

Inspection report for children's home

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| Inspector | Gaynor Moorey / Shaun Common |
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This is a registered children's home approved by the Secretary of State to provide secure accommodation and care for girls and young women from 10 to 17 years of age. The home can accommodate 16 young women whose behaviour has placed them or others at risk.

The home comprises of four individual living units with formal education provided on site.

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 **adequate**.

This inspection has the purpose of informing the Secretary of State on the continuing suitability for this provision to operate as a secure unit to restrict children's liberty.

A registered manager from another home has been seconded to manage this unit and a senior external line manager is providing support. The seconded manager has applied to become the registered manager.

There are some good outcomes for young women. The home provides individualised care and support. However each young woman's care plans are not consistent with their needs and lack detail. They do not set out a young person's holistic needs and how these will be met, nor do they fully consider the views of young people in the preparation.

The multi-disciplinary approach to care is a strength of the home. Staff receive training and support to enable them to provide individual care for the young women. Young women make positive use of the different care professionals at the unit. They make good progress in school thereby raising their self-esteem, confidence and opportunities.

Safeguarding practices, which include the reviewing of incidents on closed-circuit television, help to promote the safety of young women. There are good working

relationships with the Local Safeguarding Children Board and police. However there are occasions when young women's medical treatment is not provided immediately following significant incidents. Recording of incidents is also not as detailed as required.

Behaviour management is not consistently applied across the home. Young people receive mixed messages about the expectations placed upon them which can sometimes leave them feeling unfairly treated. Risk assessments based on the behaviour of individuals and groups of young people within the home are poor.

Young women receive satisfactory education within the home. Levels of attendance in lessons and placements are generally good. Young women make good progress academically, and with vocational and personal life skills. A number of areas were identified as in need of improvement including consistency of behaviour management and providing lessons which sufficiently challenge learning.

The management team know the strengths and weaknesses of the home and have two year development plan. The development plan includes areas that were covered in the requirements and recommendations at the last licensing inspection in April 2011, how these were met and being further developed and the new facilities that are currently being developed such as the outside activity areas.

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 |
|--------------|---|------------|
| 11 (2001) | make proper provision for the welfare of children accommodated; specifically, ensure that young people see a medical professional after any incident that has or may impact upon their health (Regulation 11(1)(a)) | 04/06/2012 |

Recommendations

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

- ensure that each child's plan is monitored by a key worker within the home, who ensures that the requirements of the plan are implemented in the day-to-day care of that child; specifically ensure that care plans set out young people's holistic assessed needs and how these needs will be met (NMS 25.2)

- ensure the views of children about how the home contributes to their overall care plan must be taken into account by the Registered Manager and staff (Volume 5, statutory guidance, para 2.27)
- ensure staff are able to maintain safe, consistent and understandable boundaries for the young women. This specifically relates to the need to maintain up-to-date risk assessments and behaviour management plans that reflect practice developments. (NMS 21.2)
- ensure a written record is kept which includes details of actions taken and the outcome of any action or investigation, following a notifiable events.(NMS 24.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

From the point of admission young people have access to a range of health services which are provided at the home or in the local community. This helps to ensure young people's health improves and they have measureable positive outcomes. Young people also have access to mental health services. Psychological and psychiatric services provide young people with very good support and care which result in positive interventions and improved emotional and mental well-being. These services also provide staff with guidance and support groups. This means they are more effective in their work with young people and outcomes for the young people have improved as a result.

Staff work hard to ensure that young people have a good understanding of their background, including the reasons why they are looked after in secure care. These reasons are explored with young people to help them develop skills to keep themselves safe for when they return to the community. Staff work closely with young people to develop positive relationships. This in turn enables them to support young people to develop a positive self-view and increased self-esteem.

External services such as those relating to drug and alcohol misuse and sexual health are commissioned by the home. These services visit the home very regularly and provide young people with information and education on these matters. This benefits young people as they begin to understand the effects alcohol, drug misuse and sexual behaviours can have on their health; young people are thus supported to develop a healthy lifestyle and avoid risky behaviours.

An appropriate balanced diet is provided for young people, which helps promote their health and well-being. Young people are consulted about menus and actively contribute to them. A nutritionist advises on the menus and confirms that the food provided is healthy and balanced. Young people's likes and dislikes are considered and their dietary needs in relation to health, religion and culture are catered for.

