

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	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 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 secure unit is managed by a county council. It provides secure accommodation for up to five young people aged from 10 to 17 years old. All the young people accommodated are placed under Section 25 of the Children Act 1989. Those under 13 years must have the approval of the Secretary of State to be accommodated prior to admission.

The home is an old building with a fenced, secure, external, hard-surfaced recreation play area and a small garden. Education is provided on site. An internal fitness room is available and the living areas include an open-plan living, dining and kitchen area.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people make excellent progress at the home. They are very positive about the care and support they receive. Their individual relationships with staff are excellent and integral to the quality of care provided. Comments from young people include, 'I am safe here and trust the staff completely. They are helping me and are always available to talk with when I am feeling down.' Staff are very aware of and acknowledge the individual experiences and needs of young people. They provide each young person with very high levels of individualised care and support to help them to progress and develop.

Young people gain an awareness of their vulnerability and strategies to help them address the reasons that brought them into secure care. Staff work effectively with other professionals to ensure young people's needs are assessed and action taken to address them. Young people's individual needs are identified in placement plans which are consistently reviewed with a weekly focus of work identified for each young person. Recent compliments from young people include, 'staff have been a big help, my life has changed a lot. I would probably be dead if I have not been at the home. Rightly or wrongly you have battled with other people for me and you always had faith in me. You are lovely people with a lot of love inside. Thank you.' A parental response states, 'my daughter was not the same young person who entered the home, she has turned back into the loving, kind young lady who I am very proud of. Thanks to you for giving me my daughter back!'

Staff actively promote young people's safety and support them to develop positive attitudes and behaviours, as well as the importance of making positive choices. Staff have a clear knowledge and understandings of their duties and responsibilities towards the young people in their care. They maintain exceptionally good links with other professionals concerned with safeguarding young people.

The Registered Manager provides clear and effective management. The school and home have developmental plans in place to monitor and improve service delivery. Minor weaknesses have been identified which have a minimal affect on the outcomes for young people. These are: that the work in progress to improve and update the young people's user guide and admission information is needs to be completed, and to formalise the consultation process with parents and placing authorities to better inform the quality monitoring process.

Staff are working very well within the parameters of the present building. Although secure and well maintained, there are limited communal and educational spaces and no en suite facilities for young people. An application to the Department for Education for a complete new build is being considered.

Areas for 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 person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
34 (2001)	establish and maintain a system for consultation with children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities (Regulation 34. 3)	31/08/2011

Recommendations

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

- support young people to reflect on and understand their history. This specifically relates to the need to keep records to reflect the actions taken by staff and ensure the cultural identity of young people is recorded. (NMS 22.7)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Highly individualised care, which is influenced by the views of young people, is provided by staff who understand the needs of the young people extremely well. As a result work with the young people is very focused and undertaken at a pace young people can manage. Young people are encouraged to make choices about the lives they lead both in the secure environment and in preparation for when they are living in the community. To help them they are given guidance from care staff and outside agencies. Depending on individual needs, a range of services are available to help young people understand their specific issues and the consequences of their actions. They receive support from the home's staff, play therapists, the looked after children's nurse, substance misuse workers, and when required access to community adolescent mental health services.

All young people have regular one-to-one time with their key-workers which helps them build positive relationships with adults. Young people can request extra one-to-one time with key-workers and feel able to approach other members of staff to talk with if they have concerns or are feeling down. Young people all feel safe at the home and that staff are approachable and always there to help them. This enables young people to talk about the issues that brought them into secure care and find ways to address them. Young people are confident staff will manage confidential information appropriately.

A particular strength of the home is the quality of the supportive relationships between staff and young people. Young people feel able to talk about their fears, aspirations and experiences. Depending on individual needs staff develop specific programmes enabling young people to gain confidence in their own abilities and believe they can and will achieve. Young people say staff help them keep out of trouble. Behaviour management plans help them look at the consequences of challenging behaviour and how this is seen by others. This work helps them understand their feelings and improve their behaviour both in the home and in the community when they leave.

Young people are able to make drinks and provide snacks for their visitors. Daily visits take place for some, and parents say phone contact is well managed. Staff work extremely well with young people and their family members and carers, ensuring contact arrangements are in line with the recommendations made in reviews. Young people, their parents and carers say contact is encouraged, well managed and supported, and in some cases takes place on a daily basis.

Parents feel staff are clearly committed to helping young people and their families and work hard to build positive trusting relationships with both young people and themselves. Parents are kept informed of how their children are doing and if they are having any difficulties. When there are restrictions on contact, explanations are given to young people. Young people spoke of how well the staff know and understand them as individuals and how they are getting help to address their underlying issues.

