

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 centre is registered as a 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 within a school area equipped with purpose-built classrooms. The centre provides care and accommodation for up to eight young people.

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 are kept safe through sound safeguarding processes that are understood and implemented by all staff. Internal and independent monitoring assists in ensuring that practices are of a high standard and any areas for improvement are identified quickly and addressed.

Young people have good quality care plans that set out their individual needs. There are good relationships between staff and young people. This assists the delivery of good quality care, which helps ensure positive outcomes.

Young people are able to contribute their views about their care and the day-to-day running of the home. They feel included and are able to influence important decisions that affect their lives. They have good health, access to a range of health services and professionals and make positive progress in education. They receive good support, advice and guidance that helps to prepare them for the transition back into the community and adult life.

Young people are supported effectively to develop improved socially acceptable behaviour. Measures of control are implemented appropriately and monitored by managers to ensure that good quality safe care is delivered. Managers have good oversight of all aspects of the provision, ensuring that shortfalls are addressed. This facilitates improvement.

Areas for improvement include ensuring that the children's guide is reviewed and available in suitable formats; ancillary staff receive training in child protection and safeguarding children and that the centre's procedure and processes around absconding are in line with best practice and statutory government guidance. The centre's plan to ensure consistency of education staff is not yet implemented and complaints and their outcomes are not yet clearly recorded.

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
4 (2001)	ensure that all persons employed receive appropriate training; specifically that all ancillary staff who have contact with young people undertake training in child protection and safeguarding children. (Regulation 27(4)(a))	31/10/2012
27 (2001)	ensure that all persons employed receive appropriate training; specifically that all ancillary staff who have contact with young people undertake training in child protection and safeguarding children. (Regulation 27(4)(a))	31/10/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the centre's procedures are compatible with and have regard to Runaway and Missing from Home and Care (RMFHC) protocols. Specifically, ensure that young people who abscond are seen by someone independent of the home within 72 hours of their return and that this is reflected in the centre's procedures, in line with statutory government guidance (NMS 5.6)
- ensure that the children's guide includes a summary of how children can contact their independent reviewing officer or the Children's Rights Director (NMS 13.5)
- ensure that the overall number, competence and deployment of staff, specifically those employed to provide education, can fulfil the home's statement of purpose and meet the individual needs of all the children resident in the home. Specifically, ensure that the plan to address the consistency of staffing in education is fully implemented (NMS 17.1)
- ensure that there are clear and effective procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the home; specifically, ensure that all complaints and

their outcomes are recorded clearly. (NMS 21.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make good progress in developing their confidence and self-esteem. They experience positive, supportive relationships with members of staff and are seen to seek their company and reassurance.

Young people benefit from an environment where healthy living, healthy eating and exercise are part of the routine and expectations. They are provided with opportunities to expand their knowledge in areas such as sexual health and the risks of substance misuse. This provides them with the knowledge to make positive choices.

Young people receive a high standard of health care. In particular, their emotional and psychological well-being is promoted to an excellent standard. This helps to ensure that young people have good health outcomes.

Young people make significant progress in education. They have high levels of attendance and make considerable progress in consideration of their starting points prior to admission to the centre.

The centre's rules, routines and staff support, enable young people to develop skills in managing their behaviours and this leads, in most cases, to a significant reduction in challenging behaviour. A young person stated, 'I don't get as angry as I used to.'

Young people are able to have contact with their relatives, friends and others to maintain important relationships and attachments. Meetings can occur in private if appropriate. Young people are able to use the telephone regularly to keep in touch with family and friends. Young people are aware of any restrictions on contact arrangements and why these have been imposed.

Young people benefit from detailed transition plans. They receive supportive programmes tailored to meet their individual needs. Members of staff are seen to work effectively with other agencies and advocate on behalf of the young people. This ensures that they are prepared effectively for adulthood and a return to life in the community.

Quality of care

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

Staff provide good role models and clear boundaries and expectations. This enables young people to feel that they are cared for consistently and safely. In turn young people enjoy respectful and warm relationships with the staff. Interactions between members of staff and young people are seen to be good humoured and relaxed.

Clear and well thought out care plans provide details on how each young person is cared for and their needs met. Various strategies are implemented to enable young people to progress in developing life and coping skills. Care plans reflect any specific needs a young person may have, such as cultural, religious or health needs, or those related to a specific health condition. Members of staff work closely with the young people and help them to understand their backgrounds and histories. This helps them to recognise that they can make positive choices and decisions and how they can influence their life chances.

A multi-disciplinary team involving psychologists, a psychiatrist, nursing staff, substance misuse workers and care staff ensures that young people have their emotional needs met to an excellent standard. The care provided is very individualised, built around each young person and takes into account their abilities and vulnerabilities.

Young people have access to a range of other health services, which helps ensure that they are healthy, fit and well. For example, they attend medical, optical and dental appointments, which have often been missed and neglected due to the turbulent and unsettled lifestyles prior to admission.

Young people's views are valued and encouraged. Young people's meetings take place regularly and the young people decide the agenda. This practice enables them to voice their opinions in a group setting if they wish. Young people's meetings have influenced and changed aspects of the home's procedures and routines such as menus, décor and activities. Additionally, staff ensure that each young person has identified personal time set aside for them to discuss their feelings, plans or any other issues they may wish to raise. The young people also have ready access to managers on a daily basis. They are visited regularly by independent advocates, their social workers and legal representatives. This ensures there are a number of avenues for young people to attain and receive support and guidance.

Young people have access to information on complaints and are able and confident to use this system if required. Complaints or concerns are addressed and resolved promptly, although the recording in one case was not completely clear to show all the details of the process and the full outcome.

