

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Michelle Oxley / Graham Robinson
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Provision subtype	Secure Unit

Date of last inspection	02/10/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The unit is registered as a secure children's home, operated by the local authority and is approved by the Secretary of State to provide secure care and accommodation. Education is provided on site in dedicated facilities. The unit provides secure accommodation for up to 24 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**.

The unit continues to provide a good standard of care for young people with some significant strengths and outstanding features identified. The quality of care provided is a key strength, underpinned by constructive and highly positive relationships between staff and young people. There is a strong focus on key working and attaining positive results for individuals, an approach which strives to maximise the potential of each young person during their stay. Leaders and managers are highly efficient and model an ethos of high aspirations. Staff are well trained, committed and enthusiastic. The operation of the unit is scrutinised through internal and external monitoring systems which contribute to a service which strives to continuously improve. One shortfall is identified, concerning written information about risks presented by young people's behaviour; this was identified in one case file.

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
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11 (2001)	ensure that the children's home is conducted so as to - promote and make proper provision for the welfare of the children accommodated there; in particular ensure that written risk assessment contain the nature of the risk presented by the young person (Regulation 11(a))	31/03/2013
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Recommendations

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

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are achieving good outcomes. Plans, strategies and targets are put into place immediately after admission. The ethos of the unit is to work supportively, rather than punitively with young people, this is recognised and appreciated by young people, parents and other professionals. Achievement and progress is celebrated which encourages young people to prosper socially, emotionally and educationally.

Healthcare arrangements are good, with young people having their immediate day-to-day health care arrangements addressed effectively. The unit also provides immediate access to a variety of more specialist services. This results in joined-up services where young people's physical, emotional and psychological health needs are well met and positively promoted.

Young people make specific choices about the food they eat. They are involved in planning menus and none raised any issues or complaints regarding the quality and quantity of food served. Attention is paid to nutrition and healthy eating, reflected in the recent themed week that took place during half-term. Meals are taken in small groups alongside staff, providing young people with the experience of meal times being pleasant, social and ordered occasions. Special dietary requirements are noted on admission and catered for appropriately.

Young people are encouraged to improve their lifestyle through exercise and diet. They are provided with information and given every support and encouragement to modify aspects of their previous lifestyle such as tobacco, drug and alcohol use. As a result, young people usually enjoy improvements to their general health and fitness levels.

Young people are currently engaging positively with their education, which is reflected in the good attendance figures. Young people speak positively about their education. For example, one described their previous lifestyle where they were totally non-compliant with education. Since admission they have already gained one

GCSE. Both the young person and his parents are delighted with the progress being made.

Following admission, young people are helped to look at and reflect on the factors and circumstances behind their admission, as well as the effect it has had on their lives and others. They participate with both collective and individualised programmes aimed at addressing specific needs. As they progress they develop a greater awareness of themselves and others. This helps them to move forward and have positive experiences, which in turn improves their self-confidence, esteem and resilience.

Young people are given opportunities to contribute positively to both the unit and wider community through a range of initiatives. For example, by raising funds for charity, becoming involved in work experience and mobility programmes, as well as participating in a range of activities provided by external sources. This leads to young people developing a wider perspective of life and a greater appreciation of others less well off than themselves.

Young people benefit from having good contact arrangements in place. For example, through the use of personalised telephones located in their bedrooms. This sophisticated system allows for daily contact with people who are deemed to be appropriate. Visitors say they are made to feel welcome and are put at ease by the warm response of staff. This contributes significantly into making contact visits a positive experience for all concerned.

The unit plans well for young people's transition and their journey towards a more independent lifestyle. Planning commences when young people are first admitted. Detailed plans are put into place, monitored and regularly reviewed. Opportunities to develop practical skills and experiences are built into young people's individual plans. A new, specifically designed building, completed since the previous inspection, provides facilities that enable young people to explore and develop appropriate life-skills. Overall, the unit has a clear commitment to meeting the needs of young people and improving their overall outcomes.

Quality of care

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

The quality of care provided for young people is outstanding. Positive responses from young people, parents and visiting professionals support this view. For example, one professional described the excellent care and support being given to a young person, resulting in them engaging fully and enjoying excellent outcomes in all areas of their life. This was reflected recently with the young person's successful application to a much sought after college and work placement. This is expected to lead to a full-time apprenticeship.

The excellent relationships developed between staff and young people; underpin the culture, ethos and working practices of the unit. Relationships, while developed

quickly, are strong and survive testing times. As a result, young people are prepared to follow a more ordered and less chaotic lifestyle. This gives them a more positive view of themselves and others, builds trust and promotes greater self-confidence.

