams display a high level of motivation to provide good activities and be involved in these with young people. Records are completed for every session, enabling attendance, attainment and the usefulness of the subject area to be evaluated.

There is a good level of support available from care staff in assisting young people to achieve, both in their formal education and during leisure time. Staff are careful to make sure that leisure time includes some of the life skills work. Staff assist during homework periods and they are very clear about when these end and enrichment commences. This helps young people to structure their time between formal and informal learning. The needs of young people are identified on an individual basis, clear records of their achievement and development requirements are available. Each young person is supported by an identified key working team. All staff are knowledgeable and understand the needs of each young person and how these will be met.

Achievements and standards in education are good. Levels of appropriate and meaningful accreditation have improved significantly since the last inspection. Despite some very short lengths of stay, almost all young people discharged from the centre over the last year, did so with some form of individualised and meaningful accreditation. For example, in science in 2009/10, 95% of young people who stayed for more than 2 weeks gained at least one unit of accreditation, and many gained



more, all at level 3. In the same year, 95% of young people who stayed for more than one month gained units of accreditation in at least 3 subjects again, mainly at level 3. Unit accreditation in English though was poor. The achievement of GCSEs has also improved significantly since the last inspection. In 2009/10, 8 young people sat 25 GCSE modules in mathematics and 24 in science. Young people who attended the centre gained a total of 27 full GCSEs in 2009/10. The proportion of good grades, given the context of young people's prior achievements is good. A young person from the centre gained the prestigious award of Sheffield's 'Most Improved Learner' last year.

Young people's individual needs and aspirations are properly considered when deciding upon programmes of accreditation. For example, one young person with a keen interest in sport successfully completed a BTEC diploma in sport and recreation with a local training provider and another followed a sports massage course last year.

Relationships between teachers and young people are professional and built on mutual respect. Young people behave well in most lessons and they are largely respectful and supportive of each other. During the inspection, with one exception, there was little use of inappropriate language or swearing. The points system is understood well by young people who mainly find it fair and motivational. Points for good? behaviour are discussed with young people and are awarded consistently across the department. Behaviour is managed well by teachers who rarely remove young people from lessons when their behaviour is disruptive. This sanction is used only as a 'last resort'.

Attendance in education is good at over 95%. Reasons for absence are known and followed up well. Punctuality is also good with most young people arriving to education on time, enabling lessons to start promptly.

Standards of work are good, especially so in science, physical education (PE) and English where young people make good progress in relation to their prior experience and attainment. In these subjects they use technical language confidently and achieve well.

Teaching and learning are good overall. During the inspection, no inadequate teaching was observed. In most lessons, young people engage well. They are challenged to do as well as they can and this is usually achieved. Teachers manage well the considerable challenges presented by the very wide range of ages and abilities in lessons as well as the inevitable difficulties of very small class sizes. They know their young people, their strengths, weaknesses and complex needs well. Teachers plan lessons with these in mind. Young people are motivated by teachers' effective use of praise and encouragement.

Inspectors saw some examples of good learning opportunities. For example, in a science lesson, young people completed an experiment measuring the flow of electricity after making predictions about the outcomes. Despite being nervous at the start of the experiment, young people enjoyed the challenge and produced a good

analysis of their results. In a very well-structured and inclusive PE lesson, young people with different levels of ability made good technical progress in skills acquisition and development. They enjoyed the challenge of tackling increasingly complex activities and were justifiably proud of their achievements gained during the lesson.

In a few lessons, teaching was not as effective. For example, there was not enough targeted questioning and as a result some discussions were dominated by individual young people. Where this happened, teachers were not able to effectively check all the young people's learning. Summaries of learning at the end of lessons were sometimes too rushed and little use of information and communication technology (ICT) in lessons was observed during the inspection.

The centre manages the constraints imposed by such very small numbers and the curriculum meets the needs of young people satisfactorily. The core subjects of mathematics, English and science are represented well and delivered daily. PE lessons are also provided each day, as well as individual fitness sessions, and both make a good contribution to helping young people maintain healthy lifestyles. Religious education, art/textiles, cookery and personal, social and health education (PSHE) are also taught. At the time of the inspection there was no design technology in the curriculum and there was insufficient teaching of ICT as a discrete subject. The timetable enables a good degree of flexibility and this helps staff to meet the needs of individual young people. Every effort is made to ensure their individual needs are met. For example, young people with particularly complex needs who are unable to cope with being in a group all day receive individual support and are able to access the curriculum through an individualised programme. Homework is set at the end of each school day and this is generally completed well with good support from care staff.

