

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Shaun Common / Linda Christie
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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

The home is managed by a local authority and is located in a small town in the Midlands. It provides a total of 18 secure places, catering for children and young people aged between 10 and 17 upon admission.

Two of the units provide care for six boys and the other unit caters for six girls. The home has education on site. Mobility takes place subject to risk assessments and agreement with the placing authority.

Three of the 18 places are for children placed on welfare grounds and 15 are commissioned by the Youth Justice Board for those serving sentences or remanded by the courts to a secure setting.

Overall effectiveness

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

The home provides high quality care that ensures good outcomes for young people. Planning for young people's care is robust and young people are central to the development and review of plans. Young people are listened to, their views considered and taken seriously. They contribute to the running of the home and feel they are well cared for.

Care planning systems are effective, clear and involve young people. The staff team has good relationships with young people which helps ensure positive outcomes are delivered. The home has a culture of high aspirations for all young people.

Effective safeguarding practices have been developed and implemented, which ensures young people are well cared for and safe. Staff have received relevant training and have a good understanding of the home's systems, policies and procedures, helping them provide safe care to young people.

Managers have a good understanding of the home's strengths and areas for development. Monitoring systems are thorough and enable areas for development to be identified and the quality of service and care to be improved for the benefit of young people. A plan is in place to further develop the service.

Some areas for improvement have been identified at this inspection. These relate to: writing to young people with the outcome of complaints; the robust recording of searches and safeguarding matters; telephone checks of written references; monitoring of the heating system; consistent support for young people in developing skills for adulthood; and updating the children's guide.

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
24 (2001)	implement the written procedure for considering complaints; specifically ensure that young people are informed about the outcome of their complaint in writing (Regulation 24 (1))	01/02/2012
23 (2001)	ensure that all parts of the home to which children have access are so far as reasonably practicable free from hazards to their safety; specifically ensure that routine searches of communal areas are clearly recorded and details of the type of personal searches are recorded in line with policy. (Regulation 23 (a), NMS 22.1 and 23.3)	01/02/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure children's safety and welfare are promoted in the home; specifically by ensuring the records relating to child protection matters show the order of events and details about the advice/guidance from the local authority children's services department and local authority designated officer (NMS 4.1)
- provide a well maintained environment, with specific reference to monitoring and making changes to the unit's heating system as necessary to ensure young people's rooms are of a suitable temperature (NMS 10.3)
- ensure young people are consistently supported to develop skills and knowledge in the areas set out in this NMS and the statutory guidance, specifically ensure that care and education staff work together and share information and how they are supporting young people (NMS 12.1, statutory guidance paragraphs 2.130 to 2.134)
- ensure the children's guide includes how young people can find out their rights, how they can contact the Children's Rights Director, Ofsted and their Independent Reviewing Officer (NMS 13.5)
- ensure that telephone enquiries are made about written references to assess the suitability of potential employees. (NMS 16.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are well supported by staff who understand their individual and diverse needs and make every effort to meet those needs. Young people describe how they have improved relationships with others and how they deal with anger and frustration. One young person said, 'I have learned to be a lot more tolerant.' Young people are also more confident about how they intend to deal with difficult situations in the future. A young person said, 'it is good to be here, I can now plan my life.' Another young person talked about the efforts staff are making to help him improve his relationship with his mother.

Young people benefit from well-planned and well-delivered health care that ensures they have good health outcomes. Their emotional health and well-being is promoted to an excellent standard by the staff team supported by child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS). Young people have developed knowledge and understanding of healthy lifestyles, including sexual health, diet and fitness. This helps them stay safe, fit and well.

Young people are expected to attend education during their time at the home. In the main, young people willingly participate and quickly become aware of the benefits gained from attending education. There is a very high level of school attendance. Several young people have not attended school for several years prior to coming to the home and as a result some struggle initially with reading and comprehension. However, several young people spoke of how they have progressed since attending education at the home. One young person was very proud that in the three months he had been in placement he had made the equivalent of 13 months progress. He said his mother was very proud of him and for the first time feels he can achieve academically.

