

Inspection report for children's home

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<b>Inspection date</b>	17/04/2012
<b>Inspector</b>	Malcolm Stannard / Graham Robinson
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Full
<b>Provision subtype</b>	Secure Unit

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<b>Date of last inspection</b>	19/10/2011
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## Service information

### Brief description of the service

The unit is registered as a secure 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 in dedicated school facilities. The unit provides secure accommodation for up to 16 young people.

### The inspection judgements and what they mean

**Outstanding:** a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

**Good:** a service that exceeds minimum requirements

**Adequate:** a service that only meets minimum requirements

**Inadequate:** a service that does not meet minimum requirements

## Overall effectiveness

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

The unit continues to provide an outstanding level of care for young people which helps them make exceptional progress in a range of areas. Young people are helped to understand the reasons for being at the unit and highly individual plans of care are in place which promotes extremely positive outcomes. Young people are involved fully in devising programmes of work and are at the centre of all practice undertaken.

Young people are highly complimentary about the care they receive and without exception state that they feel safe at the unit. A particular strength of the unit is the achievement made with each young person which sees them progress considerably from their starting point when they enter the unit. This is achieved extremely well by the joined-up working of the staff and management who see each young person as an individual with their own specific needs.

Some excellent professional relationships exist between young people and staff which demonstrate respect and consideration for all. Positive behaviour is encouraged in all interactions and there is widespread use of mediation and reparation rather than punitive formal sanctions.

There is highly effective leadership and continuing attention to improvement and embedding of current practice. Managers are excellent at tackling areas that can be improved and ensuring that the outcomes young people achieve are maximised.

An area for development noted at the inspection is to ensure that any sanctions

which are used are relevant to the misdemeanour and their effectiveness is considered.

## Areas for improvement

### Recommendations

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

- ensure sanctions and rewards for behaviour are clear, reasonable and fair and are understood by all staff and young people. Specifically, ensure that sanctions issued are effective and reflect the misdemeanour. (NMS 3.8)

### Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people achieve excellent outcomes in a range of areas while at the unit. The ethos, routines and practice are directive yet supportive, encouraging young people towards setting and achieving personal goals. They receive high levels of support which allows them to stabilise their lifestyle and go on to prosper socially and educationally.

The arrangements to promote and improve young people's health are outstanding, with all aspects being promoted positively. As well as accessing and receiving services that address day-to-day health needs, the unit has a unified adolescent team based on site. This gives young people immediate access to a range of specialised services that promote their physical and emotional health.

Since the previous inspection enhancements have taken place to the services available. The unit has introduced regular on-site visits from a dentist and has strengthened links with a number of specialist community-based health services such as sexual health teams and the genetics department from a local hospital. The services which are provided both within the unit and externally in the community ensure that all aspects of a young person's health are properly assessed, with access to a range of professionals available as required.

Young people are encouraged to improve their lifestyle through exercise and diet. They are provided with information and given every support to modify aspects of their previous lifestyle including substance misuse. As a result, young people enjoy significant improvements to their general health and fitness levels. Young people's views relating to the quality of food are generally positive; no concerns were raised regarding quantity or choice. Any special dietary requirements are noted on admission and can then be accommodated in menu planning. Attention is paid to healthy eating when menus are being considered and specialist advice is sought from external nutrition professionals.

The cooperation and communication between care and educational staff is excellent. There is an ethos and routine which is geared towards school attendance and support for learning. This is an area of strength with the attendance levels in education for the previous two terms averaging 97.9%.

Young people engage positively with their education; aims and expectations for them are set at a high level by staff. For example, attaining GCSE is the primary aim for young people to work towards. Inspectors received positive feedback from a number of young people who are preparing for GCSE, with suitable arrangements being put in place that allows them to continue the work when they leave the unit.

Staff and young people work collectively to promote communal living. Young people have an active role and take some responsibility with this. For example, they all contribute towards certain tasks and chores that are completed daily. Multi-disciplinary work is undertaken to ensure young people are able to learn life-enhancing skills. Resource packs are used with all young people which are tailored to their individual needs and abilities. Excellent communication between staff and young people ensures young people's views are taken seriously and they can make a positive contribution to running of the units where they live. This allows young people to take some responsibility for their daily lifestyle and enhances their preparation for independence and adult life.

Young people benefit from contact with family and other appropriate visitors. Extremely positive feedback from young people, parents and visiting professionals show the unit works flexibly and energetically to facilitate and promote regular contact. Parents say they feel welcome when they visit and are put at ease by the warm response from staff. This contributes significantly to making contact visits a positive experience for all concerned.

Transition planning is outstanding and commences when young people are admitted, with detailed, individual plans put into place which are monitored and regularly reviewed. There is a clear commitment to find the best and most appropriate outcomes for young people when they leave. Following agreements reached in reviews, community support from unit staff is implemented. This is facilitated by dedicated and committed staff working flexibly to provide this. As a result, young people are provided with continuity of care.

### **Quality of care**

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

The quality of care provided for young people is outstanding. Extremely positive responses from young people, parents and visiting professionals are made regarding the quality of provision. One parent spoke of the excellent communication skills demonstrated by staff with her child. These skills enable effective communication to take place, resulting in a high standard of care and enhancing the daily life of the young person.

