

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC046524
Inspection date	02/08/2011
Inspector	Malcolm Stannard / Linda Christie
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Secure Unit

Date of last inspection	15/03/2011
--------------------------------	------------

© Crown copyright 2011

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

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

The centre is registered as a children's home, operated by a local authority and is approved by the Secretary of State to provide secure care and accommodation. Education is provided on site within a school area equipped with purpose built classrooms. The centre is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to eight young people of either gender.

Overall effectiveness

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

Managers continue to develop the service at the centre and have a clear plan about what they want to achieve. Areas identified for development include: the availability of regular formal supervision and support for staff; clarity of responses to young people following any requests made at centre meetings; and the development of further practical life skills for young people who are working towards leaving the centre.

The staff team is strongly motivated to achieve good outcomes for young people and delivers highly individualised packages of care. The safety of young people is given high regard and systems and practice in place including the liaison with external agencies are outstanding. The safeguarding of young people's welfare is exceptional.

Excellent procedures are in place to ensure that all young people's needs are identified and addressed. Thorough individual assessments are undertaken which inform a detailed care and placement plan which allows all identified needs to be addressed. This includes physiological and health support which is of high quality.

Enrichment and leisure activities are provided which enable young people to develop self-confidence and learn new skills. Sessions are tailored for individuals and groups so that young people can take part at an appropriate level.

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
27 (2001)	ensure that all persons employed receive appropriate supervision. (Regulation 27 (4) (a))	01/11/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure young people understand how their views have been taken into account, and where significant wishes or concerns are not acted upon, they are helped to understand why (NMS 1.2)
- ensure that children are supported to develop practical skills, specifically opportunities to develop practical, personal self-care knowledge (NMS 12.1 (e))
- ensure the overall number, competence and deployment of staff, specifically those employed to provide education, can fulfil the home's Statement of Purpose and meet the individual needs of all the children resident in the home. (NMS 17.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people describe very positive relationships with staff who provide a caring and nurturing environment in which they feel safe and supported.

All young people spoken to during the inspection described improvements in their behaviour, increased understanding, and a determination to handle challenges differently when living back in the community. As a result of positive relationships with staff and of focused individual work young people become more confident, improve their self-esteem, and develop emotional resilience. They have a greater understanding of their relationships with parents and others of significance in their lives and several describe feeling stronger and more able to cope than before. At least three young people who were due to leave shortly described aspects of their lives and previous behaviours that they fully intend to change. One young person said, 'I did not think I would be able to make anything of myself, but I now know I can, I know what I want to do in the future'. Young people feel staff have helped them think about a number of things differently, particularly about relationships with families and friends and about the impact of their behaviour on others.

Young people's resettlement needs are assessed at the point of admission and are continually reviewed during the period of the placement. There continues to be uncertainty for some young people about future placements and other arrangements that need to be in place when they are discharged. Excellent efforts are made by staff, under the direction of a manager who takes the lead on resettlement, to ensure appropriate plans are in place. The centre will if necessary support local authorities by sourcing appropriate placements, identifying school or vocational training and making arrangements for community health appointments. A recent

positive development is the introduction of a mentoring scheme. This involves the recruitment of specific staff on a part-time basis to work with young people when in placement and provide support in the community upon discharge.

While there are a number of examples of young people being prepared by staff for discharge, there is an inconsistent focus on life-skills and preparation for independence. Young people's knowledge and practical skills are not systematically assessed or addressed.

Physical, emotional and psychological needs are well met. All young people are registered with a doctor, dentist and an optician. They are supported by an excellent child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) which provides individual support, therapeutic intervention, family group therapy and support with bereavement or loss issues.

A healthy balanced diet is provided for all young people. The range of meals provided includes healthy choices and meets individual needs and preferences. Young people are encouraged to eat healthily and make informed choices. All meals are eaten in a group dining room and are sociable and enjoyable occasions. Young people enjoy the company of staff and other adults, such as visiting professionals, during mealtimes and participate in discussions.

Young people attend the on-site educational provision. The majority attend school regularly and there is evidence to indicate that most make excellent progress in a range of academic subjects such as reading, writing and maths comprehension. One young person said he had poor reading skills when he was admitted to the unit and confirmed that his reading have improved considerably. He confirmed he has received a considerable amount of support from teachers and care staff who take the time to read with him. All young people are encouraged to read regularly and some act as reading buddies for other residents to help them improve their skills.

Young people are encouraged to look after their living areas and their bedrooms. Many young people take a pride in their living environment and want to make sure it is homely. They accept that they should contribute to keeping their environment clean and tidy. Young people are also encouraged to consider the needs of the wider community and how they can contribute to improving things for others or the environment. The unit supports a local charity called bluebell woods and young people raise money to support this project. One young person is preparing for a sponsored indoor bike ride to raise funds for a charity he is particularly interested in due to the ill health of a family member.

Young people are encouraged to maintain positive contact with families and friends, with good access to telephone and face to face visits. Key workers ensure that parents or carers are kept informed of progress and any issues that might arise.

