

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Shaun Common / Graham Robinson
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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. Education is provided on site and facilities include outdoor exercise areas and a sports hall.

The centre can accommodate 12 young people of either gender from 10 years to seventeen years of age in two purpose built living units. Admission of a young person under 13 years of age requires the approval of the Secretary of State.

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 provided with good quality care, which leads to positive outcomes. Staff have excellent relationships with young people and provide them with good support. There are individualised care plans that set out young people's diverse needs. Plans involve young people, are regularly reviewed and fully implemented by staff.

Young people have access to high quality health care services, which meet their needs well. Young people also make good progress in education, which improves their life chances.

Young people feel safe and are kept safe by a dedicated staff team who understand and implement safeguarding procedures. Management oversight of safeguarding matters is good and there are strong links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board. This ensures there is scrutiny and oversight to help keep young people safe.

There is a good mix of experience in the staff team. Staff are qualified, well trained and well supported through formal supervision to care effectively for young people.

Young people have regular opportunities to contribute their views about their care

and the running of the unit. Their views are taken seriously and used to improve provision. However, managers and staff do not always record responses to young people's queries and ideas for improvement.

Overall, quality assurance and monitoring of the unit is good. Internal monitoring is thorough and helps to improve provision to young people. External monitoring undertaken through visits under regulation 33 is adequate. Reports of visits identify strengths and shortfalls, which assists the manager and staff to improve the provision to young people. However, some reports lack detail and do not always show the quality of practice and care provision to young people in all areas.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure children's views, wishes and feelings are acted upon, in the day to day running of the home; specifically, ensure minutes of children's meetings show recorded responses to matters raised by young people (NMS 1.1)
- ensure the quality assurance process provided by visits under Regulation 33, provide evaluation in reports that determines whether the unit provides stable, safe and secure care. (Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 3.12)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Appropriate plans and strategies are developed upon a young person's admission that includes health, care and educational needs. These plans are individualised and delivered in practice. As a result, young people prosper socially, emotionally and educationally. The parent of one young person stated she is 'happy and relieved that he is safe and is doing well.'

Young people's health needs are promoted positively. All aspects of health and health care service provision are effective, ensuring that young people have their immediate day-to-day needs, along with more long-term specialised needs, fully addressed. These arrangements and their implementation, help to ensure that young people's physical, emotional and psychological health needs are met. Special dietary requirements are noted at admission and catered for appropriately, including cultural and religious needs.

Young people are encouraged to develop a healthy lifestyle through exercise and diet. They are supported to understand the risks of matters such as tobacco use, illicit drug and alcohol use. For example, smoking cessation programmes are in place, designed to educate young people. As a result, young people benefit from improved

general health and fitness.

Young people engage positively with their education, which is reflected in good attendance figures. Educational attainment and abilities are assessed on admission, with additional testing and assessment continuing throughout their stay to measure progress and achievement. There is evidence that young people are making good progress. Young people speak positively about their education. For example, one young person described their previous lifestyle of totally disengaging with education. Since admission to the unit, they are fully engaged and are making good progress.

Regular opportunities are provided for young people to contribute positively to both the unit and wider community through a range of initiatives and consultation exercises. For example, through regular unit meetings with staff and their participation in planned activities to raise money for a range of national and local charities. This leads to young people developing a wider perspective of life, contributing to good causes through fund raising and a greater appreciation of others less well off than themselves.

The unit works flexibly to ensure that young people maintain contact with family, friends and others important to them. Visitors say they are made to feel welcome and are put at ease by the warm response of staff. Young people are consulted about contact and asked to contribute any ideas they may have about how visits can be improved.

Planning for transition back into the community and support for developing skills which promote independence, commences when young people are first admitted. Opportunities are provided for young people to develop practical skills and experience. These matters are written into young people's individual plans and delivered in practice. Planned mobility is used effectively and when appropriate for the young person, so they can engage in further life skills preparation, such as shopping on a budget and cooking for themselves on the unit. As young people progress, they develop improved self-confidence, esteem and resilience.

Quality of care

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

Positive responses from parents, visiting professionals and young people support the view that a good quality of care is provided at the unit. One professional described their satisfaction of the standard of care and support being given to a young person recently admitted.

There are very positive relationships between staff and young people and this is a strength of the unit. Young people also benefit from good staff role models. This enables young people to develop positive attachments, to build trust and promotes greater self-confidence.

The positive relationships developed between staff and young people helps to

facilitate good levels of on-going consultation. Young people say they are happy with the opportunities in place for consultation, recognising the forums as positive. The views, thoughts, opinions and requests made by young people are recorded appropriately in minutes from those meetings. However, managers and staff do not always record the responses to these matters, although young people state that their views and opinions are taken seriously and acted upon. There are examples of where young people's views have had a positive impact upon the running of the unit. Such as developing a greenhouse so young people can engage in horticulture and developing menus so food from a wider range of cultures can be tasted and sampled.

Young people understand how to make a complaint and are confident to do so. They have access to complaints forms and the systems in place mean young people can either ask staff to support them or post their complaint securely so it is received directly by a manager. Complaints are taken seriously and responded to in a timely manner and young people expressed confidence in the procedure. Young people also have access to an independent advocate who visits fortnightly. No complaints or concerns were raised by young people during the inspection.

Placement plans and supporting documents, such as risk assessments and health care plans, link effectively. They are reviewed and updated regularly and therefore each young person's planning documents are current as well as being individualised. Plans thoroughly cover young people's identity, religious and cultural needs and these needs are met well. Young people are central to their planning and fully involved in reviews and any changes.

