

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Shaun Common / Andrew Hewston
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The centre is operated by a voluntary organisation. It is registered as a secure children's home and is approved by the Secretary of State to provide secure care and accommodation.

The centre can accommodate 12 young people of either gender in two purpose built living units. Education is provided on site and facilities include outdoor exercise areas and a sports hall.

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 **adequate**.

The centre has a number of areas of strength and good practice that benefit young people. However, leadership and management lack rigour and opportunities to improve are not always identified and acted upon.

There are excellent relationships between staff and young people. Young people speak highly of staff who care for them, and feel they make progress and are kept safe. Safeguarding matters are dealt with well and strong links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) ensure that practice is robust and young people are kept safe.

Care planning is individualised and sets out clearly how young people will be cared for and supported. Young people's views are listened to, taken seriously and acted upon for the most part. They are well supported by staff to improve their behaviour and to develop positive social skills.

Health and education are very well promoted and delivered leading to positive progress and good outcomes for young people. Care and education staff work closely together to support young people to attain and achieve.

Staff are very experienced, qualified and well-trained to care effectively for young

people. However, staff only receive adequate formal support to further develop their skills and deliver good quality care to young people.

External monitoring is good and this ensures that strengths and areas for improvement are identified. Internal monitoring is adequate. Shortfalls are not always identified and acted upon and the views of young people, their parents and placing authorities are not sufficiently utilised in monitoring activity to secure further improvement.

Other areas for improvement include: ensuring sanction records are fully completed and young people can have their views recorded; that young people's views in keyworker sessions and forums are acted upon; that formal responses are provided to young people about the outcome of any complaint; that the children's guide is available in different formats appropriate to young people's needs and summary reports of monitoring are completed and sent to Ofsted every six months.

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 each entry to the sanction record includes the effectiveness of the use of the measure; where this is recorded, ensure that this is accurate (Regulation 17B(3)(f))	31/12/2012
27 (2001)	ensure that all persons employed receive appropriate supervision and appraisal; specifically to the level determined by the centre's policy (Regulation 27(4)(a))	31/12/2012
34 (2001)	maintain the system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 and for improving the quality of care provided; specifically ensure that all matters are robustly monitored and that shortfalls are identified and acted upon (Regulation 34(1))	30/11/2012
34 (2001)	ensure the established monitoring system provides for consultation with children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities (Regulation 34(3))	30/11/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure children understand how their views have been taken into account, and where significant wishes or concerns are not acted upon, they are helped to

understand why (NMS 1.2)

- ensure children receive prompt feedback on any concerns or complaints raised and are kept informed of progress (NMS 1.6)
- ensure that where sanctions are used, children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records kept by the home (NMS 3.18)
- ensure that where a child requires it, the children's guide is available through suitable alternative methods of communication (NMS 13.6)
- ensure that everyone working in the home understands their roles and responsibilities; specifically ensure that managers communicate formally and clearly with staff about relevant issues decided in management meetings that affect the care of the young people or the operation of the home (Volume 5, statutory guidance, para 3.24)
- complete summary reports of monitoring under Regulation 34 at six monthly intervals and send a copy of every report to Ofsted within 28 days of completion. (Volume 5, statutory guidance, para 3.14)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people benefit from a range of services and support that centre staff and external professionals provide. Young people's self-esteem is developed and improves through sensitive approaches to individuals' care and appropriate reward structures. Parents and social workers state that young people have improved significantly at the unit, including their behaviour, attitude and levels of concentration. A young person stated that they had 'got a lot better at listening to other people and understanding their point of view.' A parent also stated that their daughter was 'getting used to trusting adults as well as developing an awareness of how to keep themselves safe.'

Strong and well-organised admission arrangements ensure that young people's health is assessed at the start of their placement and this helps to form the care plan. Immediate health needs identified are responded to, for example dental work or visits to an optician. In the longer term, mental health assessments guide staff in the most appropriate ways to respond to young people. This has led to improvements for young people, including decreasing levels of self-harm, significant reductions in aggressive behaviours and the development in their ability to form appropriate relationships.

All young people improve in their educational attainment. The education department responds to the interests of young people and helps them to develop skills in both creative and academic areas. A parent stated that the school report they received from the centre was 'the best that they had ever had.' The education department communicates with previous school placements to ensure that young people progress and achieve in a wide range of Assessment and Qualifications Alliance

(AQA) subjects.