The parent of a young person recently discharged from the unit spoke at length about the positive outcomes achieved by their child while living at the unit. This has enabled the young person to integrate successfully back into family life. All parents spoken with during the inspection described staff's work as 'outstanding'.

The ethos and working practices of the unit are based on developing and maintaining positive relationships with young people, something staff are highly skilled at doing. A range of planned and agreed strategies address individual needs and behaviours effectively and encourage young people to develop trust and acknowledge acceptable behaviours. Some strategies are proactive and highly imaginative to meet the specialised needs of a young person. As a result, young people are able to progress into a more ordered lifestyle, allowing them to develop socially, emotionally and educationally. This in turn leads to them developing a more positive view of themselves and others, with significant improvement to their emotional resilience and knowledge gained.

Young people benefit from the excellent relationships with staff who work openly and transparently and communicate effectively with them. They assist in enhancing young people's self-confidence by using praise and positive reinforcement. This results in young people experiencing a high standard of care in a trusting atmosphere, leading them to engage with adults in a positive way. Young people's cultural backgrounds and identity are taken into account in all work undertaken. Support is given by staff to ensure consideration of disability, ethnicity or religious belief when discussing future plans with young people.

Young people confirm their views, wishes and feelings are actively canvassed by staff, allowing them to make choices and influence certain aspects of the unit's operation. Young people are able to put their views forward on a daily basis through discussion and general interaction with staff. Young people are encouraged to think about behaviours, their effect on others and the consequences of behaviour.

Young people understand how to make a complaint and are confident in doing so. They confirm they are given the appropriate information when first admitted. Senior staff monitor complaints effectively ensuring they are taken seriously and dealt with quickly.

Excellent, fully-detailed care plans clearly identify individual need. This includes identity, religious and cultural needs and information about packages of work required to be completed. Regular review, monitoring and updating of plans ensure young people's needs are recognised and understood as they progress. Regular multi-disciplinary meetings comprising all professionals involved in a young person's care are held, ensuring there is an integrated approach across all departments. Key workers carry out one-to-one sessions with young people which are used to good effect to address individual issues. Young people speak with knowledge about their own plans for the future and have input into these plans. As a result, young people look to their future with optimism, know the actions required and have greater confidence of succeeding when they leave.

The excellent facilities of the unit provide young people with opportunities to experience a wide range of hobbies, activities, interests and leisure pursuits. This allows young people to follow interests they may have, as well as developing new ones. For example, one young person spoke enthusiastically about the interest they have developed in dance while living at the unit. Community links are used to facilitate some of the newer enrichment opportunities available.

The unit's location, design and size support its purpose and function as a secure children's home. Appropriate service contracts are in place and regular security and health and safety checks occur. Young people understand what action to take in the event of fire. The standard of maintenance, décor, fixtures, fittings, furnishings and equipment are of a high standard, providing young people with a safe and relaxing environment. They have access to their room where they can spend some time alone should they wish and bedrooms can be personalised to suit the taste and interests of the young person.

### **Safeguarding children and young people**

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

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There are excellent systems in place which protect and support young people's welfare. Without exception young people at the unit stated that they felt safe. Measures are in place to ensure young people are protected from self-harm, bullying and accidents by intensive and proactive practice. Positive support is offered on a consistent basis by staff who are quick to respond to any concerns identified ensuring safety for all at the unit.

Young people's individual records contain comprehensive risk assessments which clearly identify risks for themselves and others. Staff are knowledgeable of the associated actions required in relation to each young person which are detailed in plans of care. The introduction of a 'pillars of parenting' system enables a multi-disciplinary approach to be taken when concerns relating to a young person's safety or behaviour are identified. A discussion forum is held which includes the input of psychology support and a highly individual package of care and management is produced to support the young person. This is a commendable and creative practice which safeguards young people and benefits them by reducing the number of interventions required. The unit managers and staff are not, however, risk averse and will support young people to take reasonable and assessed risk as part of their development.

On occasions a risk assessment will identify that a young person may be at risk of harming themselves. This increased level of risk determines the frequency of room and personal searches. Young people say that these are carried out with sensitivity and that they are always given the option to speak with staff first and hand in any

restricted items prior to a search commencing. Any searches undertaken are fully and appropriately recorded.

An embedded and robust child protection system is in place. All staff undertake safeguarding training and there is a structured procedural process available for them to follow. Managers at the unit have a proactive relationship with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), the Registered Manager or Deputy attend all board meetings and have provided awareness training to Board members to help them understand fully the needs of young people living in a secure environment. There are strong links with the Local Authority Designated Officer who is kept informed of all incidents where restraint has occurred. The unit's procedures are submitted for approval by the LSCB; this ensures transparency of practice.

The unit has a strong and proactive relationship with the police. A written agreement and protocol is in place which details the lines of responsibility and processes to be undertaken should a young person go missing or the police be present at the unit.

