

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Shaun Common / Paul Taylor
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Provision subtype	Secure Unit

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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

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

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Satisfactory: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Service information

Brief description of the service

This secure children's home is managed by a local authority and is situated in a rural location. It is approved by the Department for Education to restrict young people's liberty. As well as the living accommodation, there are facilities for administration, education and recreation available on the site.

The children's home provides two separate units that can accommodate up to 12 young people both male and female, who are aged between 10 and 17 years. Admission of any young person over the age of 10 but under 13 years of age requires the approval of the Secretary of State.

Overall effectiveness

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

The unit has a number of areas of strength that ensures that exceptional outcomes and high quality care is delivered. Relationships between staff and young people are excellent and individualised, well planned and co-ordinated packages of care are delivered, which reflect a good quality service to young people. Young people's views are considered and taken seriously and a range of professionals provide young people with interventions and support. They also provide staff with guidance and advice to support them in their work with young people.

Practices ensure young people are kept safe and they are cared for by a dedicated staff team who understand the home's policies, procedures and systems. Young people are treated fairly and their religious, cultural and identity needs are met. Young people are supported to develop positive behaviour; however, records of sanctions do not show how measures of control are supporting young people to develop understanding of their behaviour and positive social skills. Staff have not undertaken training in countering bullying so they understand and can deliver best safeguarding practice, and some other training is not evidenced.

Management of the home is sound. Staff are well led and supported. There is some commitment to improvement, although internal and external monitoring systems have weaknesses that do not always identify shortfalls, reflect the quality of the provision or assist in improving the care delivered. Young people's complaints are not monitored effectively to ensure that satisfactory outcomes are achieved in all cases. A policy and procedure regarding serious incidents and how they are notified is not up to date.

Areas for improvementStatutory 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
17B (2001)	ensure that sanction records accurately include the effectiveness of the measure used (Regulation 17B (3)(f))	01/10/2011
24 (2001)	ensure that a written record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of the investigation (Regulation 24(5))	31/10/2011
27 (2001)	ensure that all persons employed receive appropriate training; specifically training in countering bullying (Regulation 27(4)(a))	15/01/2012
34 (2001)	maintain the system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6; specifically ensure that all matters are robustly monitored and any areas for improvement are identified and acted upon (Regulation 34(1))	01/10/2011

Recommendations

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

- provide evidence of the training undertaken by staff to meet the needs of children; specifically evidence of training in child protection and complaints (NMS 18.1)
- ensure the written report of a visit carried out under Regulation 33 is lodged in the home in a timely manner for the manager and staff to read and respond to (NMS 21.8)
- ensure that the monitoring system in place under regulation 34, comments on the quality of the matters monitored (Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 5: Children's Homes, section 3.14)
- ensure there are effective procedures for monitoring and controlling the home; specifically review and revise as necessary the policy and procedure regarding the death, serious injury or serious illness relating to a young person (NMS 21.1)
- ensure that duties set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010 relevant to the unit are evidenced; specifically ensure that minutes from multi-disciplinary safeguarding meetings are kept in the home and are up to date. (Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 5: Children's Homes, section 2.66 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010, section 2.143)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Outcomes for the young people are excellent. The support they receive ensures that they are able to develop their life and social skills in a caring and nurturing environment and at a pace commensurate with their ability to cope with the routine and structure provided by secure accommodation.

Young people benefit from highly individualised support which helps them develop their life and social skills as well as their confidence and coping strategies. Carefully planned support from staff helps the young people to achieve set goals and targets and to develop their self-esteem. Each young person has an individualised programme which gives them the opportunity to explore the reasons for being in secure accommodation and to develop self awareness and insight. Young people report that they can share their feelings with members of staff who help them, particularly when they are struggling with difficult issues. A young person said, 'my link worker is so special.' The level of support offered to the young people enables them to make exceptional progress while they live at the home.

Young people benefit from well-planned and delivered health care that ensures they have very positive health outcomes. Young people particularly benefit from having their emotional health and well-being promoted to an excellent standard by the staff team. Healthy living is encouraged and delivered through a balanced and healthy diet and by encouraging exercise. Young people are educated about matters such as sexual health and illicit drug use so they have the knowledge and understanding of dangers and risks that helps them stay safe, fit and well. The robust medication systems ensure that the young people receive the medication they need, when they need it to assist in recovery or in maintaining their well-being.

Young people's educational needs are promoted and met ensuring excellent outcomes are achieved. Each young person has an individualised educational programme which has an emphasis of encouraging their personal progress and enrichment. Close working between members of the care staff and teaching staff ensures that the young people benefit from consistent advice and guidance. Young people's educational attendance is excellent and every young person has the chance to attain educational accreditation and success. This ensures that they are able to experience school and education as a positive and rewarding experience, often for the first time in their lives. A young person said, 'I've learnt things here, it's helped.'