Young people benefit from experiencing an excellent standard of support and care from a staff group that has high aspirations for them. For example, significant changes of attitudes and outlook were noted for a young person case tracked. The heavy support provided, coupled with detailed planning has ensured the prospects for that young person when they move on, have increased significantly. This view is enhanced and supported by the young person's parents and social worker, who provided excellent feedback about the unit and the way it operates.

Young people understand how to make a complaint and are confident to do so. They have free access to complaints forms which are monitored closely by the head of the unit. Complaints are taken seriously and responded to in a timely manner. Young people also have access to an independent advocate who visits weekly. No complaints, serious issues or concerns were raised by young people during the inspection.

Care plans are individualised and current, identifying areas of need and addressing those needs through a range of strategies and risk assessments. Young people's identity, religious and cultural needs are well met. Plans are formally reviewed alongside the unit's internal reviewing system. This ensures plans are updated with consistency. Young people are heavily involved in their planning, giving them a clear sense of direction and input regarding their own progress and future.

Individual and group work programmes effectively confront young people about past behaviour, attitudes and views. The unit has recently revised the key working programme especially in its delivery to young people. This is an excellent example of the unit looking at and reflecting on current, well-established practice and then taking positive steps to improve further. The excellent work undertaken by keyworkers was noted through the case-tracking process with key workers seen to work effectively and with diligence to improve outcomes for young people.

An excellent range of well-planned, purposeful activities and leisure pursuits, coupled with an on-going enrichment programme, provide a full and varied programme which overlaps between education and care. For some young people, this can include community based activities such as going to a music studio, accessed through the mobility programme. The unit also provides opportunities for young people to develop practical skills. For example, in a well-established mechanical workshop located on site and through a formal work experience programme taking place in the unit's main kitchen. These activities develop and enhance young people's practical skills which are transferable on release.

A tour of the premises shows the unit's location, design and size supports its purpose and function as a secure children's home. Appropriate service contracts along with regular security and health and safety checks are in place. Young people understand what action to take in the event of fire. Parts of the living units look tired and worn

but an on-going programme of decoration is currently underway to address this.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say that they feel safe and protected in the unit. For some the unit provides much needed stability, safety and an opportunity to reflect on the high risk situations they experienced previously. One young person described the unit as 'a safe place to stay where the staff look after you.' Young people are protected by the home's approach to safeguarding which offers additional checks and measures over and above those expected in a community children's home. These measures ensure that welfare is monitored in areas where young people could be vulnerable. A good example of this relates to the use of physical restraint which is examined by managers and the Local authority Designated Officer (LADO). Each physical intervention is scrutinised on CCTV and any anomalies followed up and addressed. The approach helps to ensure that young people are not subjected to improper practice, so that restraint techniques are applied correctly, safely and proportionally.

Relationships between young people and the staff team are respectful and relaxed. Young people look to staff for emotional support. They say that staff are approachable and nurturing and feel that disciplinary measures are fair and reasonable. The home's recording and quality monitoring systems show a steady and continued reduction in the use of physical restraint, single separations and sanctions. Young people say that sanctions are effective and although the same measures do tend to be used, levels are low and young people respond positively. The result is that young people behave and interact positively with the staff team. The culture operates around the notion of positive support and the avoidance of physical restraints and sanctions where possible. As such, measures to control behaviour and intervene physically are minimised to the benefit of young person.

Incidents of bullying are recorded at an early stage and a predefined approach is taken to address the issue. The approach is a three stage one, resulting in a meeting between the Registered Manager and the perpetrator at the final stage. Staff are mindful of the harm that can be caused by bullying and work hard to intervene early. Young people are confident that bullying is dealt with swiftly by the staff team; they are fully aware of the process and have received good support to develop positive relations and greater empathy for each other.

Personal searches are conducted in line with risk assessments. The approach has recently been adjusted in line with Youth Justice Board expectations which now means very few young people receive a full search. Young people describe the search as 'turn out pockets and the wand.' This approach is not overly intrusive and therefore of benefit to young people. However, recently there has been an increase in low level contraband items being discovered, which means that the team are giving further consideration to the current approach.

Young people are protected by the staff team's approach and knowledge of

safeguarding procedures. The team are provided with a range of training which ensures that staff know what to do should they suspect that a young person is at risk of harm. Further protection is offered by the recent and on going expansion of safeguarding training, so that staff develop a greater understanding of external safeguarding structures. The result is that safeguarding concerns are identified and dealt with swiftly by the appropriate agency. There are strong links with the local practitioners concerning child protection. The Registered Manager is a member of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. He ensures that the profile of secure settings is raised amongst fellow professionals. This contributes to their understanding of secure settings and allows the sharing of ideas about developing practice to further protect young people.