Young people's achievements are good. While levels of accreditation are relatively low, there has been a very successful move to enable young people to gain substantial and nationally recognised qualifications such as Business and Technician

Education Council (BTEC) awards and more of these will be achieved as the year progresses. In the last year 10, full BTEC awards have been achieved by young people including the BTEC level 1 and level 2 awards in caring for horses and level 1 awards in caring for children. These courses are complemented well by good quality and very successful work experience in local stables and nurseries. In addition young people have achieved a total of 37 individual BTEC awards, including some at level 2. Subjects have included food preparation, parenting, antenatal care and preparation for birth, together with further horse care units achieved by young people whose length of stay prevented them gaining a full award. Young people also gained a total of 74 qualifications at various levels in numeracy and literacy and most make good progress in these key subjects. Other qualifications gained include basic food preparation and information and communications technology (ICT).

Punctuality to lessons is generally good. Attendance, including authorised absence, has improved and is now good at over 90%. However, there are issues around unauthorised absence where a small number of young people refuse to attend education.

Appropriate to their age and understanding, staff assist young people to learn skills for adulthood. They undertake a range of tasks such as learning to keep living and bedroom areas tidy and clean, planning a menu, shopping for food items and cooking.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy positive relationships with staff. Young people recognise that at times their behaviour can be challenging, though they stated they think highly of staff who are tolerant and help support them.

The management of young people's behaviour by staff is inconsistent. There is some good behaviour management that encourages young people to develop positive behaviour. However, not all negative or anti-social behaviour is appropriately challenged and addressed. This means young people are not always supported to develop positive social skills and an understanding of appropriate behaviour.

There are a good range of activities for young people. Staff plan ahead, especially for holiday periods, ensuring that young people are engaged with interests that they enjoy. Young people take an active part in choosing and planning activities. They are supported to maintain a healthy lifestyle through physical activities such as use of the fitness suite, boxercise, hip-hop dancing and badminton.

Young people's views are considered and taken into account in the running of the home. For example, they help plan activities, menu development and have contributed to the review of the incentive scheme. They know how to make a complaint and feel confident in doing so should they need to. There is easy access to complaints forms and information. All complaints are taken seriously and young

people's concerns are robustly addressed. An advocacy service visits regularly to provide young people with independent support and advice and information is displayed with contact details for this service.

Each young person has a care plan that sets out some of their needs but they lack detail. They do not set out a young person's holistic needs and how these will be met. Young people have not been involved in developing their plan nor have they had their say on the content. Young people's needs in the areas of culture, religion and identity are identified and staff work with young people to meet these needs.

Young people benefit from, and have access to, a range of appropriate external services. A General Practitioner visits the centre regularly and is available in an emergency. Young people access community health services as required, such as the dentist and opticians. Mental health professionals provide a direct service to young people at the home. However, not all young people see a health professional after an incident.

The quality of teaching and learning is variable and but satisfactory overall. Some lessons have considerable strengths but the level of challenge and expectations are inconsistent. As a result young people do not always make the progress they are capable of.

In the successful and sometimes very successful lessons, teachers' expectations, both in terms of what young people can achieve and how they will behave, are high. Young people enjoy the challenges they are presented with and work enthusiastically and diligently to achieve their objectives. For example, in a very successful physical education (PE) lesson, young people made very good progress working in teams with "fitballs" to illustrate how the use of these can improve the strength of certain muscles. Initially unsure that they could achieve the very challenging tasks set, young people worked together with determination and great enthusiasm to succeed in this activity. In a beauty therapy lesson, young people made good progress in their understanding of hand and arm massage techniques and used very technical language confidently and competently. Young people's behaviour and engagement in these lessons were excellent and learning took place in a calm and productive atmosphere.

However, in too many lessons, young people are not challenged sufficiently by the activities set. Young people too often refused to engage and their behaviour deteriorated, sometimes to unacceptable levels. Swearing and the use of inappropriate language was sometimes not challenged or challenged ineffectively. On a few occasions, young people rather than the teacher determined what they would do in the lesson. Sometimes, this situation was managed well and negotiated skilfully by teachers. For example, in an English lesson a young person was initially reluctant to engage in an activity. The teacher negotiated an alternative approach to the task the young person would do. As a result the young person took part in the lesson and made good progress and achieved her objectives. On other occasions though, young people were allowed to carry out other tasks with no negotiation or did not engage at all.

