

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Shaun Common / Paul Taylor
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is managed by a local authority and provides a total of 18 secure places for children and young people.

Two units each provide care for six boys and the other unit caters for six girls. The home has education on site.

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.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service of high quality 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 **good**.

Young people have very positive relationships with staff. High quality care is provided, which helps to ensure positive outcomes for young people. Young people have highly individualised care plans that determine their holistic needs and how these needs will be met.

Young people's views are considered, taken seriously and contribute to the day-to-day running of the home. They have good access to a range of health services and professionals, and make positive progress in education. They are supported to develop a range of skills that helps to prepare them for transition back into the community and adult life.

Young people are kept safe through robust safeguarding systems and processes that are delivered effectively by staff, and monitored by managers. They are well cared for by a qualified, well trained and knowledgeable staff team. Managers have good oversight of all aspects of provision ensuring shortfalls are addressed and that the quality of care provided to young people continues to improve.

Areas for improvement include; ensuring records of restraint are completed in a

timely manner, reviewing the incentive scheme, ensuring that young people always have the opportunity to see a health professional following physical restraint, and that the children's guide is available in suitable formats.

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
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of restraint, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose. (Regulation 17B(3))	01/08/2012

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 behaviours are clear, reasonable and fair and are understood by all staff and children; specifically review the incentive scheme so there are suitable incentives at all levels of the scheme that encourage positive behaviour and support young people's progression (NMS 3.8)
- ensure that children are always given the opportunity to be examined by a registered nurse or medical practitioner following any incident requiring the use of physical restraint (NMS 3.16)
- ensure, where appropriate and when required, that the children's guide is available through suitable alternative methods of communication. (NMS 13.6)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people benefit from well thought out individualised support, which helps them develop their life skills and social skills, and make significant progress. Young people thrive from being able to form trusting relationships with members of staff and are offered good support with clear consistent routines and behavioural boundaries. This enables them to make sense of their histories and background and to feel valued and respected. A young person stated, 'It was the right place for me. I find it very safe here.'

Young people prosper from having their specific health needs well met. They have ready access to a psychiatrist and on-site clinical and psychiatric nurses. This specialist input enables a young person's emotional well-being and stability to be promoted to a particularly high standard. Advice and guidance from the staff team and other specialists, such as sexual health and substance misuse teams, if needed, ensures that young people develop awareness and understanding of risks associated with certain behaviours.

Young people are able to have contact with friends and family and other people important to them. If contact is not permitted or needs to be supervised, young people are made aware of the reasons for this. Members of staff support young people sensitively and they encourage and enable visits to take place in a positive environment.

Young people make significant progress with their education. They gain from living in an environment where their access to education is valued and promoted and their educational achievements significantly improve. Attendance is excellent and young people benefit from a culture where attendance and the value of education are embedded in the routine. Young people experience success within education, often for the first time in their lives. A young person said, 'Education has been one of the best things here.' Young people benefit from having well-planned work experience placements and transition programmes to college and further education in the community, where this is deemed appropriate and safe.

Young people are supported to learn and develop life and social care skills within the home and in the wider community, where appropriate. They are enabled, through sensitive and thoughtful staff support, to engage in independent skills programmes which are specific to their abilities and needs. As a result young people make good progress in their social and practical skills. For instance, young people regularly go shopping and cook for themselves as well as learning budgeting skills. These specific, individualised and well-planned programmes enable young people to prepare for independent living and adult life when they return to live in the community.

The structure and strategies put in place to support the young people to manage their behaviour enables them to become more settled and leads to a significant decrease in risk-taking behaviours. One young person said, 'I don't lose it as much as I used to.'

Quality of care

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

Young people live in a child-centred environment that provides them with an excellent standard of care. Young people feel that they are treated fairly and with respect. The centre's ethos and working practices focus on implementing, developing and maintaining positive and trusting relationships with young people as they arrive. The staff team are skilled in this aspect.