Risk assessments are updated every week at a care practice meeting. Staff use the written notes of these meetings, the risk assessment forms and the care plans to determine the level of risk presented by each young person. This in turn dictates the protective action required to support young people. One case was identified where the nature of a significant risk had not been set down in writing, although protective strategies had been set out and the young person was subject to frequent observations. However, in this particular case there was the potential for some staff to be unaware of pertinent information and risk indicators so the young person was not comprehensively protected.

The unit's recruitment processes are robust and involve several layers of checks over and above what is usually required. The management team understands their role in ensuring that only the most suitable applicants are appointed. As a result young people benefit from staff who are recruited carefully and in a considered way limiting the likelihood of unsuitable individuals being appointed.

Young people live a safe and well-ordered environment. Security systems operate effectively and there have been no cases of young people going missing from within the unit or while out on mobility. The team works in conjunction with other agencies, such as the police and fire brigade, to maximise the physical safety of the unit and ensure that young people using the service are protected by prompt attention to the health and safety of those using building.

Leadership and management

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

The Statement of Purpose is a clearly written document which provides young people, placing authorities, parents and carers with an accurate description of the service provided. The Registered Manager is a strong and experienced leader; he is well established and respected by the staff team. The unit employs a solid team of senior managers, who model a solid ethos based around a positive approach to ensuring that young people's time at the unit is utilised constructively to maximise positive outcomes for every young person. This is transmitted effectively to care and ancillary staff who demonstrate a good deal of commitment to achieving constructive results for young people.

Staff turnover is minimal and morale is high, creating a positive, stable environment for young people. The team feel well supported by each other and by their managers. Staff are supervised monthly and the quality of supervision is excellent with supervisors ensuring that staff receive the support and gain the skills they need to carry out their role efficiently and to improve their practice on an on going basis. Staffing levels are good, sufficient to meet the needs of young people, enabling a high level of individual work with young people which supports their progress well. Communication systems between staff, staff meetings and care practice meetings ensure that good care practice is well established and new information efficiently disseminated across the team.

Monthly reports for the purpose of quality monitoring continue to be produced to a high standard. The report produced every six months now contains an increased analysis of the home's performance noting key areas of successful practice as a basis for improvement; this contributes effectively to development planning. The development plan contains realistic and practical, yet challenging, improvement objectives. This is regularly reviewed and progress is monitored based around high expectations and improved outcomes for young people.

The unit operates in consultation with others and there is a sound history of compliance coupled with high aspirations for improvement; recommendations and a requirement made at the last inspection have been met. The unit is externally monitored in line with the regulations and the Registered Manager ensures effective communication with the monitors to ensure that all shortfalls are promptly addressed and followed up. External monitoring includes consultation with young people and parents, ensuring that the monitoring process takes account of a wide range of views.

There is a culture of consultation and continuous improvement, addressing shortfalls and developing the service to create sustainable outcomes for young people. Positive measures recently introduced include the development of the approach to skills for adulthood, which have progressed to a more practical and realistic setting where young people can learn. Improvements have been made to the level of individual support given to young people, streamlining the key worker system, and offering more specific, focused and high quality support to young people. Young people's well-being and safety is enhanced by more comprehensive staff training in physical restraint to reduce risks. Young people receive increased and sustainable protection from the knowledge they acquire through the introduction of e-safety training.

The staff training package is excellent and serves young people's needs well. This is high quality, varied and covers a wide range of relevant topics to support young people's needs in specific areas. The training programme is created in way that responds to current, emerging issues and new legislation. For instance staff receive training in child sexual exploitation, which helps them to provide improved support for young people who may have been affected by these issues. In addition, as a result of the recommendation set out in the recent Independent Review of Restraint in secure settings, staff have had training in airway management and basic

resuscitation training, to reduce the risk of positional asphyxia when physically restraining a young person. The management team recognise the value of a well trained staff team in underpinning the success of each young person's placement at the unit. As a result they ensure that sufficient time and resources are allocated to enable training opportunities.

Records are well maintained and give a detailed account of young people's histories and provide a clear picture of the progress. Managers regularly audit young people's case files and other records to ensure that these contain up-to-date information so that assessed needs can be clearly identified by the team.

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* and the evaluation schedule for children's homes.