There has been considerable curriculum development this year, especially in vocational education with the introduction of a range of courses such as horse care, childcare and more generic topics such as preparation for interview. Young people experience a variety of subjects through the school day. Mathematics and English are taught on most days and young people benefit from good quality PE lessons three times each week, which make a good contribution to them maintaining healthy lifestyles. The Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) curriculum is complemented by input from outside agencies. Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is taught discretely as well as being applied across the curriculum. Food technology, child development, art and beauty therapy provide good opportunities for young people to develop practical skills in these subjects, although the resources for beauty therapy are at present poor and prevent young people gaining important salon skills. A reading slot has been recently introduced at the end of each day and while this is a good innovation, a review of what learning takes place in these sessions is required.

Young people benefit from generally good support in education. Teaching assistants provide good support in many lessons by helping young people to concentrate and remain on task. On a few occasions, teaching assistants are a little overly directive and complete some work on behalf of young people.

An initial assessment of young people's abilities in literacy and numeracy is carried out in a timely way using a variety of appropriate methods. These include aspects of adult literacy and numeracy which are combined with national curriculum levels to determine a young person's starting point. No free writing is currently included in the initial assessment process. The information resulting from the initial assessment is shared with teaching staff so as to inform lesson planning and delivery. There is no formal procedure to share this information and its implications for young people with residential staff. Currently there is no formal assessment for dyslexia.

Additional learning support, focusing largely on developing literacy, is provided where required through withdrawal from timetabled lessons. In addition, some young people benefit from support with their personal development through individualised sessions where young people discuss some often very sensitive issues such as emotions and self-esteem, so as to further develop their emotional literacy.

Input from Connexions is provided on demand, but there is little liaison between the service and the young person's home Connexions service. The education department is proactive in gaining information from young people's previous establishments where applicable and provides information for future educational placement.

Medication is stored securely, which helps to keep young people safe. Medication administration is fully recorded to show that young people received the medication they need, when they need it, to stay healthy and well. At the time of the inspection none of the young women were able to self-medicate due to the risks to themselves and others.

The home is appropriately designed and maintained, and provides good security. Young people have communal areas to relax and eat meals. They can personalise their bedrooms and there is appropriate furnishings and décor throughout. The home therefore provides a good environment conducive to the positive care of young people.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young women report that they feel supported and cared for in the unit. They feel that they can share any fears or anxieties with the staff and that these will be treated seriously and acted upon. Members of staff are aware of what to do in the event that they have concerns about a young person's well-being. Staff understand the vulnerability of individual young women.

There is a clear complaints process which is readily available and appropriately used by the young women. They are aware of the system and know the various adults and organisations to whom they can complain, which includes independent advocates. The manager addresses complaints promptly and ensures that the young people understand the resolution to any complaints they have made. Young people express their feelings and opinions openly.

Young women spoken with did not identify bullying as a problem. However there are times when incidents occur where young people can behave in a verbally or physically aggressive manner toward each other. Young women are advised and informed about the issues of bullying and understand that it is not acceptable. Young women stated that staff deal with issues swiftly when they happen.

Staff treat young people as individuals and sanctions are imposed in line with their level of understanding and ability although there is inconsistency in practice. Some young women feel that on occasions sanctions are dealt with differently by staff subsequently leaving them feeling unfairly treated.

Room searches and physical searches are undertaken appropriately including searching for missing items and possible contraband.

The home cares for young women with some very complex needs and challenging behaviours. There have been 178 incidents involving the use of physical restraint recorded in the last year. The frequency of physical interventions has however reduced from the previous year. Staff receive restraint training as part of their induction with regular refresher training provided. The unit has introduced a wider range of training and approaches to look at how to resolve conflict without the need for restraint. The approach incorporates increased options of resolution which has led to a reduction in actual restraints of approximately a third. Young women report that they feel staff use restraint only when needed to keep them and others safe and staff do not hurt them during such incidents. A new system has been introduced where young people are encouraged to complete reflective accounts of incidents

involving restraint or single separation so as to gain a greater insight into their experience of the situation. Well kept records confirm that restraint is only used to keep young women safe.

The use of single separation is appropriate but the occasions when such measures are implemented have increased. Dedicated logs are used to record every situation where single separation is carried out. These records clearly show that young women are regularly monitored while in their rooms, the length of time they are separated and the reasons why. Since the last licensing inspection there have been 602 episodes of directed or enforced separations.

Suitable guidance is in place to address behaviour management; however this is not implemented consistently. Each young woman has a behaviour management plan which identifies behaviour that is potentially dangerous to themselves or others. The plans contain basic objectives of how behaviours are to be dealt with by the staff team. During the inspection, observations and feedback from staff and young people found that behaviour management strategies and protocols were not always adhered to, leaving young people feeling frustrated and unfairly treated.