Staff deal with and respond very positively to testing and significant challenge by the young people's behaviour. This helps young people to settle and reinvest into a more ordered lifestyle. As a result, young people experience trusting relationships with appropriate adults. This gives them opportunities to develop a more positive view of themselves, leading to a significant improvement in their ability to form attachments and develop emotional resilience. A parent stated, 'We were impressed by the very calm atmosphere, and the staff's kind and caring attitude.'

Young people speak very positively about their ability to influence certain aspects of the centre's day-to-day operation, such as activities and menus. They recognise and value the council meetings held monthly between senior staff and young people. This is a forum where their views are represented and changes can be made to the running of the home. Those young people representing and presenting the views of their peers take their responsibilities seriously. This assists them to develop both their communication skills and self-confidence. Young people are also able to share their views with key workers, managers and external professionals such as independent advocates and social workers. This helps to create an open and constructive culture.

Strong relationships, underpinned with excellent communication between young people and staff, gives young people the confidence to air their views and opinions, making use of the natural interaction taking place daily. This allows young people to have an immediate and positive impact on some aspects of the centre's operation. It also encourages them into making more appropriate and informed decisions about themselves and others.

Young people understand the complaints procedure. Complaints are taken seriously and acted upon in a timely manner. Anyone making a complaint is now provided with a personal letter containing the outcome of the complaint, along with details of how the matter can be taken further if not satisfied. Young people have access to independent advocates who can assist and support them through the complaints procedures, if necessary.

A comprehensive range of planning documents coupled with personalised strategies and risk assessments inform the centre's own excellent care plans. Young people's plans are individualised covering all aspects of need, including their religion, culture and identity. Identified diverse needs are comprehensively met.

As well as the formal, statutory reviewing of plans that take place within required timescales, the centre has developed its own system where the plans, needs and progress made by a young person are reviewed by key staff on a three-weekly cycle. This provides a forum of accountability for those charged with responsibilities for undertaking certain tasks as laid out in the plans. Detailed minutes taken at this time charts improvement, identifies areas for continued need and evaluates progress. These minutes are added to the care planning package ensuring that plans are up to date. This is excellent practice and contributes to high quality care and the delivery of positive outcomes for young people.

Young people benefit from experiencing a range of positive and purposeful activities and leisure interests, many of which are new to them. This gives them opportunities to follow and to continue with any interest they have developed, once they leave the home. For example, one young person with the assistance of staff is exploring how to join a rugby club located in his home area. Young people provide positive feedback about the range and opportunities they have to participate in activities within the centre, or if on a mobility programme, which involves visits to the local community. For example, young people said, 'There is always something to do' and 'Staff are good at arranging activities.' While many activities promote exercise and general fitness, a number are designed for relaxation and to meet individual need and interests. For example, work is ongoing to create an area where chickens can be kept, which will utilise the skills of one young person currently accommodated.

The centre's location, design and size support its purpose and function as a secure children's home. The standard of maintenance, décor, fixtures, fittings, furnishings and equipment are of a high quality, providing young people with a safe and relaxing environment. Appropriate service contracts along with regular security and health and safety checks are in place to maintain a safe and positive environment.

A lot of improvements have been made to the building and its facilities since the previous inspection. Those directly affecting the quality of life for young people include: a refit of all the bathrooms located in young people's en suite bedrooms; replacement of lounge fixtures in two units; resurfacing of the play area; replacement of dining room furniture; and significant improvement to the facilities and equipment contained in the Gold/Platinum Lounge, an area available for those on a higher incentive level. Young people speak positively about these developments which they say has improved their comfort and lifestyle.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are well supported to develop socially acceptable behaviour through the use of an incentive scheme and detailed behaviour management plans that are implemented by staff. Plans detail young people's needs and how staff will provide support. Young people stated that the incentive scheme has good rewards and helps them to behave more positively. The incentive scheme contains different levels; bronze, silver, gold, platinum and graduate, through which young people can progress by improved or sustained positive behaviour. Some young people felt that the rewards provided on moving from gold to platinum level were not sufficient, and did not fully encourage progression because they only suited some young people and not all. Staff support young people's views about some aspects of the rewards system.

Sanctions are used appropriately, are varied and relevant to the misdemeanour. Records are accurately kept and show that young people have had the opportunity to comment on any sanction imposed upon them. This shows young people are encouraged to develop understanding and responsibility.

