

Inspection report for children's home

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Service information

Brief description of the service

This secure children's home is operated by a local authority and is approved by the Secretary of State to restrict young people's liberty. Education is provided on site.

The children's home can accommodate up to 18 young people, who are aged between 10 and 17 years. Admission of any young person over the age of 10 but 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**.

A number of improvements have been made since the last inspection. These include: Security matters having been fully addressed, the home is well-decorated and maintained, young people can have their comments recorded about single separation and they can also freely access complaint forms. This shows staff and managers are committed to improving the service provided to young people.

Excellent outcomes are achieved through high quality work by staff and managers and in partnership with other professionals. Young people have access to a range of services and are provided with very good support from staff. Young people are consulted about the running of the home and their care and feel involved and central to life at the home. All aspects of education and health care are very positive for young people. However, not all staff are following aspects of the medication administration policy consistently and this has the potential to breach confidentiality.

A real strength of the home is in the way it supports young people to develop skills for adult life, and return to the community or to move to another provision.

There are very positive relationships between staff and young people. Some excellent work by care staff through key work sessions enables young people to develop attachments, self-esteem and trust. Care planning for young people's individualised needs is thorough and plans are delivered in practice leading to good

quality care.

There are good links and liaison with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), which supports the home to keep young people safe. Child protection matters are dealt with appropriately and fully recorded in line with the relevant procedure.

Staff support young people well to develop positive social skills and behaviour. Negative behaviour is managed well with a focus on rewarding and reinforcing positive behaviour. There are some shortfalls with recording. These include the format of records kept, separation records and those relating to individual risk management plans (IRMs). However, these have minimal impact on young people's overall care.

Staff are well trained, mostly qualified or are undertaking a relevant qualification. They understand young people's needs well and have a good understanding of the homes procedures in order to deliver good and safe care.

The home is well-led and managed. There are a range of systems and processes in place to monitor the care provided and safety of young people. Shortfalls are identified and addressed quickly through good quality assurance systems and this leads to improvements in the service provided to young people.

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 that within 24 hours of an incident of restraint a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose; specifically, loose sheets that describe the incident are not stapled into the volume. (Regulation 17(b)) | 31/03/2014 |

Recommendations

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

- ensure that if staff resort to any measure of control or discipline or restraint, this is carefully recorded with full details by the staff involved within 24 hours in a record kept for this purpose; specifically, ensure sanction, restraint and single separation records are kept in a format set out in the statutory guidance (Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 2.91)

- ensure that medicines are administered in line with an agreed (and medically approved) protocol (Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 2.53)
- ensure a record is made and kept of all uses of single separation; specifically, that records contain accurate times when separation is used for security reasons and that records reflect that where young people are being kept in separation, the criteria continue to be met (NMS 23.13)
- review the written policy on the use of CCTV; specifically, ensure that staff do not use CCTV for the purposes of writing an account of an incident of physical restraint (NMS 23.6)
- ensure management of the secure unit regularly and frequently monitors the units care; specifically, that robust and detailed records are kept of the implementation of individual risk management plans so records reflect why young people are being managed away from the group, how long for, efforts to reintegrate the young person to normal routine as soon as possible and governance and decision making by senior managers. (NMS 23.18)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Young people make exceptional progress in gaining an understanding of their backgrounds and the events that have led them to being placed in this home. As a result, young people's sense of self and well-being substantially improve and they develop aspirations for their future. Young people form positive attachments with staff and each other. Their increased maturity and understanding of their needs means that many of them maintain positive contact with the home following their transition to other placements or the community. This allows young people to continue to benefit from the home's facilities and support. For example, young people continue to attend the home's education provision to complete nationally recognised qualifications. They also avail themselves of opportunities to complete work experience placements in the kitchen. A youth offending team worker for one of the young people said, 'He has really, really thrived.'

Young people develop social and life skills and the confidence to disengage from inappropriate patterns of behaviour. This is a result of the excellent individual interventions devised to enable them to address offending behaviours. Strong partnership working with professionals and family members ensures that all involved with a young person fully understand their specific programmes. Consequently, young people's ambition to achieve is supported and strengthened. A young person stated, 'I feel I have changed so much over the time I have been here and really made progress. I have a future now and feel I can make a success of my life.'