Staff place the well-being of young people at the centre of their practice and ensure achievements are celebrated. All managers and staff encourage young people to have high aspirations during their stay and when they move on. There are many examples of young people making good progress. There are examples of artwork displayed around the centre and a professionally produced calendar with artwork by young people is sent to external stakeholders. Young people regularly participate in competitions for national arts and literature events at which they have been successful in obtaining prizes. Young people have also been involved with external artists in creating some excellent murals and other high quality artwork.

Young people have regular contact with families and others of significance in their lives. They can make and receive calls in private, receive letters and visits are encouraged and supported. Staff are fully aware of the importance of young people building and strengthening relationships with family and other significant people.

Planning for resettlement is well embedded in practices at the centre. Managers and staff constantly remind placing agencies of the importance of early planning for young people's discharge from the secure setting. Young people's wishes and

feelings are taken into account and they are supported by staff to make their views known. The centre advocates on behalf of young people to ensure appropriate planning is in place, as does the children's advocacy service who meet with young people regularly.

Young people are encouraged to carry out daily practical tasks such as cleaning the living areas and their bedrooms. They are encouraged to wash and care for their own clothes. They have opportunities to learn about cooking and budgeting in school. Some young people cook with care staff on living units. If they can leave the centre on authorised mobility into the local community, young people plan meals and purchase the items required from a local supermarket. This helps them to learn a range of practical skills. However, the arrangements for assessing young people's competencies and knowledge in relation to practical life skills are not robust. Strategies for addressing this through planning and care delivery are not fully developed, a resources resettlement pack for care staff is not always fully utilised. Some young people who have been at the centre for several weeks have not yet been given an opportunity to engage in practical sessions to improve their skills for adulthood. Care staff are not fully aware of the work done with young people in education in this area and information is not well shared between education and care staff.

Quality of care

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

Staff form very positive relationships quickly with young people who are placed at the home. They understand their needs, are mindful of the issues that brought them to a secure setting and provide them with excellent support. Young people are relaxed and comfortable with the staff caring for them. They know who they can go to for support and have access to a range of people to respond to any concerns they may have, including external advocates. Staff are good role models for the young people and encourage positive approaches to conflict resolution.

There are well embedded comprehensive processes in place to consult young people about all aspects of running of the home. For example, there is council forum where young people and staff meet each month. It is well attended by young people, who are encouraged to actively participate and make suggestions for improvements. There is evidence of meaningful discussions with young people in these forums and records of action taken show staff respond to suggestions and questions. Young people have influenced changes, for example improvements made to menus and rewards on the incentive scheme.

Young people know and understand the complaints process and procedure. They have access to information and staff support them where necessary in making a complaint. Any complaints made are responded to in timely manner and the outcome is shared with young people. Young people sign the record to say if they are happy with the action that has been taken. Young people's concerns are therefore taken seriously and acted upon. However, the home does not fully comply with the policy

in that managers do not write to young people with the outcome of their complaint so they get an explanation in plain English and have a personal record to refer to.

There is a robust system to ensure that all young people receive a thorough assessment shortly after admission by centre staff and a number of specialist professionals. This includes an examination from a visiting doctor and a specialist nurse, usually within 24 hours of admission. A detailed personal health and care plan is formulated which identifies any needs. Mental health screening is included in this process and a more detailed mental health assessment is carried out if required by appropriate clinical staff. There is an excellent range of medical facilities available to young people and their health needs are addressed quickly. Health professionals make links with services in the young person's local community, as necessary, and ensure arrangements are in place for any medical issues that need to be followed up when the young person is discharged. Young people's individual needs are therefore identified and systematically addressed through robust planning, monitoring, evaluation and review.