Young people make a positive contribution to the community. The centre supports differing charity events and young people are fully involved with the planning and involvement of these. For example, young people have raised money through a recent coffee morning for a cancer care and support charity, and the upcoming 'jeans for genes' day develops young people's awareness of diversity and supporting others. Young people are listened to and their views acted upon. There are forums to discuss current issues that help them to develop a responsibility for their behaviours and their own house unit. Young people are fully involved in their reviews and this ensures that they are central to the decision making process for their future plans.

An emphasis on contact arrangements allows young people to continue or further develop positive relationships with their families. Young people and their families are encouraged to communicate on a regular basis and this helps to support relationships when they leave the centre.

Young people develop a good range of independence skills through a programme that assesses their knowledge of areas such as laundry and budgeting. This is then followed up with practical exercises that further support young people to develop skills in how to manage in adult life.

Quality of care

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

Relationships between young people and staff are excellent. Young people enjoy the company of staff and are responsive to their requests. These relationships are enhanced by young people having dedicated key workers and meetings to examine issues pertinent to their lives and the reasons for their placement at the centre. Some young people find the secure living environment challenging and on occasions poor behaviour toward each other does occur. This is responded to through discussions with young people, both on an individual level and group basis within the young people's forums. Young people's views are taken seriously and carefully considered. However, the recording of key worker meetings and forum meetings occasionally do not always fully show that managers have reviewed and responded to concerns raised by the young people sufficiently.

Young people fully understand how to make a complaint or raise a concern. The majority of these are low-level and skilfully responded to by the staff team on an informal basis. Young people have access to an advocate with whom they can discuss any issues or concerns and who can provide independent support and advice. Complaints are fully investigated and records show that young people are formally responded to on almost all occasions. One complaint had been investigated, but formal feedback had not been provided to a young person.

Care planning is detailed and sets out young people's needs clearly and how they will be supported. These are written in line with information provided by the placing

authority. Plans are reviewed regularly to ensure that methods of care are consistent. The views of professionals, staff and young people are central to the review process; this supports the development of plans. Plans include information relating to contact and this is promoted effectively by the staff team. Social workers and parents state that communication from staff at the centre is of a high quality and that they are always able to talk to someone in relation to their young person. Care within the units is highly individualised with diverse needs being responded to. For example, through menus being developed to meet young people's cultural and religious needs.

The staff team respond well to the health needs of the young people. Supportive links are in place with mental health professionals who visit the home on a weekly basis and the centre nurse is a highly valued member of the staff team. Appropriate recording systems are in place to ensure that medication is administered regularly and safely by trained staff. Aspects of health promotion are intrinsic to life within the home. Sexual health forms a part of discussions with young people; healthy eating and lifestyles are carefully considered by meeting dietary needs and physical activity being promoted in the evenings.

Young people's placements are enhanced by the close working relationship between education and care staff. Information about young people's progress is shared and forms part of the behaviour management system of the unit. Young people are generally positive about education and discuss their achievements within classes. Care staff help to support young people in lessons. Outside of school, a range of activities are delivered that are responsive to young people's needs and interests, as well as being appropriate to cultural expectations. Young people are involved with group activities in areas, such as the gym, as well as time spent on their own. Other activities take place that stimulate young people's interests, such as flower arranging. Alternatively young people have time to spend on a more informal basis watching television or cooking.

The centre is well designed, allowing young people to spend time within comfortable and clean areas. Communal areas are spacious and well decorated, while individual bedrooms can be personalised with young people having responsibility to keep their own rooms tidy. Maintenance is robust with any issues being responded to in an appropriate timely fashion. The unit is sufficiently secure and new additional security arrangements are in place for the gym area, which is soon to be in operation.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people stated they feel safe at the centre. They have no concerns over bullying and stated that staff address this very quickly and take it very seriously.

The centre has a clear child protection procedure. Care and ancillary staff are fully aware of the procedure to follow, which helps them to keep young people safe. There have been two child protection concerns at the centre since the last

inspection. Both matters have been referred to local authority, but not considered by them as requiring investigation. The centre has then appropriately undertaken their own thorough investigation and records clearly demonstrate the process and outcome. Both matters required no further action.

There are strong links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) that ensures oversight of centre practices and assists managers to improve the safety and well-being of young people. A senior manager within the organisation is a member of the LSCB and the Registered Manager reports to the Board on behaviour management matters, such as physical restraints and any injuries.

The centre has a policy and procedure in place relating to searches of communal areas and for personal searches of young people. These are conducted to ensure that any items that pose a risk to young people are found and removed. Records are kept that detail each type of search and anything found, and show consideration is given to vulnerability and risk in promoting the dignity of young people.