Staff at the unit have exceptional skills in forming appropriate professional relationships with young people. They promote the use of diversion and diffusion when dealing with young people and will give them a number of options while explaining the consequences of their actions. This enables the young person to learn how to take responsibility for their own actions. Inappropriate behaviour, comments or language are consistently challenged and there is a strong response where these could be construed as bullying.

A highly structured and positive approach is taken to behaviour management, including an incentive scheme which is fully understood by young people who say that it is effective in modifying their behaviour. When a young person is not achieving on the scheme or is unresponsive to it, an individual plan is prepared in order that positive behaviour can be promoted for everyone.

Physical restraint is used only as a last resort and since the last inspection the numbers of restraints occurring have been consistently low. There is no use of restraint as a punishment or to enforce compliance. Detailed and accurate records are kept of any incident or restraint including the reason for its use. The records are audited and monitored by a manager. CCTV coverage of all restraints is viewed by a senior manager in order to confirm that practice is appropriate and young people are spoken with in order that they can give and record their views on the event.

Reparation and restorative justice practices are now increasingly used as an alternative to a formal sanction. This practice assists young people to think about their actions and the impact on others. Formal sanctions are used extremely infrequently; however, some of those which are implemented tend to involve similar measures and do not always relate to the young person's misdemeanour. The effectiveness of the sanction is not always considered in the record held.

Young people are not removed from the group or separated unfairly. The use of single separation is low. This only occurs when there is a need to protect the safety



of a young person and others or is part of an agreed management plan for those who display particularly unsettled or dangerous behaviour. On all occasions, when a young person has been separated from the group, staff will interact with the young person in order to ensure they have the opportunity to talk about their situation. There is detailed recording and monitoring of any separation which occurs, including management oversight.

Young people are protected and benefit from the process in place for vetting staff. This is extremely robust and well organised ensuring careful selection and monitoring. An additional process has been added to the procedure which ensures there is an extra level of scrutiny undertaken by the Registered Manager. Only approved and identifiable escort staff are used to transport young people outside of the unit.

The measures in place at the unit to safeguard and promote the rights and welfare of young people are in excess of those which would be expected in a non-secure provision. An independent advocate makes regular visits to the unit and young people are able to talk freely with and access them for additional support if required.

## **Leadership and management**

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

The unit is effectively led by the Registered Manager and an experienced and competent senior management team who are highly visible to staff and young people. The guidance available from managers supports staff to facilitate exceptional outcomes for young people. A comprehensive Statement of Purpose sets out clearly the aims and objectives of the unit. Written procedures are also in place which guide all staff on how to ensure these are achieved on a day-to-day basis. There is a stated commitment to ensure that all young people receive an equally high quality of care and that all identified needs are met. Informative written guides for young people and visitors enable them to be aware of the rights and responsibilities of everybody in the unit. A range of different communication formats can be made available so that young people are able to fully understand the contents of the guide.

The Registered Manager has a stated vision for future development of the unit and leads with a clear sense of direction. She understands fully the strengths and weaknesses of the unit and there is a full and inclusive challenging development plan in place which takes account of all new legislation and practice developments. Senior managers are able to lead staff teams with clarity due to the stated targets for further development of practice which are in place. There continues to be outstanding capacity for continuing improvement, with any recommendations fully addressed and a management team which is constantly looking for ways to improve further the quality of care to benefit young people.

Internal monitoring occurs daily and a monthly monitoring meeting is held to consider core quality assurance data. This enables the management team to identify any trends and areas for development. Any target set to enhance the quality of care

for young people is addressed robustly and systematically to ensure the desired outcome is achieved. Monthly monitoring reports are compiled following a visit by an external manager from the local authority. Reports relating to the development of the unit are produced by the Registered Manager and made available to Ofsted. Young people are regularly consulted with regard to their care and their views on the unit are taken into account.

The unit managers are able to demonstrate the impact and value that living at the unit has had on young people. Where required, young people benefit from individual plans to enable them to establish a baseline of appropriate behaviour so more positive interventions can occur. Care staff track young people wherever possible when they leave the unit and attend community meetings and reviews. This enables them to assess the impact the unit has had on young people's lives and how individuals have improved. Any learning from past experiences is used to inform future development in practice. A number of detailed and positive progress reports are available which evidence the opportunities in education and employment that young people have accessed since leaving.

Excellent arrangements are in place to ensure young people are able to contribute to and attend their formal review meetings. Staff and managers are proactive in reminding placing authorities of their legal responsibilities, including attendance at reviews, visits to the young person and transition arrangements.

A comprehensive package of training opportunities is in place for staff. Induction, mandatory and development training are all catered for. Almost all staff hold formal social work or child care qualifications which enhances their professional practice. A range of meetings are held which enable dissemination of information and consolidation of practice for care staff. Each staff member receives regular formal supervision. Records of the sessions held evidence the high expectations of practice by managers and clearly set out the desire for sustained improvements and efficient use of individual staff skills. The support in place assists staff to undertake their roles with young people proficiently.

The physical environment is maintained to a very high standard. Any required repair or maintenance is carried out quickly ensuring no areas of the unit are allowed to deteriorate. A planned programme of major work is currently underway to further enhance the premises, including new heating and ventilation systems and upgraded lighting.

## 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.