Each young person is allocated a case manager and two care staff as key workers. They are also allocated a member of professional services, a specialist team within the home. These staff provide individual and group work to help young people address targets in their care and sentence plans. This key team also work closely with other professionals involved with the young person such as Youth Offending Teams, child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), substance misuse and nursing staff as appropriate. The key team also liaise very closely with the young person's family and ensure they are active partners in the planning and review process. The approach of forming a team around the young person is highly effective in ensuring all identified needs are addressed and any presenting issues dealt with by the most appropriate professional.

Each young person has an individualised plan of care, which identifies all their needs and provides a focus of the work to be done during their stay at the home. Clear and specific targets are included to address offending behaviour for those young people who are serving sentences. These plans are monitored by managers at weekly multidisciplinary meetings which effectively evaluate the focus of the work with young people and any care or welfare issues. The plan is revised as required and additional strategies are agreed to address any presenting issues. The case manager and other members of the key team are at the meetings and the discussions help them reflect on the effectiveness of the interventions.

Young people are encouraged to be active partners in planning for their care. The case manager and key workers discuss the plan with young people and agree any revisions with them. Young people sign to indicate they have seen the plan and comment if there is anything they are not happy about. Young people are also actively involved in meetings to review their progress.

Young people benefit from a home that has effective and efficient partnership arrangements in place with stakeholders who support them in their work. For example, young people have access to a wide range of primary medical services,

including General Practitioners, specialist nursing staff, dentist, optician and substance misuse professionals. The quality and responsiveness of medical practitioners is excellent, with young people receiving prompt attention as required. The services available to young people and staff to address any psychological and emotional health matters are also excellent. The CAMHS team are well established at the home and offer consistent, high quality care to young people. They work very closely with the professional services team, who undertake direct work with those young people exhibiting more complex emotional and behavioural issues. Staff receive positive support and guidance from the CAMHS team, who also provide training in specific areas, for example, understanding sexually harmful behaviours. Young people can easily talk with CAMHS professionals and see them often and as a result become comfortable about sharing any issues or concerns.

Young people's medicines are securely stored. There have been recent changes to the recording of controlled drugs and administration of non-prescribed medicines. All staff have received updated training in the safe handling and administration of medicines and are aware of the revised procedure. All medication records are fully completed and are regularly monitored by managers and the nurse. Any discrepancies are dealt with immediately. These robust practices ensure young people's health is promoted and that they are kept safe.

Young people's cultural and diverse needs are identified and well met. There is evidence throughout the assessment, planning, interventions and review procedures to indicate that this is embedded in practice at the home. For example, a flexible approach has been taken towards progressing young people on the incentive scheme to help them deal with being locked in their bedroom. Any specific dietary needs are identified and young people confirm their preferences are considered. Interpreting and translation services are commissioned as needed to ensure young people's needs are met.

There is an ongoing programme of raising young people's awareness of equality and diversity matters. The centre recently held a series of sessions about black history, reviewing hate crime and plans are in place to remember Holocaust Memorial Day.

The centre is maintained to a good standard, which ensures the environment is conducive to the positive secure care of young people. There have been some recent improvements to areas of the building, including refurbishment of young people's living areas. The young people's en-suite bathrooms are in the process of being refurbished and dining furniture is being replaced. However, one area of the building where young people's rooms are situated was noted to be cold, which is an uncommon occurrence. A young person also stated that her room was cold and this was clearly affecting her.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

A detailed and comprehensive child protection procedure has been developed and

implemented since the last inspection. The Local Safeguarding Children Board have seen this procedure and endorsed it. Staff have been trained in the new procedure and have a good understanding of what action to take to ensure young people are kept safe.

Any child protection concerns are taken very seriously and are documented. Records show the action taken is in line with the procedure and this ensures young people are kept safe. However, the records lack some detail and clarity about the order of events and specific advice from the local authority children's services team or the local authority designated officer. The impact of this shortfall on young people is minimal as the process overall is robust and thorough.