Young people make excellent progress in education from their starting point on admission. Teachers and care staff work well together to ensure the needs of young

people are met. Individual reading programmes are put in place if needed to help young people develop their reading skills and achieve in school. These programmes are implemented by both teaching staff and care workers. Young people also receive individual tuition in school, helping them gain confidence in their ability or prepare for exams. Significant progress has been achieved by a number of the young people currently resident.

The staff promote children's rights and equality by helping young people understand issues in the wider world. Staff strongly advocate for young people's rights and ensure they have a voice at reviews; this helps ensure future plans will meet their needs and keep the young person safe. Themed days, which are a celebration of cultural festivals or other events, take place regularly. Young people felt the last themed day on Australia was interesting and enjoyable.

The admission process is robust. The managers of the home ensure sufficient information is available to undertake a detailed assessment of need for any young person referred for a place at the home. The assessment also considers the impact an admission will have on other young people resident. On admission young people are informed of what is expected of them and how the home operates. They report being made welcome by staff and introduced to the other young people. Young people have a key-worker and support key-worker who will explain the reason for admission and what is provided and what is expected of them. They also have access to an independent advocate within a week of admission.

Young people receive good support to develop their independent living skills. When risk assessed as being safe to do so, they can do domestic chores, planning budgeting, shopping and cooking for themselves. This helps prepare them for leaving the home and the transition to adulthood.

Quality of care

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

Positive supportive relationships with staff enable young people to talk about the issues that brought them into the home and any problems this may raise for them. This is complemented and supported by specialist work undertaken with other professionals such as substance misuse workers and mental health staff when needed. Young people benefit from this support to help them work through issues and told inspectors that they feel safe and cared for at the home.

Staff encourage and support young people to attend their reviews. The vast majority of young people attend their reviews which helps them understand the reasons for their placement and future plans. The young people attend weekly young people's meetings which they can chair and minute, developing their confidence and self esteem.

Staff have an excellent understanding of the vulnerability of young people and the risks they may pose to themselves and others. There is a multi-disciplinary approach to care and a very good management oversight of each young person's progress. Young people each have a detailed plan which is set out in relation to their identified needs. Care staff, education staff and therapists are all aware of, and work with this plan to provide consistency of care.

A strength of the home is the way it ensures highly individualised care is provided. Staff are extremely knowledgeable about the needs of each individual and key-workers ensure the focus of work undertaken is in line with review decisions. Staff ensure cultural, religious needs, education, and young people's supervision and treatment meets their very differing and complex needs. Staff are aware of young people's history and take action to help young people understand their cultural background, although work is not always reflected in care plans. Staff actively promote diversity and help young people to broaden their horizons and experiences while in their care.

There is a robust system in place to monitor a young person's progress. Each week a young person's progress is reviewed in line with their care plan objectives and any behaviour management plan in place. This review considers the views of the range professionals involved in the care of the individual young person. A specific focus of work for the following week is agreed for the young person and key-worker to work towards.

Parents and carers are extremely complimentary about the care and the trusting relationships they have with the staff at the home. External professionals consider the staff's knowledge and insight into the specific needs of the young people cared for is exceptionally good. They report very good partnership working with the home to ensure young people and the wider community are kept safe. Comments from police reflect that during a recent admission staff were very kind, calm and thoughtful, even though the young person was displaying very challenging behaviour.

Staff provide an exceptional level of one-to-one support. They spend time talking to young people getting to know them. Four staff are on duty out of school hours in order to ensure young people are suitably engaged in a range of activities. Young

people have a say in the activity planning and are regularly able to undertake group and one-to-one activity sessions.

Education of young people is given a high priority. The educational resources have developed since the last inspection. A virtual school, organised by the local authority, is now available to the young people in the home. The head of this school, when needed, attends multi-disciplinary meetings to look at educational provision to ensure they meet any statement of special needs or continuation of curriculum activity. Individual education plans and statements of special educational needs are in place. Young people say, 'going to school is a must here and staff help us get ready for school and want us to do well in school'. The staff team regularly consider how best to balance and promote the educational needs alongside the time and services needed to promote the emotional wellbeing of young people.

Staff check those sent to escort young people have the correct authorisation and identification. Robust systems are in place to protect young people when they are using transport organised by external agencies.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff manage any child protection disclosures exceptionally well. They have the drive and commitment to ensure any issues identified are taken seriously by other agencies. Staff refer allegations appropriately and advocate for young people to ensure their voice is heard and appropriate action is taken by relevant authorities to protect them. Young people all say they feel safe in the home and there is, 'always someone around for you with time for you'.