Young people are able to develop their life and work skills as they are provided with opportunities such as vocational work experience and college placements. They undertake a specific programme aimed at developing their life skills, which is delivered at a level commensurate with their abilities and vulnerabilities. Progress for young people in these areas is exceptional.

Young people are supported to maintain contact and keep in touch with those important to them. They understand arrangements in place and it is made clear to them if contact is prohibited for any reason. Visits are encouraged and the young people receive sensitive support from members of staff during these events if these

are stressful or emotional occasions.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from very positive and supportive relationships with members of staff. Appropriate and professional boundaries are maintained and relationships are based on respect and valuing each other. Members of staff get to know the young people very well and are very aware of their vulnerabilities and strengths. Staff work closely and effectively with the young people to develop strategies to minimise risks and to manage difficult situations, such as peer pressure and anger management. Young people are confident that members of staff will advocate for them and support them with any difficulties.

Staff are committed to ensuring that young people benefit from the delivery of clear care plans, which determine individualised needs and include realistic and achievable goals. This practice ensures that young people thrive within a nurturing and caring environment. Excellent monitoring enables staff to evaluate young people's progress on a daily basis and to ensure that plans are up to date, relevant and meet the needs of each young person. This in turn provides good information that staff use to inform statutory reviews and ensures that reviews accurately reflect each young person's progress and positive outcomes.

The unit has an embedded ethos whereby young people are encouraged to speak openly. Young people have their views and opinions listened to and valued. This underpins and encourages a culture of openness and honesty. They are able to express their feelings and views in a variety of forums such as: young people's meetings; individual sessions with their key worker; meetings with advocates and visiting managers and informally during their daily lives. One young person said, 'they listen and take us seriously.' Young people are able to influence matters relating to their daily lives, such as goal setting, menus and activity planning.

Young people are aware of how to make a complaint and have access to relevant and suitable information. They can contact relevant people outside the unit if they are unhappy about anything, such as an advocacy service and an independent complaints department. Records of complaints made do not always show how a complaint has been resolved and the outcome. However, young people confirmed they feel listened to and their views are taken seriously.

Young people are cared for in an environment that promotes their health and well-being. They have a health assessment on admission and are provided with advice, assistance and interventions with any health issue. They have access to a range of medical and health professionals, such as a school nurse and general practitioner. They receive other health services, including access to psychological and psychiatric assistance if they need it, which ensures their emotional and mental health needs are met to an excellent standard. Young people are cared for by a staff team who provide consistent and supportive care which is underpinned by professional advice

and guidance.

The support offered to the young people to attend school and achieve educationally, is of a very high standard. The close working relationships between education and care staff ensures that education is promoted and valued and seen as an embedded part of the routine and structure of the unit. This ensures young people achieve success in an area many of them have found challenging and have previously perceived as a negative part of their lives.

Members of staff ensure that the young people are able to access a number of different activities commensurate with their levels of trust, behaviour and vulnerability. Crafts, board games, activities in the gymnasium and a climbing wall are examples of what is on offer. Members of staff ensure that young people are constructively engaged and occupied with positive activities, which help them develop their life and social skills.

The unit assesses and identifies young people's cultural, religious and identity needs on or before admission. All of a young person's needs in these areas are met with practice of a high standard. This ensures that each young person has a bespoke package of care which supports nurtures and encourages them to develop and progress.

The home is furnished, decorated and maintained to a very good standard, which ensures the environment is conducive to the positive care of young people. Young people are given the opportunity to personalise their rooms with posters and pictures. A good balance is maintained of ensuring that the unit is safe and secure as well as being comfortable and homely.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say they feel safe and are well cared for. Their views are supported by the effective application of policies, procedures, systems and practice.

Behaviour is managed very well by staff who have excellent relationships with young people. Young people are encouraged to develop socially acceptable behaviour through guidance provided by staff, as well as through the use of an effective and well known incentive scheme and appropriate measures of control. The incentive scheme is clear and well understood by young people. The positive use of rewards achieved through the scheme supports young people to develop positive behaviour and social skills.

There is a robust procedure, protocol and recording system in place regarding absconding and being missing from the unit. There has been no absconding or absences without authority since the last inspection, either from the unit or while out in the community on arranged mobility. Staff have a good understanding of the action to take should such an event occur, so they can help to keep young people

safe.

The use of physical restraint is low and underpinned by a clear policy and strategy that shows how its use will be minimised. Young people stated that when restraint is carried out, it is always used properly and safely by staff. The use of single separation is appropriate and helps to keep young people safe. All incidents of restraint and separation are fully recorded and closely monitored by managers to ensure appropriate use, and to safeguard young people.