Young people are safe and have good relationships with staff. One young person said, 'I feel safer here than I ever have.' Interactions between staff and young people are positive and behaviour is managed consistently. An incentive scheme is in place, which young people said they understand and appreciate. This offers young people rewards and positive reinforcement for positive behaviour, helping them to develop social and life skills which will benefit them in the future.

Written care and behaviour plans set out the support young people need. They are complemented by risk assessments of young people's known and likely activities that show how any identified risk will be minimised or eliminated. These are implemented by staff to keep young people safe.

Behaviour management policies and a restraint minimisation strategy are in place to guide staff on best practice. These focus on the use of positive relationships, using strategies such as diversion and diffusion techniques. The use of physical restraint is a last resort and has reduced in comparison with the previous six months. All incidents are fully recorded. Managers monitor records and randomly view incidents on closed-circuit television to identify any concerns and to ensure practice is safe and of a high standard. Young people are able to make comments about any incidents so their views are considered and they have access to medical staff so their rights and welfare are promoted.

The use of sanctions is appropriate to the misdemeanour and these are fully recorded. Sanctions are implemented to help young people develop positive behaviour. Young people give their views on any measure imposed and encouraged to develop understanding and responsibility. The use of single separation is used appropriately and fully recorded each time its use is necessary. Managers routinely monitor these matters for their effectiveness and appropriateness to ensure young people are kept safe and their rights safeguarded.

An anti-bullying policy is in place and the home continues with a zero tolerance approach to any bullying behaviour. Young people feel that matters are addressed quickly and fully by staff. There have been no unauthorised absences since the last inspection.

The policy and procedure regarding the use of searches is implemented. Searches

take place of all areas of the unit that young people have access to. Routine and random searches are now undertaken and recorded to help prevent restricted items being brought inside the secure perimeter. However, the recording of searches of communal areas does not clearly determine what has been searched and when. Individual searches of young people are carried out appropriately, but not recorded with sufficient detail.

The recruitment process is good and helps to ensure that the right people are employed to work with vulnerable children. There have been new appointments since the last inspection. All required information is obtained prior to anyone starting work at the home. However, written references are not verified by a telephone check to ensure their authenticity.

Leadership and management

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

The home has made good progress since the last inspection. All statutory requirements and recommendations have been fully addressed. This means improvements have been made that benefit young people's safety, welfare and quality of care.

A clearly written and up-to-date Statement of Purpose is in place. This document sets out the aims and objectives of the home and what services and facilities are available to young people. It provides good information for parents, families and placing authorities about the secure unit.

Information for young people about the home and what to expect is provided in the children's guide. This is in different formats such as DVD. Good detail is provided for young people about what the home is like. However, some information that would be of benefit to young people is not in place, for example how to find out about their rights, how to contact the Children's Rights Director and Ofsted, and where appropriate, their Independent Reviewing Officer.

Staff at the home are sufficient in number to provide a good level of safe care to young people. Each unit has at least three staff on duty at all times. There is a good number of staff who are qualified, well trained and have a good mix of experience. The staff team is made up of people from a range of different backgrounds, which reflects the population of young people. Staff are well supported through regular formal supervision. They have a good understanding of young people's needs and a good working knowledge of the home's policies and procedures to help them deliver quality care.

External monitoring of the home is good. Regular visits by relevant people independent of the home involve examining the care provided and making recommendations for improvement that benefit young people. The registered persons monitor this process to ensure that these visits cover the required matters and support the home in delivering the best possible care to young people.

The Registered Manager has clear processes in place for monitoring the quality of care provided to young people. This person checks a range of matters regularly and identifies any areas that require improvement, ensuring these are addressed. This helps to improve the standard and quality of care provided to young people. A development plan is in place to identify how the home intends to progress and develop further. This contains a clear evaluation of how the home perceives its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, objectives and areas for development. This plan is clearly written and affords a clear overview of the home and how it intends to drive service improvement for young people's benefit.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.