Staff are trained in the use of physical restraint and training is kept up to date. A risk assessment process identifies for staff any physical or health concerns a young person may have. Staff are briefed on any risks to the young person and this helps them to deliver safe practice. Physical restraint is used as a last resort and appropriately. Managers closely monitor all incidents through scrutiny of records and randomly viewing incidents on closed-circuit television. Through this monitoring, they can identify any concerns and ensure practice is safe and of a high standard. However, physical restraint records are not always completed in a timely manner and some information is not clear. For example, some records of incidents are completed five days after the incident, which is not contemporaneous and could affect the accuracy of the information. Some records do not show clearly whether a young person has been offered the opportunity to be seen by a health professional after an incident.

Young people stated they feel safe and they are kept safe. Young people undergo a thorough assessment of their needs on admission to determine any vulnerability and to identify the support they require. There is direct input from mental health professionals who support young people and advise staff on practice. This helps staff to keep young people safe. Young people have no concerns over bullying and have confidence that if there was any bullying, staff would address this.

Child protection matters are managed effectively and help to keep young people safe. Staff are trained and knowledgeable in the home's child protection procedures. Any concerns that are raised or identified are dealt with quickly through liaison with relevant professionals including the local authority designated officer and agencies. Safeguarding records show the concern and the processes followed to safeguard young people. Managers do not have strong links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). Managers have attempted to liaise with the Board and forge relationships, however oversight by the LSCB has not been forthcoming or sufficiently developed as set out in government guidance, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010.

No young people have absconded from the home or while out on visits into the local community. An appropriate policy and procedure is in place that is known by staff that will assist them in keeping young people safe, should an incident of absconding occur.

Routine searches take place of all living areas to ensure the environment is free from anything that could present a risk to young people. Individual searches of young people are carried out on a risk assessed basis on their arrival to the home and when they return after any period of time out of the home. Searches range from a pat down to a more thorough search. These processes are carried out sensitively and help to keep young people safe.

A thorough and robust recruitment process is in place. This ensures that the range of required checks needed are carried out fully before anyone is allowed to work at the home. The process determines that the right people are employed to work with

vulnerable children.

Leadership and management

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

There is good information provided for young people, parents, placing authorities and others about the home and the services it provides. The Statement of Purpose and children's guide are kept up to date and reviewed regularly. However, the home does not have provision to ensure that the children's guide is available for young people and others, as appropriate or required, in different formats or languages.

Care and ancillary staff are skilled, knowledgeable and qualified to deliver outstanding quality of care to young people and positive outcomes. They understand young people's needs, are knowledgeable of, and implement the home's policies and procedures. All staff are well supported and their training is kept up to date.

External monitoring takes place through monthly visits to each unit by a person independent of the home. They write a report reflecting the home's strengths and identifying any areas for improvement. This helps managers improve the care provided to young people.

Internal monitoring of the home is good and also covers the range of required matters. Any shortfalls are clearly identified through a number of different processes and measures put in place to secure improvement. Reports are sent to Ofsted as required to ensure that the regulator can monitor the home's progress and service delivery. Managers have addressed all the statutory requirements and recommendations identified at the last inspection. Young people now receive a letter informing them of the outcome of any complaint they have made. Child protection and search records are now well-kept and these demonstrate how young people are kept safe. The heating system is well-maintained and provides appropriately for young people's needs. Care and teaching staff work together to deliver an effective joined-up life-skills programme that prepares young people for adulthood. The children's guide advises young people about those they can contact for advice and support, and telephone checks are carried out to verify new employees written references. This ensures that staff employed are the right people to work with vulnerable children. The action taken demonstrates managers have a commitment to improving provision for the benefit of young people.

Managers and staff are effective at keeping parents and others informed about young people's care and progress. One parent whose child recently left the centre stated, 'Staff were good at keeping in contact with us and reporting any concerns and asking if we had any suggestions.'

A clear and robust development plan is in place. This sets out clearly areas for further improvement and what measures will be taken to further develop the service and improve outcomes for young people.

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.