Young people enjoy the activities and leisure pursuits that take place outside of school time. For example, competitions between the two living units are proving to be popular. Activities that have a practical input along with others such as music enhance self-esteem and provide young people with interests and skills that they can continue on their return to the community.

The unit's location, design and size support 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. The unit is well decorated, furnished and maintained, providing a homely and comfortable environment that is conducive to the positive care of young people.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people stated they have no worries or concerns about their safety. They feel safe and are kept safe. Bullying incidents are infrequent and a robust approach and response to bullying is evident.

There is a clear child protection procedure, implemented in practice that ensures young people are safeguarded. There has been one child protection since the last

inspection and records show that this was managed quickly and effectively in the best interest of young people. There is good liaison with relevant authorities and the Registered Manager has strong links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board. The manager sits on a sub-committee of the board and liaises with a senior manager of the local authority about the safeguarding functions of the secure unit to improve practice.

There is clear up-to-date care planning and risk assessments that show how young people's vulnerability is managed and their individualised needs met. Young people at risk of suicide or self-harm are closely monitored and cared for in line with their risk assessment and this ensures they are kept safe.

There has been one incident where a young person has absconded since the last inspection. The incident involved a young person who was undertaking a planned visit as part of their reintegration back into community. An appropriate procedure and protocol is in place that was followed by staff, and the young person returned quickly to the unit. A full record is available of the incident, which shows the positive action taken and the support provided to the young person on their return to the unit.

The unit has a policy and procedure relating to individual searches of young people and routine searches of communal areas and individual young people's rooms. The policy about searching young people has recently been reviewed and revised to show that a risk-led approach has been implemented. This means the level of search undertaken, which could be a 'pat down' or a more thorough search, is carried out after consideration of known risk factors or security and safety concerns. A more thorough or detailed search, known as a 'dressing gown' search, can only be undertaken after authorisation from a senior manager. Detailed records are kept of all searches and young people are able to sign or make comments on the record. This approach ensures that young people's dignity is promoted and appropriately balanced with the need to keep them and others safe.

A good incentive scheme is in place. Young people understand it well and feel it assists them to improve their behaviour. The scheme is designed so young people can progress from bronze through to platinum levels by earning points for good behaviour. Each level has progressive rewards and benefits to encourage young people to sustain positive behaviour and develop positive social skills.

Sanctions are used on occasions where there is inappropriate behaviour by young people. A record is kept of any sanction imposed and young people are able to sign this record or write their comments about the measure used. This encourages young people to develop understanding and responsibility. Sanctions used are appropriate, varied and applicable to the misdemeanour. The effectiveness of sanctions is monitored by the manager to ensure that they are having the desired positive effect of addressing poor behaviour.

Single separation is used appropriately. Records are robust, accurate and monitored to show that young people are kept safe during periods when they are locked in their

rooms. Young people have the opportunity to sign these records and write their comments, which helps to promote their rights.

Physical intervention is only used when appropriate to do so and as a last resort. Staff are trained in the use of physical intervention to ensure they are able to use the relevant methods appropriately and safely with young people. The methods used by the unit do not involve pain compliance and there is a focus on the use of de-escalation, diversion and diffusion to try to avoid any physical intervention taking place. Each incident is accurately and fully recorded and monitoring of the records takes place by senior managers to ensure practice is appropriate.

Recruitment processes are robust. Eight new relief staff have been employed since the last inspection. All relevant and required information and checks are in place, to help ensure 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 unit's Statement of Purpose provides good information for parents, professionals and placing authorities about the range of services provided. The document is kept up to date and reviewed regularly.

Young people are provided with good information in a children's guide that tells them what the unit is like and what they can expect. Information about the unit is available in different formats. For example, it can be provided in different languages for those whose first language is not English.

There is a good mix of experience among the staff team and a sufficient number of staff on duty at all times to provide appropriate care to young people. Staff are qualified, trained and knowledgeable about the needs of young people and how to meet those needs. They understand the unit's policies and procedures, which assists them to provide good quality safe care. All care and ancillary staff are supported well through regular formal supervision, appraisal and attendance at staff meetings. In addition, managers provide feedback to care staff on any changes to procedure or operation of the unit, which is an area that has improved since the last inspection.

External monitoring of the home is satisfactory. Visits take place each month by a person independent of the home in line with regulations. A report of each visit is provided to the home and Ofsted in a timely manner. However, these reports are inconsistent as they do not always provide sufficient detail or evaluate the quality of care provided. They do identify strengths and shortfalls, which assists the manager and staff to improve the provision to young people. However, some reports lack detail and do not show the quality of practice and care provision to young people in all areas. For example, when reporting on single separation and physical restraint, reports sometimes only refer to numbers of incidents and not the quality of the records and practices, that impact upon young people.

Internal monitoring of the home is good. The Registered Manager monitors all aspects of the provision, which ensures a good quality of care and good outcomes for young people. Reports of monitoring reflect the strengths of the service and areas for improvement, which benefits young people. The manager ensures that a summary report of this monitoring is sent to Ofsted every six months so there is external oversight of the progress the unit is making.

There have been a number of areas of improvement since the last inspection. These include: the recording of the effectiveness of sanctions; robust monitoring by the registered manager; staff now receive regular formal supervision and appraisal; young people are helped to understand how their views are taken into account and get prompt feedback on any complaints made; young people can now record their views about any sanctions; the children's guide is available in different formats; staff receive feedback from management meetings; and the manager now sends six monthly summary reports of monitoring undertaken to Ofsted. These matters show improvement that impacts positively upon the care and well-being of young people and the service they receive.

There is a clear development plan for the home. This plan determines what managers and staff intend to do over the coming year to improve services 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* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.