The curriculum is enhanced by inputs from external agencies, mainly during enrichment weeks, providing activities such as dance and drama. This aspect of the curriculum is not as well developed as the formal subjects. In addition, young people's personal development is addressed through cross-curricular themed events such as a tennis tournament, cooking sessions and weekly assemblies. Many events are attended by members of the community and the centre's advisory board. Charity fund-raising events also enable young people to make a positive contribution. Vocational provision though is very limited with appropriate facilities not available to the unit.

Links with 14-19 providers are developing with local secondary schools and further work is planned in this area.

Young people access education quickly after their arrival at the centre. Initial assessment takes into account young people's previous achievement and attainment (where information is available) as well their levels of literacy and numeracy. Learning styles are also considered. This data is used well by teachers to inform individual learning plans, target setting and lesson plans. During the inspection there was evidence that young people are introduced quickly and very successfully into education and quickly begin to contribute to lessons and make progress in their

learning.

Young people all have individual learning plans (ILP5) which contain longer- term targets for their academic work and also for their behaviour. Whilst most of the targets are detailed and measurable, a few are vague, making the measurement of progress difficult. The ILPs are reviewed frequently, progress is recorded well and new targets are set. There are also weekly targets for academic work and behaviour for each young person. These are not always reinforced enough during the week for example staff miss opportunities to refer to them at the end of the day when points from the very effective merit points system are discussed with staff and young people.

All young people have a personal tutor and have a weekly tutorial to discuss any issues and their progress. Appropriately, there is no formal programme for tutorials due to the very diverse individual needs of young people. Connexions support is provided as required and this is valued by young people and staff. The department has excellent links with the child and adolescent mental health service, which plays a significant role in supporting teachers to work successfully with young people with very challenging behaviours. Young people are successfully helped to attend college interviews or to be part of familiarisation days with the education or training provider they will be going to upon their release. Young people receive very good post-release support from staff to ensure they are settling in to their new education or training placement and are continuing to make good progress.

Young people with very low levels of literacy benefit from being able to access assistive technology and make good progress with their reading and writing.

The education department runs smoothly on a day to day basis and consists of a small committed team of teachers and learning support assistants who work enthusiastically with young people. Communications within the department are good.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

The registered manager is fully aware of the individual needs of the young people and undertakes initial assessments on young people as part of the admissions process. Care files are very well organised and contain good information. Young people have their needs assessed effectively and well written placement plans outline how young people will be helped.

Young people can expect individualised support to address the issues that brought them to the centre. Care and sentence planning is well managed. Key worker sessions focus on the needs of young people identified through the care planning process. Plans highlight interests and activities young people have and the actions that need to be taken by staff to support these both within the centre and in the community. For example, a boxing coach has been provided within the centre and access given to athletic facilities in the community.

The staff team is committed to supporting the young people. Staff have a good understanding of bereavement and loss issues young people may have and are able to effectively support them. To develop their knowledge and understanding a senior member of staff and a staff member from each team have undertaken bereavement and loss training with more training planned for the remaining staff team.

Internal key team and management reviews take place and provide staff with an excellent overview of how young people are managing and progressing towards meeting their targets. External reviews also take place as required in line with national expectations and young people are supported by key workers to have a voice in these reviews. Copies of reviews and outcomes are held on relevant individual files and young people are aware they can access these.

Young people are admitted to the centre sensitively by staff who are aware that entering a secure setting can be intimidating. A detailed induction process ensures young people are reassured and helped to understand what is provided for them and the routines at the centre. Young people are told who they can keep in contact with at the time of admission. Young people receive support in maintaining contact with families and friends and are aware of any restrictions imposed.

A specific post has been identified to oversee transition planning. Discharge planning starts when young people arrive at the centre and progress is monitored through the reviews and case management meetings. Health care professionals give advice on the suitability of future placements when additional support for young people is required. Staff actively seek information young people are entitled to; for example, looked after children's documentation and details of future placements.

Young people are prepared well for discharge. The staff help the young people to leave the secure setting on a positive note and support them after they leave. There is good use of trips to visit new placements and this helps young people to learn to cope outside the secure setting. Staff help them to get to know a new area and show them how to access local facilities. Staff also visit the young people in their new placement for an agreed period, depending on identified need.

All young people take with them a range of mementoes of their stay in the centre. The aim is to ensure they remember the positive impact that living in a secure setting has had on their lives and opportunities this has provided for their future. Long after they have left, some young people continue to regularly phone the centre to keep in touch and talk to staff. External professionals working with young people at the centre liaise with other professionals in the new area and will visit the new placement if needed. This ensures consistency of care and the provision of continuing mental health services in new placements.