Young people are assessed on admission for any risk or vulnerability. A care plan and risk assessment are developed, which are regularly reviewed and young people are very closely monitored throughout their stay. If there is any indication of increase in vulnerability, then action is taken to address this to keep young people safe.

Young people are supported to develop positive social skills and to improve their behaviour. They have very good relationships with staff and there is an incentive and rewards scheme that they fully engage in and understand. The scheme has levels from bronze to platinum that young people progress through by earning points for good behaviour. Each level has associated rewards and privileges. Young people feel that the incentive scheme helps them to improve their behaviour.

Where young people's behaviour is unacceptable, sanctions may be used. These are recorded with most information being clear. However, the effectiveness of the measure is not always being recorded or not recorded accurately, to show whether the sanction imposed is having the desired effect of stopping poor behaviour from reoccurring. Managers have regular meetings that monitor the use of sanctions, which ensures trends, patterns and effectiveness are considered. Young people do not routinely have the opportunity to have their comments recorded or to sign the record so they develop understanding and responsibility.

The use of physical restraint has reduced since the last inspection with very few incidents occurring. The centre's policy has a clear direction that staff strive to avoid using restraint and focus on using diversion and de-escalation techniques. Records are kept of all incidents and these are clear, showing good detail on attempts to avoid and diffuse an incident as well as the incident itself and the outcomes. All incidents are closely monitored by managers to identify any trends and patterns and to improve practice. The centre does not use any pain compliance techniques.

There have been no new staff recruited since the last inspection. There is a process in place to ensure that required checks are carried out so that the right people are

employed to work with vulnerable children.

Leadership and management

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

There are some good aspects to the management of the centre that lead to benefits for young people. However there are some areas of weakness leading to opportunities for improvement not being identified and addressed and this impacts upon service delivery to young people.

There is good information for parents, placing authorities and professionals in the centre's Statement of Purpose. This sets out clearly the range of services the centre provides to young people accommodated. The document is regularly reviewed and kept up to date.

Young people are provided with a children's guide to the centre, which tells them what the centre is like and what they can expect. For example, it tells young people why they are looked after at the centre and what the rules and routines are. However, the document is only available in a written format. This does not provide for all young people with differing needs. For example, young people whose first language is not English or those who may have a learning disability and use other methods of communication.

There is a development plan for the centre. This clearly sets out plans that managers have for the development of the service and how improvements to the quality of care of young people will be made.

Care and ancillary staff at the centre are experienced, well trained and qualified relevant to their role and responsibilities, and understand young people's needs well. They demonstrate commitment to the young people and understand policies, procedures and processes in order to look after young people well and keep them safe. Ancillary staff reported that they receive good support that assists them in their role. However, care staff are only provided with adequate support by managers to assist them in delivering good quality care to young people. Formal supervision is not delivered in accordance with the centre's policy for frequency or duration. For example, most supervision sessions were 30 minutes or less when the policy requires a minimum of 45 minutes. Of the six files examined, three were well short of the policy direction of three-weekly meetings. The quality of recording was good in some respects and limited in others, and showed adequate and not high quality support for care staff who work with challenging and vulnerable young people. Additionally, most, but not all staff have received an annual appraisal of their performance to support them to develop and improve in their role of caring for young people. Staff meetings occur regularly, however staff are not always provided with briefings or information from managers about changes in the provision. For example, strategic decisions or monitoring or development matters that affect the service and the care of the young people.

External monitoring is good and carried out through monthly visits by a person independent of the centre. Reports are completed of every visit and are provided to the centre and Ofsted in a timely manner. Visits comment on the quality of service provided and assist managers to make improvements that benefit young people.

Internal monitoring of the centre is adequate. A range of behaviour management data is thoroughly scrutinised on a regular basis by the management team. This examines restraints, use of separation, sanctions and other matters in order to identify trends and patterns. This enables appropriate action to be taken and improvements made that benefit young people. Monitoring of other aspects of the quality of care is carried out regularly and a report produced in line with regulation. However, although monitoring covers a range of matters and identifies some areas for improvement, it is not always undertaken with rigour. For example, shortfalls in sanction records and staff appraisals have not been identified or addressed. Although young people are consulted about a range of matters relating to their care and the running of the home, they, their parents and placing authorities are not routinely consulted about the matters monitored by the Registered Manager. The Registered Manager has not provided Ofsted with a recent summary report in the last six months about monitoring activities, so that Ofsted is appraised of progress and the management oversight of the centre.

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.