Quality of care

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

Staff understand their role in loco parentis with the young people and are aware of the importance of forming positive meaningful relationships with them. Many young people have relatively short placements in the secure unit therefore staff ensure they act as quickly as possible to identify their physical and emotional needs.

Staff provide excellent consistent emotional support to young people, listening to their concerns or worries, noticing when they are struggling, helping them develop strategies for coping with frustrations and to manage their anger.

Several young people described staff as caring and said they look after them well. A parent spoken to during the inspection was very positive about the support provided by staff to their child. They described the staff group in the unit as the most caring group of people ever to have looked after their child and 'nothing was too much for them to do to help'.

Young people are made aware of the expectations of their behaviour and are encouraged to respect others and themselves. The majority of staff challenge unacceptable behaviour or comments and ensure young people apologise if they have been offensive. Young people are also encouraged to consider their peers and understand they have needs and wishes. The group in residence in the main get along very well together. This is testament to staff promoting empathy and consideration for others.

Excellent procedures are in place to ensure young people's individual needs are identified and addressed, including any offending patterns or risky behaviours that resulted in them being placed in a secure setting. After a thorough assessment of need each young person has a detailed care and placement plan devised to address a range of matters, including their emotional, physical and psychological needs. Each young person is allocated a team of staff who work closely with them, including key workers, a case manager and when appropriate, a member of the in-reach child and adolescent and mental health service.

The care planning, and where appropriate sentence planning, processes identify areas of direct work that needs to be addressed with individual young people. In addition to individual key work sessions, young people participate in group work sessions. The focus of work is to help the young person develop a positive sense of self, learn skills to deal with the pressures they face, and understand the impact of their behaviour and attitude on others. A recent positive addition to the care and placement planning procedures is the introduction of an equality and diversity plan for each young person. This has improved understanding of the range of diverse needs that can contribute to a young person feeling excluded from society. For example, this process has helped formalise for staff the impact that a learning disability can have on a young person's experience of themselves and how others respond to them.

A wide range of useful resources is available for staff to use with young people on an individual basis and through group work. The assistant manager responsible ensures

that appropriate resources are available and continues to improve the range of these.

Extensive child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) are available to young people. Three qualified clinicians work with young people directly and in certain circumstances with their parents. They also provide support and consultation to staff in their direct work with and management of young people. CAMHS professionals also provide training for staff in a wide range of topics, including managing self-harm and most recently understanding aspergers syndrome. CAMHS staff describe a very positive integrated and holistic approach to the care of young people at the secure unit, which they feel very much a part of.

The assistant manager responsible for assessment and planning keeps a very good oversight of the whole process. He prepares management information, based on regular monitoring and auditing of all interventions, preparation for reviews and decisions about young people. As a result external professionals are very positive about the quality of planning and interventions and of communication from unit staff.

Young people are encouraged to participate in planning and reviewing their progress. All young people prepare a written consultation document and present this, with support from their key workers, to their formal review meetings. Parents are also encouraged to actively participate in planning and decision making for their child and are kept well informed by staff about issues that might arise. A parent spoken to during the inspection said they felt very much involved with decisions about their child, particularly in relation to the care provided at the unit and preparation for discharge.

Good arrangements are in place to identify and address young people's health needs. Services available include access to a local general practitioner, nursing staff from the medical practice, and substance misuse workers. Young people are encouraged to think about their physical health, to eat healthily and exercise. This is an ongoing topic of conversation with young people, who remind each other, in a positive way, about eating healthily and taking exercise. Young people who have not developed good hygiene habits are supported, educated and encouraged by staff to improve self-care.

Young people say they feel staff listen to them most of the time. Some young people feel issues about the meals provided are not always listened to, although there is evidence to contradict this. However, records of the young people's community meetings do not reflect a process where young people are consulted over day-to-day matters and the routines of the unit. The records reflect more of a grumbles process than an encouraging two-way discussion about issues that affect the group and development of the unit. The records are not detailed and do not reflect the level of consideration given to suggestions made by the young people.

Care staff support and encourage young people to attend the on site education and attain at school. The daily routines include a period after school for homework to be done. This is facilitated by care staff who ensure the work provided by teaching staff

is done by young people. The majority of young people attend school, although some in the early stages of placement will attempt to absent themselves. On one of the inspection days there was a long delay in the commencement of education after lunch. This resulted in some young people becoming frustrated about the lateness of lessons starting.

The head of education has recently commenced a period of maternity leave and there is an acting head who only took up her post the day before the inspection. The acting head has some previous experience at the unit, although that was also for a temporary period. The majority of the teaching and learning support team are temporarily provided by an agency. Only one permanent member of the teaching team is available and they work on a part-time basis. Although efforts are being made to ensure consistency for young people a largely temporary teaching team impacts on the opportunity to achieve this.

A good range of enrichment and leisure opportunities is available to the young people. They are encouraged to develop interests and skills that help them develop self confidence and improve self-esteem. Taking young people outside of the secure unit into the community with the use of agreed mobility is very well developed. Young people are also encouraged to consider activities that they can do when discharged from the unit, such as fishing or attending leisure centres. As well as visiting future placements, young people are able to visit places of interest in the community that will improve their confidence and promote their independence.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people said that they felt safe in the centre. Young people are supported by staff to keep themselves safe and excellent practice ensures that interactions with other young people are appropriate and protect them.