The approach to risk assessment is not sufficiently robust. Guidance for staff about how some particularly concerning situations should be dealt with were unclear. These included matters involving self-harmful behaviours. There was also no assessment in place to address the passing of objects between young people during the school day that could be subsequently smuggled back to the unit for the possible purpose of self-harm. This is despite similar incidents occurring previously.

Behaviour management was also raised as an issue within the school day and the approach of teaching staff. It was reflected that in too many lessons young people were not challenged sufficiently by the activities set. Young people too often refused to engage and their behaviour deteriorated, sometimes to unacceptable levels. Swearing and the use of inappropriate language was sometimes not challenged at all or challenged ineffectively.

There are comprehensive systems to address child protection issues. These are understood by members of staff and acted upon. Issues of note or concern are reported to the relevant agencies such as the Local Authority Designated Officer. All members of staff have attended training in child protection and know what to do and who to inform if they have concerns about a young person's well-being. Records indicate that this is achieved effectively and promptly with the manager checking and monitoring any records or CCTV footage that may relate to safeguarding issues.

A multi-disciplinary team contributes to care planning and supports staff to develop strategies to care for the young women. There is an experienced night staff team who have regular supervision and have access to a comprehensive range of training. Night staff have detailed handovers when commencing their duties and liaise with senior staff and duty managers and are consulted regarding care practices.

Travel arrangements for the young women are agreed with placing authorities before

they are taken out of the secure environment. The registered provider has a 'Runaway and Missing from Home and Care' protocol in place with the local police and staff know the procedure to be followed should a young woman go missing. No one has gone missing from the home since the last inspection.

A good system is in place covering the staff recruitment procedure and the unit maintains copies of all relevant checks. This helps to ensure that staff working with the young women are suitable to care for them.

Risk assessments address the general building and fire safety. Fire equipment is regularly checked and young people are aware of what to do in the event of a fire.

Leadership and management

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

The seconded manager has applied to become the registered manager. The senior staff team work together to develop systems and strategies to move the unit forward and improve outcomes for the young women.

A comprehensive Statement of Purpose is available at the home, which is made available to social workers, parents and carers. The home operates in line with its stated objectives. An easy to understand children's guide is produced; young people confirmed they were supplied with a copy on arrival.

Staff are positive about their roles and this was reflected in conversation and questionnaires. There has been a number of new staff employed since the last inspection. The staff commented on receiving satisfactory levels of support and feel confident dealing with and supporting particularly challenging behaviours presented by some young women.

Sufficient staffing levels ensure that both group and individual needs are met. Members of staff undertake regular training which provides them with skills, knowledge and competencies required to meet the needs of the young people. Members of staff receive regular supervision, informal supervision and yearly appraisals. Team meetings provide an opportunity for staff to discuss practice and keep up-to-date with any issues related to the care of the young people.

The Regulation 33 monthly monitoring visits are undertaken as required. Reports reflect and take account of the views of young people and staff. The management team undertake regular monitoring of practice in line with Regulation 34 requirements. A report on the findings of the Regulation 34 review helps the provider identify and evaluate trends and issues that may need to be addressed.

At the last inspection the unit received no requirements or recommendations. The home has however a development plan which has identified areas for improvement. Some of these areas are already being implemented such as the outside activity spaces that have been created for the use of the young women. An extension is also

currently being built which will offer improved facilities. The management and staff have continued to implement the computer system which holds the unit records and the case records for each of the young women.

All records required to be held are available although not all are as accurate and detailed as required. All significant events relating to the protection of young people are notified to the appropriate authorities. However, written notifications are unclear in reporting the actual details of the event in question with some terminology being misleading.

Leadership and management within education are good. The headteacher has a clear and largely accurate picture of the quality of education within the department, especially with regard to the quality of teaching and learning. She is aware of the areas for development and there is a clear vision for the department as detailed in the school development plan.

Staff benefit from good access to professional development. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together as a team and communications, through a range of informal and formal methods, are good. There is a clear and effective structure within the department and staff understand their roles, responsibilities and accountabilities.

The department has benefited from good support from the school improvement service within the local authority. They have provided support in areas such as leadership and management, learning and teaching and subject specific support in English, PSHE and ICT. Some joint lesson observations with the school improvement service have been carried out and this has provided a valuable external view on the quality of teaching and learning and confirmed the headteacher's largely accurate evaluations.

The department prepared a detailed self-evaluation which highlighted many aspects of strengths and areas for development found during the inspection. However, some of the overall judgements in the self-evaluation were slightly generous and without enough input from teachers and subject leaders.

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.