The value of education is embedded in the ethos of the home. Attending school is an established part of the routine. Young people are supported well to attend and achieve by all staff at the centre; for example, young people receive homework and are supported by staff to complete this. Young people all spoke very positively about the quality and experience of education at the centre.

Young people are offered a good variety of purposeful and enriching activities and where appropriate this includes the opportunity to take part in activities in the community. Examples of opportunities young people engage in include cadets, the cinema and shopping. A young person stated, 'they do keep us busy.'

The centre is appropriately secure and fit for purpose. It is well-maintained and decorated and conducive to the secure care of young people. Young people are able and encouraged to personalise their bedrooms, which gives them a sense of belonging.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people stated that they feel safe. They have no worries about bullying and felt that any issues were addressed quickly by staff. On admission, young people's needs are thoroughly assessed. Any needs are identified, including vulnerability. Appropriate plans are put in place and addressed by staff. Young people are also provided with support by Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) professionals who advise and guide staff with the direct care of young people. This also helps staff to keep young people safe.

Child protection matters are addressed well and help to keep young people safe. Most staff are trained in the home's child protection procedures and all understand and implement them when required. However, ancillary staff have not received this training to assist them to better understand how to protect young people. Child protection concerns that have come to light since the last inspection have been fully addressed. Where staff practice has not been of the very highest standards expected, managers have identified the issues and robustly addressed them with those relevant staff. For example, managers have intervened when recording has not been clear. Records are kept of all such matters that show the concern and the processes followed to safeguard young people. Managers have strong links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board and the local authority designated officer (LADO). Any safeguarding concerns are shared quickly with the LADO who has oversight of all matters. The LADO provides guidance and advice and quality assures the centre's processes.

Young people are very well supported to develop socially acceptable behaviour. Staff and managers develop and implement detailed behaviour management plans, which set out the support young people need. The centre has an incentive scheme that is well understood by young people and assists them to develop positive social skills. Young people progress through the various levels of the scheme gaining rewards for improved behaviour.

Sanctions are used to deter young people from negative behaviour and are appropriate to the misdemeanour. The centre also employs a restorative approach with young people. Young people are educated to understand what they have done wrong and the impact their behaviour has on others. They then choose to engage in an appropriate activity to put right or make good what they have done wrong. Records are accurately kept of reparation and sanctions. These indicate that young people have had the opportunity to discuss their behaviour, comment upon it and show they are encouraged to develop understanding and responsibility.

The use of single separation is appropriate and fully and accurately recorded to show the reasons for its use. When young people are separated, close monitoring and observations take place to keep young people safe.

Physical restraint is only used as a last resort and where it is used, it is implemented appropriately. All staff are trained in the use of physical restraint, which is kept up to date. Managers closely monitor all incidents through scrutiny of records and randomly viewing incidents on closed-circuit television. Any concerns that arise are followed up and addressed through appropriate procedures. This ensures that practice is of a high standard and there is commitment to safeguarding young people and improving the quality of care.

A policy and procedure is in place that is known by staff that assists them in keeping young people safe, should an incident of absconding occur. There has been one incident of absconding since the last inspection while a young person was out on mobility. The incident was managed appropriately in line with the procedure and the young person was found and returned quickly to the centre. However, the procedure and associated records do not show that the young person should be seen by someone independent of the home on their return to offer support, advice and guidance.

Individual searches of young people are carried out on a risk assessed basis. For example, searches may occur when young people arrive at the centre for the first time or when they have been out on a planned mobility programme. There are different types of searches used, dependent on risk and vulnerability. These processes are carried out sensitively, respect young people's dignity and help to keep them safe. Routine searches take place of all living areas to ensure the environment is free from anything that could present a risk to young people.

No new staff have been recruited since the last inspection. There is a policy and procedure in place for safe recruitment that ensures a range of required checks are carried out before anyone is allowed to work at the home. The process ensures 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**.

The centre provides good information for placing authorities, parents and others in the Statement of Purpose. The document is reviewed regularly and is kept up to date. The statement sets out clearly what services the centre provides. Young people are provided with a children's guide to the centre. This contains good information for them on what the centre is like and what they can expect. However, the guide does not inform young people how they can contact the Children's Rights Director or their independent reviewing officer for additional advice and guidance. It is also not available in any different formats; for example in a different language for young people whose first language is not English. It is also not available in a format for young people who may have a learning difficulty or difficulty with reading.

Care and ancillary staff receive good support that assists them to deliver good quality care to young people. They receive regular formal supervision, attend regular staff meetings and feel managers are approachable. Care staff are knowledgeable about the needs of young people, are well-trained and qualified.

There is a sufficient number of care and teaching staff to ensure young people receive a good quality service. However, the majority of the teaching and learning support team are temporary or provided by an agency. Young people are not adversely affected as the same staff are used and they are making good progress with positive outcomes and achievements. However, arrangements do not provide permanence of staff and this could impact upon young people's development. A clear and robust plan is in place to fully address this matter, though this has not yet been implemented.

A good quality development plan is in place. This sets out what the centre intends to undertake and achieve in the near future to improve service delivery to young people and improve their outcomes. The centre has shown a commitment to continuous improvement to benefit young people. A statutory requirement and two recommendations from the last inspection have been acted upon. Staff now receive regular formal supervision, summary reports of managers monitoring has been sent to Ofsted and a clear plan is in place to improve consistency in teaching staff in the education department.

External monitoring of the home is good and helps managers to improve the quality of care provided to young people. A person independent of the centre visits each month and a report is produced about each visit. The report reflects the home's strengths and areas for improvement, which are acted upon to benefit young people. Reports are sent to Ofsted in a timely manner.

Internal monitoring of the home is good. There is scrutiny of recording, systems and processes. Shortfalls are identified and action taken to improve provision and the care provided to 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.