Sanctions used to discourage negative behaviour are varied, appropriate and relevant to the misdemeanour. Young people are able to have their views recorded about such matters, which encourages understanding and helps them to develop responsibility. Records are made of all sanctions; however, the effectiveness of the measure imposed is not recorded clearly or accurately. This means that an assessment of whether the sanction has an effect on supporting young people to develop positive behaviour and whether young people understand what they have done is wrong, is not evident.

Systematic regular searches are carried out of the all areas of the unit in line with the policy in place. This ensures that an environment that is as safe as possible is provided for young people; any prohibited items or articles that may pose a risk to young people are located and removed. Records are kept of such matters and any action taken, as appropriate.

Young people are kept safe by the implementation in practice of robust risk assessments and effective health and safety measures. Risk assessments set out young people's likely and known activities and the measures in place to reduce or eliminate risks to their welfare or safety. Other health and safety matters are also managed very well, such as the maintenance of gas and electrical installations, robust fire safety practices and the testing of equipment.

Young people do not see bullying as a concern. They feel safe and are closely supervised by staff at all times. Where required, individual work sessions are undertaken with young people about bullying and its impact upon others so they develop a better understanding of its effects. The home's policy and procedure on bullying is delivered in practice to help keep young people safe; however, staff are not trained in this area; this may reduce their understanding and ability to implement best practice.

Child protection procedures and processes are sound and ensure that young people are safeguarded. Staff are trained in child protection matters and know the home's procedures well. There have been no child protection referrals to the local authority since the last inspection. There are good links between managers at the unit and the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). Programmed safeguarding meetings take place between the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), police, the named nurse for child protection and other relevant persons. These meetings provide opportunities to share information about the practices and operational matters at the unit in an open and transparent way. This helps the unit improve in its safeguarding

practices and in its responsibilities (as set out in the government document, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010) in keeping young people safe. However, minutes of these meetings are not all available or provided to the unit in a timely manner to show evidence of this good practice.

Robust and effective recruitment and vetting procedures and processes are in place. These ensure that a range of checks are carried out so the right people are employed to work with vulnerable children.

Leadership and management

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

Good information is provided for young people, parents and professionals about the services provided at the unit. The Statement of Purpose is regularly reviewed and reflects what is delivered in practice. A children's guide is provided to all young people. This summarises the Statement of Purpose in a format suitable for young people, so they know what to expect when they come to the unit.

There is a stable staff team, which has a good mix of experience and skills in order to care for and meet the needs of young people accommodated. Most staff are qualified, with the remainder undertaking a relevant qualification. Staff are knowledgeable, understand the home's policies, processes and systems and have undertaken most required training. This helps them to deliver outstanding quality of care and outcomes for young people. However, training in countering bullying, to support staff to deliver best safeguarding practice has not been undertaken. Although training in child protection and complaints has been undertaken by all staff, records do not reflect that this is the case.

Staff are very well supported in their role of caring for vulnerable young people, which helps them to deliver a high standard of care. All new staff are offered a wide-ranging induction programme; including training that covers key competences. They are mentored and supported through this initial stage of their work. This ensures they are knowledgeable about the purpose and ethos of the unit. All staff receive regular formal supervision and their performance is appraised annually. Regular recorded staff meetings take place; this affords staff good support and the opportunity to share information and practice to improve the quality of care provided to young people.

Internal and external monitoring systems are in place and well established. An individual independent of the home visits each month to assess the quality of care and to assist the home in improving its service delivery to young people. However, these visits have not always examined or reported well on a number of matters important to young people. Although this issue has been recently identified by an external manager with direction provided to ensure the quality of these visits improves, practice is not yet sustained or embedded to evidence this is the case. Reports of these visits are not being provided in a timely manner to the home. For example, they sometimes arrive after the next visit has taken place. Managers are

therefore unable to take prompt action to improve the quality of care provided.

Internal monitoring of the home by managers to improve the quality of care provided to young people takes place regularly and is satisfactory. The format of reporting used by managers assesses the unit's practice against national minimum standards that became defunct on 1 April 2011. Reports do not record the quality of matters monitored so practice and the quality of services provided can be assessed and, where appropriate, improved. Not all matters are robustly monitored as shortfalls are evident in complaints recording, staff training and sanction records.

Significant events relating to the safety and protection of young people accommodated are routinely notified to relevant authorities by managers. This ensures practices at the unit are transparent. Relevant agencies are involved and kept up to date and can contribute to robust safeguarding of young people. However, the home's policy and procedure that forms a part of this process has not been reviewed and updated accordingly. For example it contains agencies that no longer exist.

Managers have shown some commitment to improvement. The home has devised a development plan that sets out any planned changes and how the home intends to drive service improvement. Two statutory requirements and four recommendations have been fully addressed and acted upon since the last inspection. These matters helps to secure improvement in the care and safeguards provided to young people. However, a recommendation relating to the quality monitoring of the home has not been addressed.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.