Young people say there is no bullying and are clear it is not acceptable in the home. Sufficient staff are available to young people to observe them and keep them occupied and ensure robust observation at all times. Young people are confident staff have a good awareness of how to spot bullying and will take action to protect them if it was needed.

Procedures in the home, agreed with the police, are followed if a young person goes missing during mobility. All relevant people are notified and a young person is well supported on returning to the home. Young people receive weekly visits from an advocate who is independent of the home. They are clear of the advocate's role and aware the advocate will take action when they request their help. This enhances the protection of young people and provides them with access to someone external to the home that they can talk with.

The incentive scheme is points based and supports young people to work towards set targets and boundaries, and rewards their success and achievements throughout the day. Mobility, trips out of the secure environment, is linked to clear risk assessments and the incentive level scheme. Young people strive to move up the levels and achieve mobility. Young people speak with pride of their achievement on the incentive level and how they look forward to the mobility linked to this. All the young people eligible for mobility have achieved the incentive level needed demonstrating a positive improvement in behaviour.

The complaints system is robust, transparent and young people receive responses very quickly. There is external senior management oversight of all complaints. The independent advocate is known to young people and visits every week and available on the phone. The advocate supports young people if they want to make a complaint when requested. All young people repeatedly said they are safe, know how to complain and are confident in the complaints system, and feel listened to and supported.

Behaviour management is very child focused with individualised behaviour management plans in place when needed. These are developed with input from external professionals and young people. Although at times the number of restraints are high this directly relates to the needs and challenges of the young people accommodated who have very complex challenging needs. For three months after particular young people were admitted the number of restraints increased significantly. However, there were no restraints involving these young people in the following month. This can be linked to the positive behaviour management plans and the work done with individual young people.

Records of restraints, single separations and sanctions are detailed and are very well maintained. Records of restraints and single separations cross reference with each other correctly and the registered manager and regulation 33 visitor sign and comment on records held. Young people see these records and are able to write comments into the record book. Young people know they have the right to see records written about them and staff share records with them on a regular basis.

Leadership and management

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

The home is very well run and provides outstanding care and support to those using the service. There is a low turnover of staff which means that young people receive consistent care and have the opportunity to develop lasting relationships.

The management team have a good record of meeting actions and recommendations set at inspections. They continually look to develop practice and have development plans in place for both care and education facilities. Funding has been sought from the Department for Education for a complete new build. A multi-disciplinary approach to the development of this new building ensures it will be 'fit for purpose' to operate as a secure children's home and accommodate all the services needed.

The Statement of Purpose clearly reflects the aims and principles which underpin the care and service provided. There is a range of useful information available for young people, their parents and others involved with the secure children's home. As well as the statement of purpose there is a parental guide to the home and a young person's guide. For young people who might have reading or other difficulties key-workers go through the content of the young person's guide with them on admission to ensure they understand the content and have the opportunity to ask questions.

A DVD and video are being developed for young people and a young person at the home is updating the young person's guide in comic strip format. Another young person is updating the complaint information displayed on a board in the visitors' room.

The process for external scrutiny of practice at the home is excellent, with a system in place to monitor practice. Regulation 33 visits take place as required and provide detailed reports. Elected council members visit the home and the registered manager attends quarterly meetings with elected members to discuss regulation 33 and Ofsted report findings and report on progress against any recommendations.

Managers have a good oversight of how the home is operating. They attend the weekly team meetings to ensure they are aware of the needs of young people in their care and how these are being addressed. Managers continually look to see how they can improve the services provided to young people. To help this process they ask parents and social workers in reviews for their views. They have taken the comments expressed by a social worker into account and ensure staff clarify roles and responsibility for outreach work expected when young people leave. However, the consultation process with young people and other stakeholders is not formalised and does not provide detailed evidence to enable an analysis of practice.

The staff receive effective support from managers and colleagues in their work with young people. Care staff continue to build expertise in areas they are interested in; they have delegated tasks that reflect their particular skills, interests or developmental needs. This expert knowledge and information obtained is then shared with others as appropriate to ensure the best possible care for young people. A first aid trained member of staff is on duty at all times ensuring effective management of any accident.

The staff to child ratio to meet the needs of individual young people is an

outstanding. During school hours there are at least three care staff working with up to five young people plus teaching staff and a manager who is also on site. During the evenings and weekends at least four care staff work with a maximum of five young people. This enables staff to carry out regular one-to-one work and be available to support young people which they clearly appreciate and benefit from. This staffing enables opportunities for young people to enjoy trips outside of the secure setting when they have earned and are considered safe to have time away from the secure unit. There is a stable staff team in place providing continuity of care.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.