Young people's health significantly improves. Many previously unmet needs are addressed; for example dental work, which also increases young people's self-confidence. Strong partnership working with specialist psychological services enables young people make exceptional progress in improving their emotional and mental

health. A foster carer stated, 'She made massive progress.'

All young people attend the on-site education provision. Young people's needs are robustly assessed and specific education programmes are tailored to address those needs. Many young people have had large gaps in their education prior to residing in the home. Young people report how much they enjoy school now and their achievement during their time in education is exceptional. Young people's educational attainment is significantly above expected national progress. In addition, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic young people make even greater progress with a residency period of 24 to 52 weeks, particularly in English, Mathematics and Science. Young people pass nationally recognised qualifications. Staff proactively encourage them to participate in work experience programmes both within the home and in local provision. This universal, inclusive approach inspires young people and the majority are ambitious to succeed. A youth justice worker stated, 'They've looked at his learning needs and how to communicate with him. We were all given information with some pointers as how best to communicate with him, which really, really impressed me.' The resultant achievements empower young people to have aspirations for the future.

Parents, young people and professionals report positively about the excellent contact arrangements between the home and important family members. A parent said, 'Communication is very good, they ring me every week.' Young people are fully supported to maintain these essential relationships which supports them, increasing their sense of belonging. Parents are involved in planning and care arrangements. Young people benefit from the continuity this provides to develop coping strategies to avoid further offending behaviours.

The preparation for transition to independence or move to another provision is a major strength in this home. Young people's diverse and individual needs are extremely well planned for promoting opportunities for success and achievement. At the suggestion of a young person, the home have instigated an innovative 'mentor programme'. This allows young people to benefit from support from a known and trusted member of staff in preparation for moving and for an agreed period of time after they leave the home. Consequently, young people make exceptional progress and have long-term plans as well as immediate goals. A young person said he has 'A mentor who I really like and I want to be able to be a mentor as well and make that difference for other young people.'

Quality of care

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

The majority of the staff team are positive role models enabling young people to develop good relationships. Managers are fully aware of some inconsistencies in day-to-day care raised by young people and are taking action to address these. Young people are very supportive of each other although they can become frustrated at the impact some behaviour can have on the group as a whole. Young people's assurance in their relationships with the management and staff team enable them to express

these frustrations. Young people all report that they like and trust staff and some reported that they felt they had a real bond. Comprehensive key work sessions demonstrate some exceptional practice in building trusting relationships with young people. Consequently young people feel safe, secure and that they belong in the home where their individual needs are met. A youth offending worker said, 'His key worker is absolutely brilliant and is really knowledgeable about him.'

Young people have a range of opportunities to enable them to express their views and wishes. In addition to residents meetings and key work sessions, young people have a council which has representatives from all three units within the home. Young people are involved in staff recruitment interviews providing them with opportunities to participate in decision making processes. Young people take great pride at being included and gain vital communication and negotiation skills as a result. Young people read and sign reports written about them. As a result their self-confidence increases as they recognise and take pride in their ability to formulate and express their views in a positive manner. A foster carer stated, 'They have helped her to recognise in herself that she was worth much more than she was portraying.'

Young people fully understand and utilise the complaints procedure. Information about complaints including forms is freely accessible. In addition the 'grumbles book' provides young people with the opportunity to raise low level concerns. This is a good system but is not yet fully embedded in practice. Managers are working with young people and staff to improve their understanding of the process. All formal complaints are quickly and comprehensively responded to. Young people's views are formally recorded and the impact of any complaint detailed in a 'lesson learned sheet' for all staff. Young people feel valued as they are able to see and experience the positive outcomes of using the process.

Excellent care planning ensures that all young people's individual, holistic and diverse needs are formally identified and robustly addressed. Staff know young people's needs and ensure care plans are fully delivered. Weekly case management meetings ensure that young people's progress is discussed and care plans are comprehensively updated. Young people, their parents and professionals are actively involved in reviewing and updating care plans. Proactive steps are taken to ensure that young people's diverse needs are sensitively met; for example, involving young people in community based lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) groups. A youth offending team worker stated, 'It's a really joined up service and he's at the heart of it. They make sure he gets the service he needs and that he is benefiting from them. They are the best secure children's home I've worked with because they are so on the ball with everything and so inclusive.'

