

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Malcolm Stannard / Paul Taylor
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The centre 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 a separate purpose-built building. The centre is registered to accommodate up to 27 young people in one of the three living units available. There were 26 young people resident at the time of inspection.

Facilities available for young people's use include an artificial surface sports pitch, a sports hall, gym, garden areas and a courtyard containing a tennis court.

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**.

The centre's managers continue to drive forward a number of developments to enhance the care available for young people. There is a clear vision of the desired direction for the centre and a good understanding of the centre's weaknesses. A development plan covering all aspects of the centre's operation is used to measure progress.

The centre's particular strengths are resettlement and transition practice, an excellent enrichment provision, the individuality of young people's care plans and a high standard of health care. Staff receive good formal support and access to a range of training. All of these strengths ensure that young people receive good quality care with positive outcomes.

There is good monitoring of all occurrences at the centre and an excellent, transparent process for involving external professionals in assessments of practice. This helps to ensure that young people's welfare is protected.

An area for development is to ensure that all staff have a full understanding of the use of single separation and clarity in the recording when used.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure a record is kept of all uses of single separation. Specifically, ensure clarity of recording and staff understanding that only those events which meet the criteria for separation are to be recorded in the log held. (NMS 23.12)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are encouraged to follow a healthy lifestyle. They are, whenever possible, given opportunities to take responsibility for their own health, including the management of some medication. Young people receive support to understand key issues and risks relating to subjects such as smoking and substance misuse. They also have access to support from external professionals. This ensures that their physical and emotional health needs are met.

Young people make good progress in developing self-worth and confidence. They learn how to form appropriate relationships and this enables them to become emotionally resilient. Young people achieve good educational attainment and make significant progress from their starting points.

Young people participate in day-to-day and long-term decisions in relation to their time at the centre and future plans for them. They benefit from a staff team who are good at working with them to support changes in behaviour, including the completion of reduction in offending work. This helps young people to understand the consequences of their interactions with others.

Young people are effectively prepared for independence and adult life. This helps them to become more confident about their individual abilities. They benefit from effective preparation for successful transition to the community. Young people are able to develop and maintain appropriate contact with family members.

Young people enjoy a healthy and balanced diet. They contribute to menu compilation and have individual choices of food at mealtimes. They learn about healthy eating to enable them to benefit from the range of food available. Young people's dietary and cultural needs are accommodated to help promote their health and respect their individuality.

Quality of care

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

Clear routines and behavioural expectations enable young people to develop positive and constructive relationships with members of staff who in turn offer them good support and advice. The clear boundaries provided give young people opportunities and strategies to develop appropriate behaviour.

There is an established ethos in the centre which promotes the views and opinions of the young people. 'They do listen, they're patient' was a comment made by one young person. A young person's council meets on a regular basis and members are able to raise items for the agenda. The approach ensures that the young people feel they can raise issues in a formal arena and receive written responses from managers. The young people have been able to influence decisions in key areas such as the privilege system, activities and the menu. Additionally, young people are able to voice their opinions and feelings in more private situations such as key working sessions and time with members of staff.

The approach by the centre managers and staff ensures that young people have a good understanding of the complaints process. All young people are made aware of how to complain and to whom they can address their concerns. A number of professionals from both within the establishment as well as external and independent of the centre are readily accessible to the young people. Records of complaints show that they have been addressed promptly and are signed by the young people to show that they are satisfied with the resolution.

The sensitive staff support delivered clearly ensures that young people are assisted to understand why they may not have their wishes granted in certain situations. For example, members of staff will explain why there may be restrictions on certain contacts or why they may be unable to take part in some activities on occasion. The approach by staff to ensure that the young people understand these decisions is patient and delivered in a manner which is appropriate to each young person's individual understanding and cognitive ability.

Each young person has an individual support plan which outlines what their needs are and what targets need to be achieved in order for them to progress. The plans also address each young person's vulnerabilities and what strategies should be used to enable them to develop their behaviour positively and to enhance their own internal controls. The young people are involved in the development of their plans and are able to endorse them and make comments in order to show that they understand and agree. The approach means that the young people have a personal investment in the process.

Young people's health is promoted to a high standard. Many of the young people are admitted following periods of chaos and disruption in their lives and have had their own health needs neglected. A thorough assessment is undertaken and specialist input, such as psychological or psychiatric support, or support from a drugs advisory worker, is readily available. Additionally, conventional health needs, such as updating childhood immunisations and appointments with opticians and dentists, are arranged. The approach enables the young people to have a chance to address any health concerns and to live in an environment where their emotional and physical well-being

is valued and promoted.

Young people benefit from a robust system which ensures that medication is properly administered and that storage is secure, safe and subject to regular auditing and scrutiny. Young people are assessed as to whether it is appropriate and safe for them to look after and to administer their medication themselves.

Attendance at school and the value of education is embedded into the culture and ethos of the centre. Attendance levels are high in relation to young people's starting points when they are admitted. Young people benefit from the opportunities they have to attend school and to develop their educational achievements. One young person said, 'School has been one of the really good things for me here, I would never have taken exams if I hadn't been here.'

Close liaison between teaching and care staff ensures that everyone is up to date with each young person's progress or specific issues. There is a weekly assembly, attended by staff from both disciplines, where young people's progress and success can be acknowledged and celebrated.