Young people's welfare is protected by an effective child protection structure. Staff members understand their responsibilities and roles when addressing safeguarding issues. All potential safeguarding matters are referred appropriately and managers monitor the progress of them all proactively in order to confirm that appropriate action has been taken and any investigation is concluded. All staff receive training in the safeguarding of young people and attend regular updates. There are very good and transparent relationships in place with staff from the local authority safeguarding services. Staff recruitment and vetting procedures are robust and any visitors to the centre are checked and monitored appropriately. This helps to ensure that young people are safe.

An independent advocate visits the centre weekly and is able to speak with each young person individually if they wish to do so. This ensures that young people are able to speak with someone external to the centre who they can raise any concerns with. The advocate is an established visitor who has attended the centre for a

considerable period of time. This ensures that he is known by the young people and they feel happy to approach him with any issues.

An established and robust complaints process is available and understood by young people which enables them to raise any concerns they may have. There have been very few formal complaints since the last inspection. Staff members are skilled at addressing any issues which arise to young people's satisfaction without the need for recourse to the formal structure. One young person stated 'Staff are good at sorting things out for you'. As a result young people are confident issues they raise are dealt with promptly.

Behaviour management techniques continue to be used selectively. Restraint is used only as a last resort and individual risk management behaviour plans are put in place to support those young people who are experiencing difficulties sustaining positive behaviour. Each young person also has an individual risk assessment which identifies the most appropriate actions to be taken should a young person be unsettled. This assessment also contains details of the level of searching required for a young person following a visit or mobility trip. This level of information ensures that young people are not searched inappropriately and assist to protect their dignity. Young people are also able to take reasonable risks as part of their development and learning at the centre.

The number of conversations held with young people following an event using restorative principles has increased. While this has yet to affect the number of sanctions which are given, these remain at a low level and are only used where necessary. Young people are not locked in their rooms inappropriately. Separation is rarely used with staff preferring to remain with a young person and communicate with them following any incident or period when young people are upset.

Records held of any use of behaviour management techniques are of good quality. Random checks are carried out on these by an officer from the local safeguarding services. Internal audits also identify any gaps in record. All of this helps to protect young people's safety and welfare at the centre.

Staff continue to encourage the display of positive behaviour by young people and they receive very good proactive guidance from staff about forming appropriate relationships, understand boundaries and having regard to others living in the centre. An incentive scheme which is well established and effective is in place to enable young people to receive rewards for sustained positive behaviour.

Security arrangements at the centre are robust and offer protection for all. The environment is physically safe and written risk assessments are in place for all areas. Required safety and service checks are carried out and staff receive relevant training. While some areas of the building would benefit from upgrading, such as bath and toilet areas, the premises are well maintained and suitably equipped. Any health and safety matters are addressed routinely as part of the clear and well structured building development system in place. All of these undertakings ensure that the centre is a safe and secure environment for young people to live in.

Leadership and management

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

The manager and senior management team at the centre have defined roles and responsibilities. There is a clear vision and understanding of the level and quality of service which they deliver to young people. A written development plan is in place which sets out the targets and aims for the centre.

A Statement of Purpose is available; this contains all the information required by the relevant schedule setting out the aims and objectives of the centre and has been recently updated. Young people receive their own information pack which tells them about their rights and expectations of the centre. This is currently being reviewed to ensure that all the information required by the new national minimum standard is included.

Young people benefit from a stable care staff team which has seen minimal changes since the last inspection. Teams are organised to ensure a good mix of skills, strengths and experience. Staff receive a good level of training covering a range of aspects of their work with young people. A large amount of training is carried out internally using relevant short sessions, external pathway courses can also be accessed. All care staff hold a relevant qualification or are registered and undertaking a course.

Young people are cared for by staff who are highly motivated to see them make as much progress as is possible. Staff are aware of each person's diverse needs and these are also identified in individual equality and diversity plans. This ensures that young people benefit from individualised care.

Wide ranging quality assurance systems are in place internally. However, on occasions the actions taken to address areas of required development are not robust enough to achieve the desired outcome. Externally, auditing is carried out by means of a regulation 33 visitor from the responsible authority. Any actions required as a result of these visits are reported on and made known to the manager.

The records which are held on young people are well constructed, comprehensive and audited frequently by team leaders. The information available ensures that all staff are able to have a good understanding of a young person's background and needs. All significant events which occur within the centre are notified to the relevant agencies and any required actions are carried out and recorded.

A recommendation was made at the last inspection that staff should receive formal supervision at the required frequency. The completion of formal supervision sessions remains low with 9 of the 17 care staff having received three or less recorded sessions since January 2011. None of the four team leaders have received a recorded supervision meeting since March 2011 with no individual receiving more than one session. While informal support is given, this is not evidenced and the low level of

formal supervision does not ensure that staff are able to access the support which is appropriate to the work they perform.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.