Staff are proactive in ensuring that young people's identified holistic health needs are well met. Young people are able to access a range of health services to meet these needs. Partnership working with specialist agencies is a major strength in this home and effectively contributes to significantly improving young people's emotional and psychological well-being. Medication is stored appropriately and dispensed in line with medical advice. A newly devised policy details how medication is to be administered from the recently refurbished medical room. However, inspectors were

able to confirm young people's views that not all staff are following this policy consistently and this could potentially breach confidentiality.

Excellent partnership working between the education and care teams ensures that young people are able to benefit fully from their education experience. Young people ask for extra education sessions during holiday periods as they enjoy the time they spend in classes. The education team work together with care staff to provide enrichment opportunities and a range of fun activities for young people. For example, a music teacher comes in to the home to provide guitar lessons for four young people; two young people are having singing lessons and one young person attends drama school. These activities build self-esteem and provide young people with positive leisure activities that they can further develop in the community.

Care and education staff have worked with young people in writing, preparing and performing in a Christmas pantomime. Photographs of the event are displayed with pride in the corridors of the home. The activity enabled young people to gain self-confidence and to develop increased self-worth. A parent said, 'She's done really well there and I am really happy with everything they've done' and a foster carer stated, '(name) has made her believe in herself.'

Young people are cared for in a home which is appropriately secure, well decorated and furnished in order to meet their needs. Young people are able to personalise their rooms and take great pride in their personal space. A young person stated, 'I love it here.'

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people said they feel safe at the home. They did not raise any concerns about bullying.

On admission to the home, staff carry out an assessment of young people's vulnerability. A risk assessment is developed and implemented, which shows the measures taken to keep young people safe from suicide or self-harm. Alongside the risk assessment is a 'measure of control book'. This is used to clearly record any changes to young people's care and is shared with all staff at each handover. This ensures staff understand and can implement measures to help keep young people safe.

Young people are supported to develop positive social skills and behaviour through an incentive scheme that is well embedded into the home's routines. The scheme has different levels from bronze to platinum and young people achieve and progress through levels by earning points for good behaviour. The level of rewards and privileges young people earn increases as they progress through the scheme and this positively reinforces good behaviour. Where young people have specific needs that means the incentive scheme is not suitable for them, individualised plans are developed that help them to manage and improve their behaviour.

Individual risk management plans (IRMs) are used where a young person is presenting risks to themselves or others. These involve young people having a different routine. This could mean that due to the risks they pose, that they are managed away from others for periods of time in other areas of the building, such as a lounge area, play areas or bedroom corridors. During these periods, young people are always with staff members who engage and work closely with them to re-integrate them back into the normal centre routine once the risk has diminished. Records kept by the home about such incidents are adequate. There are instances where there are gaps in recording that do not always show how staff are working to reintegrate young people and the governance and decision making of senior managers. However, for the most part, this is recorded and shows young people and others are being cared for appropriately and kept safe.

Where negative or inappropriate behaviour is exhibited by young people, staff may implement approved sanctions. Any sanction used is fully recorded and monitored by managers to ensure they are effective and appropriate. Young people are able to have their comments recorded about any sanctions imposed. This helps them to reflect on their behaviour and to develop understanding and responsibility. Records of sanctions are kept in a book with a plastic spine that can be opened and is therefore not tamper proof and this does not fully protect young people's information. There is some use of restorative practices evident in the sanction records. If a young person has done wrong they can make good or put right by, for example, helping to repair items they have intentionally broken.

Physical restraint is used by staff who are trained in the home's approved methods. The Registered Manager confirmed that no pain compliance methods are used at this home. There is a clear policy and a restraint minimisation strategy to ensure that the use of restraint is minimised. Staff and young people are provided with good support via a formal debrief. Someone who is not involved in the incident carries out a debriefing with a young person. The restraint records kept reflect clearly each incident; however some records have pieces of paper that contain elements of the incident stapled into the record. It cannot therefore be verified when this element of the recording was made. Staff are also using CCTV to write about the incident in the record for the purpose, which is not best practice. The restraint book has a plastic spine that can be opened. This means the record is not tamper proof and this does not fully protect young people's information. Records and CCTV show that the use of restraint is appropriate and managers review and monitor all incidents to ensure young people are managed in line with policy and practice.