Consultation with young people is good. Young people have various avenues to let managers know their views. While at the centre, they are consulted about matters relating to the day to day routines and when they leave, exit interviews are conducted by an independent service. These measures help the management to

tailor the routines to the needs and preferences of young people. As a result the young people feel listened to and know where reasonable action can be taken to implement their suggestions.

Young people's achievements are recognised by staff who understand the importance of building their self-confidence and self-esteem. Young people enjoy good appropriate relationships with staff. All parties external to the centre spoken with during the inspection praised the care and services provided to young people and the trusting relationships staff build with them.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

The centre has a positive outlook. It works towards young people's independence and prepares them for adulthood. Staff enable young people to develop skills at their own pace according to their age and ability. Key workers and care staff help young people to learn how to cope emotionally and to develop as individuals. For example, young people have access to a telephone that can be used in private or monitored by staff if this is required as part of a placement plan.

Mobility is used imaginatively and safely to support young people to prepare for adulthood or transition to a new placement. Young people access Connexions services and have regular physical health and social education. Although there are limited opportunities for work experience in the centre, young people are able to apply for, and be interviewed for work in the tuck shop or kitchen.

Although a secure centre there is a good emphasis on providing domestic style furnishings. It is clean and well maintained and ensures that the young people have a warm and comfortable place to live in. Health and safety processes are maintained in good order.

The building is well maintained and servicing plans are in place for all areas. Any maintenance work required is recorded in a log which is then given to the responsible staff. Where possible, repairs are carried out within short timescales or immediately where this may be a security or safety risk.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

A range of user friendly information is available to young people, parents and professionals. Young people receive a comprehensive pack of information when first admitted. The pack provides information about what they can expect during their stay and includes a statement about how their individual and diverse needs will be met. A Statement of Purpose is available which details fully and accurately the function of the centre. The statement was updated in September 2010.

The staff group at the centre are experienced and motivated. There is a good team approach allowing for stability and consistency. Turnover of staff is low and the centre has a good retention track record. Three quarters of the staff group hold a recognised qualification, all others are registered and undertaking a National Vocational Qualification. The training programme is comprehensive, well planned and effectively delivered. The training officer has identified further avenues for staff development and the centre has introduced bite size training sessions and living workbooks.

Good informal support is available for staff from seniors and managers, and this includes some live supervision during the working day. A system of formal supervision and appraisal is in place; however, the frequency of completed sessions has declined. There is an inconsistent manner of completing these sessions with the result that staff, on some occasions, are unable to access the more formal guidance and direction required.

The centre is managed by an experienced and committed management team. Individual responsibilities are understood throughout the staff group and there is evident ambition to further develop the practice at the centre. A comprehensive business and development plan is in place and good support is provided by officers of the local authority.

A comprehensive quality assurance system is also in operation and there is external and internal monitoring of the provision which is undertaken consistently. Management data is produced monthly, providing clear statistical information and giving insight and direction towards continued development. Records for young people are well ordered, of good quality and regularly audited.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Young people are made aware of a range of festivals, encouraged to try diverse foods and cultural or religious needs are met. Visits from different religious leaders are arranged and no activity or enrichment session is gender specific.

The management structure in the formal education department is informal but effective. Teachers are clear about their responsibilities and accountabilities. Teamwork and communication between teachers and residential staff is good.

Resources are generally used well. Classrooms are clean and tidy with no evidence of graffiti and are treated with respect by young people. Since the last inspection an education advisory board has been established. Membership consists of a range of appropriate professionals, including the cabinet member for children and families from the local council. This has been very effective in providing support and challenge to the education department to raise standards and has contributed significantly to the progress made since the last inspection.

The department's staff have adopted an appropriately self-critical culture and they are aware of their strengths, weaknesses and areas for development. The self-evaluation report is detailed and evaluative. The largely positive and accurate text is

not reflected by the grades awarded in the report though, which inspection evidence showed to be too low.

Links with the local authority are now developing well. For example, there are plans to share practice with mainstream schools and to carry out a curriculum review within the centre. There is a school improvement advisor in place so as to ensure productive links with the local authority, and to ensure that support and challenge are maintained.

Given the self-critical culture and the progress made since the previous inspection, the capacity for further improvement is good.

## **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):

- improve the levels of accreditation in English (NMS 14)
- increase the amount of ICT input (NMS 14)
- improve the curriculum through the introduction of vocational education and external inputs (NMS 14)
- ensure the records of menus demonstrate a suitable and varied nutritious diet has been provided (NMS 10)
- ensure the frequency of formal supervision for staff meets with the requirements of the standard. (NMS 28)