Additionally, a member of staff timetables and arranges opportunities for young people to attend work experience and community projects, with a view to developing their social and life skills. This enables young people to complete something positive for the community and to have a sense of achievement. Young people also have opportunities within the centre to develop life and work skills by joining maintenance teams in redecoration and repair. This enables them to have an investment in their living environment as well as having the opportunity to develop vocational skills.

An excellent range of activities and interests is offered and encouraged. Young people benefit from enriching and positive use of their free time as well as having yet further opportunity to develop their life and social skills.

Each young person's identity and specific needs are known and met to a good standard. This is in relation to culture, religion or specific support due to conditions such as being on the autistic disorder spectrum or having mental health issues. Young people benefit from well-constructed, individual support plans which they themselves have endorsed. This ensures that young people's needs are met and that their identities are acknowledged and valued.

Young people are involved in events that promote other cultures and religions. This ensures that they receive cultural enrichment. For example, a world sports day is held to promote sports from around the world, as well as giving the young people the opportunity to taste a variety of foods and to learn about the different cultures. Religious needs are met and promoted. For example, an Imam and Christian ministers visit regularly.

The centre is well maintained and security is achieved to a robust standard. A well organised maintenance team ensures that décor issues and repairs are addressed promptly. Young people are encouraged to personalise their rooms with pictures and

posters in order to make them feel more comfortable and homely.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The staff at the centre ensure that young people's safety is given high priority within all aspects of the care provided. Systems relating to safeguarding young people within the centre are well organised and all staff understand them. There are professional and effective links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Regular meetings between the centre and the local authority designated officer help to review practice and develop ways of working with the young people. All incidents relating to safeguarding concerns are swiftly and fully recorded with a clear chronology of events and outcomes. Lessons learned from safeguarding incidents are shared where appropriate to develop safer practice.

Consultation with young people with regard to their safety is completed on a regular basis and staff have responded to areas when young people have highlighted concerns, such as the changing of mealtime serving. Records of complaints also show that, at times, young people are concerned about their safety and the behaviours of other young people, with some instances of bullying. The staff team respond effectively to these concerns. Records show work which has been completed with both the perpetrator and the victim. Young people are able to highlight specific staff to whom they would talk, if they felt unsafe.

The centre uses an effective range of behaviour management tools. Young people are able to discuss the system of points and levels, how they gain or lose points and also the rewards associated with each level. Behaviours are also responded to through a restorative justice model within the 'resolve and restore' system, to develop young people's awareness of the effects of their behaviours on others. When instances that require physical intervention occur, restraints are managed by competent, regularly trained staff. All restraints are fully recorded and then scrutinised by senior staff. Young people are debriefed to develop effective ways of working. Staff use interventions such as single separation and removal from the group. There is some confusion within the staff team relating to the use of these and how they are to be recorded to show how young people are being supported.

Searches of rooms to ensure safety are completed on a regular basis throughout the centre and these are appropriately recorded. Individual searches are recorded within differing recording tools, depending on the level of search.

Regular checks relating to health and safety issues are in place. A range of risk assessments are available relating both to the physical environment and young people's behaviours to promote safety across the site. Thorough recruitment checks continue to be completed on all staff prior to working with young people and Criminal Records Bureau checks are updated every three years to further support the protection of young people.

Leadership and management

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

The centre is effectively managed by the Registered Manager and a small, focused senior management team. There is clarity about the centre's objectives. These are set out in the statement of purpose and a recently produced vision document. A comprehensive business and development plan is available, the content of which demonstrates a good understanding of the centre's strengths and weaknesses. The Registered Manager takes appropriate action to tackle any identified weakness in provision quickly. The positive impact of some of these actions can be seen. The management team is always looking to improve the provision available. For example, they have introduced an NSPCC programme for young people identified as requiring additional support.

Young people receive good information about the centre and their rights and responsibilities while living there. A written guide is provided which is produced using child-friendly language. Staff support young people to ensure that they understand the content. All young people's information can be made available in differing formats and languages when required.

The Registered Manager receives support from an external manager and there is regular monitoring of practice by a senior member of the local authority. Internal monitoring is undertaken on a daily basis and all significant events are fully audited and assessed in order to identify any areas for practice development. There are sufficient staffing resources at the centre and there is a good blend of experienced and newer staff of both genders. This ensures that young people receive care from a member of staff to whom they feel able to relate.

Staff members are supported well to carry out their role with young people. There is regular formal supervision for all staff, as well as annual development appraisals. There is good provision for staff to receive relevant training. Staff undertake formal qualifications along with mandatory and relevant individual training for personal development. Staff with supervisory responsibilities undertake relevant courses and team and assistant team leaders undertake an appropriate level 4 qualification. A number of staff are training to lead on the updated Youth Justice Board recording system. In addition to formal courses, staff have access to fortnightly bite-size training sessions. These cover a range of subjects and enable staff to refresh their knowledge. All of these provisions assist staff to carry out their roles with young people proficiently. Managers demonstrate a clear desire and show support for sustained improvement in staff skills and practice.

Records held relating to individual young people clearly identify progress. These are kept up to date with relevant information about a young person's plan. The information available ensures that everybody is fully aware of the assessed needs and plans for each individual. This means that young people receive care relevant to their needs.

Evidence of a young person's progress since leaving the centre is available in some cases, particularly those where the resettlement worker has supported transition. This enables the impact the centre has had on young people to be evaluated. A robust system to remind local authorities of their responsibilities to a young person is available. However, this is rarely used due to the proactive approach taken by centre staff at reviews and planning meetings to ensure that appropriate planning for young people is in place.

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.