Single separation is used in accordance with relevant government guidance. The home's practices reflect this guidance and managers closely monitor any use of single separation to ensure it is appropriate. Young people are always closely monitored when in their rooms to ensure they are safeguarded. However, records are not as robust as they could be. For example, they do not always show that the criteria for single separation continues to be met after a young person has been placed in single separation. Additionally, recording is not always accurate when a number of young people are singly separated in the rare event that there is a

security or safety issue. This can indicate that young people have been locked in their rooms much longer than was actually the case. Records of single separation are kept in a book with a plastic spine that can be opened and are not tamper proof and this does not fully protect young people's information. Although there are some recording shortfalls, use of single separation is appropriate, closely monitored by managers and used for the minimum time necessary to keep young people and others safe.

The home has clear policies and procedures in place for searches of communal areas, bedrooms and for the individual searching of young people in order to promote safety and dignity. Communal areas and bedrooms are routinely searched and records are kept of these searches and anything found. Searches of young people are undertaken on a risk-led basis in line with the home's policy. Most searches undertaken are a pat down and sometimes an electronic wand is used. Where a more thorough search is needed due to an identified concern or risk, the reasons are recorded and authorisation is required from a manager.

There have been no incidents where a young person has absconded since the last inspection. The home has an up-to-date protocol with the police and local authority and a procedure that staff fully understand and can implement. These matters support staff to help keep young people safe.

There have been 13 child protection concerns since the last inspection. Seven of these were matters related to historical issues or not related directly to home. Six concerns related to allegations against staff at the home. All matters are appropriately dealt with in line with the home's child protection procedure. The response to any matter is quick and relevant authorities are notified including the local authority child protection team and the local authority designated officer (LADO) as appropriate. Records are kept of all actions taken. Staff have access to the policy and procedure and are aware of their responsibilities in keeping young people safe.

There are good links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). Board members visited the home at the time of the inspection to familiarise themselves with the operation and functions of the secure unit. The home liaises regularly with the LADO and the Registered Manager provides a report to the LSCB about physical restraint so the Board can provide oversight of the home's practices to help keep young people safe.

Managers very regularly review all behaviour management, vulnerability and safeguarding matters. They identify patterns, themes and trends. As a result, plans and practices are updated and adapted to ensure young people's needs are met and appropriate safe care is provided.

There have been four new staff appointed to work at the home since the last inspection. Records show that a robust process is followed to ensure the right people are employed to work with vulnerable children.

Leadership and management

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

Managers are committed to improvement for the benefit of young people. Seven recommendations were made at the last inspection. Three of these related to the education provision and will be reviewed at the next inspection. The other four recommendations have been fully addressed. Young people are able to have their views recorded about single separation, the unit kitchens are well decorated and maintained, a security concern has been fully addressed and young people have free access to complaints forms.

The Statement of Purpose provides parents, professionals and others good information about the secure unit and the services it provides. There is also a children's guide to the home that is provided to all young people. The guide tells young people about the home and what to expect. The guide can be made available in different formats to meet young people's needs and can be translated into other languages.

Care staff have a mix of experience and are well trained and knowledgeable of the needs of young people. They understand the home's policies, procedures and processes, which supports them to deliver good care to young people. 75 per cent of staff are qualified, 19 per cent are undertaking a relevant qualification. Other staff are new and will be undertaking a relevant qualification after planned induction and foundation training. Staff are provided with formal supervision and receive support from managers in their day-to-day work with young people.

External monthly monitoring of the home by an independent person is robust. Visitors identify the home's strengths as well as any areas for improvement. This assists managers to address any shortfalls and further develop the service provided to children and young people.

Internal monitoring is good. The home has a number of different quality assurance and quality monitoring systems that are well established. Managers ensure that these formal processes support the identification of positive practices the home can build upon and identify any shortfalls or areas for improvement that they quickly address.

The home has a development plan in place. This is a comprehensive document that sets out how the home intends to improve its services to young people. A number of areas in the plan have been achieved or are being actioned. A review is due to take place in the near future to set new objectives to further improve the quality of care for 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.