

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Shaun Common / Ann-Marie Born
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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 **adequate**.

Young people make good progress in all aspects of their lives. The provision of health and education services and individualised support for young people leads to good health and education outcomes.

There are positive relationships between staff and young people. Young people feel well cared for and safe.

Their needs are assessed and plans developed with them for their care that are implemented in practice. Vulnerable young people are supported by staff who follow clear risk assessments that are regularly reviewed.

Staff are knowledgeable about the home's systems, processes and of the young people's needs. Staff are well trained and receive good formal support. This leads to effective care provision for young people.

Young people are supported to develop positive behaviour and life skills that will assist them in adulthood and when they return to the community. Contact with family is well organised, planned for, promoted and supported so that young people can stay in touch with people important to them.

Safeguarding and child protection matters are managed well and this contributes positively to keep young people safe. Good links with relevant professionals and agencies, including the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and the local authority designated officer (LADO) ensures good practice and safe care.

The home for the most part is well-managed. However, the Registered Manager's responsibilities have extended beyond a dedicated role for the secure unit. This has meant that some matters have not been monitored robustly leading to some shortfalls in recording systems and in a security matter. Shortfalls in recording include: lack of details in behaviour management plans, sanction records and physical restraint records. Additionally, there is some lack of consistency in permanent staffing; sanction, restraint and separation records are not kept in the correct format and the home does not have development plan that is specific to the secure unit.

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 sanction records include the effectiveness of the use of the measure. (Regulation 17B(3)(f))	30/05/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure the home meets children's behavioural needs, as set out in their care plan; specifically, ensure behaviour management plans are sufficiently detailed (NMS 3.7)
- ensure that records of sanctions, restraint and single separation are kept in formats that cannot be tampered with after the event - e.g. bound numbered records or electronic entries that are then "barred" so that they cannot be amended at a later date (Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 2.91)
- ensure, that where there has been physical restraint, that children are always given the opportunity to be examined by a registered nurse or medical practitioner; specifically, ensure restraint records reflect that young people have been offered the opportunity to see a medical professional, what they decided and the outcome (NMS 3.16)

- ensure that the home has a development plan specific to the secure unit, reviewed annually either identifying any planned changes in the operation or resources of the service, or confirming the continuation of the home's current operation and resource (NMS 15.2)
- ensure that the overall number, competence and deployment of staff, both as a staff group and on individual shifts, can fulfil the home's Statement of Purpose and meet the individual needs of all children resident in the home; specifically, provide consistency in permanent staff members to care for young people (NMS 17.1)
- ensure that the management of the secure unit is effective in, defines clear accountabilities for, and regularly and frequently monitors the units care, safety and security; specifically ensure that the Registered Manager is in day-to-day charge of the secure unit in order to robustly manage the provision and effectively monitor the care, safety and security provided. (NMS 23.18)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Discussion with a variety of external sources, such as social workers and parents, verifies that young people experience good outcomes. They confirm holistic needs are recognised, with appropriate individualised plans and strategies in place to address those needs. All those spoken with were able to acknowledge the positive changes and progress being made by young people.

The health needs of young people are promoted and addressed positively. The home's nurse, along with visiting doctors, dentist, optician and other health professionals, ensure every day health needs are met. In addition to this, specialist input is provided by a visiting psychiatrist and psychologist. As a result, all aspects of a young person's physical, emotional and mental health are assessed and addressed positively and young people's needs are well met with good progress and positive outcomes being evident.

Young people are encouraged to reflect on their past lifestyle and encouraged to improve their health through exercise and diet. For example, young people and staff in one unit recently embarked on a healthy eating programme to promote appropriate weight loss. Exercise is built into the daily routine alongside activity programmes. This results in young people positively modifying their lifestyle as they develop greater awareness about their own health needs.

The inspection coincided with the education holidays. Evidence kept by the home shows success in re-engaging young people who have missed long periods of schooling. Attendance improves while young people are at the home and they achieve and make good progress with their education.

There are positive links with the community. Young people are given opportunities to develop a wider perspective of life and a greater appreciation of others less well off

than themselves. For example, in raising money for national charities.

Contact arrangements are put in place on admission, with young people being well supported to maintain contact with family and friends. At times, these arrangements can be complex, but the individualised approach by the home, allows for those complexities to be well managed. For example, with the arrangements in place to cater for young people who have parents living overseas. Visitors confirm they are made to feel welcome and are put at ease by the warm response of staff. This allows for visits to be a more relaxed and positive experience for all concerned.

The arrangements for young people's transition back into the community and in supporting the development of independence skills are good. High levels of pre-planning, coupled with an individualised programme of mobility, gives young people a clear outlook. As they progress through their stay at the home, they are given opportunities to develop practical life skills alongside new experiences. This helps to develop greater self-confidence and esteem as they move towards their transition to new placements or back into the community.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from the positive, trusting and supportive relationships they develop with staff, who act as good role models. For example, one young person stated that; 'Staff are very supportive and caring.' One young person stated that staff, 'have stuck with me, even through the difficult times.' As a result, young people learn how to trust appropriate adults, giving them greater self-confidence and a more positive view of themselves and others. Feedback from relevant professionals identifies the nurturing ethos created by the unit as an area of particular strength.

Staff communicate effectively with young people. Young people are comfortable with staff and they clearly enjoy each other's company. The evident non-judgemental environment facilitates on-going consultation where young people freely express views, opinions and make informed choices. This is often achieved informally, although formal consultation is built into the weekly routines of the home. For example, one young person was able to request a change in her mobility arrangements to suit her needs. Overall, young people are empowered, which gives them a feeling that their views and opinions are valued.

Young people understand how to make a complaint and are confident to do so. They have access to complaints forms which can be sent directly to senior staff. Complaints are taken seriously and responded to in a timely manner. Young people also have access to an independent advocate who visits the home weekly and is made aware of any complaints made by young people. No complaints or concerns were raised by young people during the inspection.

Young people demonstrate an understanding and have ownership of their own placement plan. Plans are of good quality, individualised and link effectively to

individual risk assessments, health care and mental health plans. Matters include a young person's identity, religious and cultural requirements. Plans are updated regularly which keeps them current. They demonstrate progress and contain sections that are evaluative. This along with other documents such reports written prior to formal reviews, evidences the progress made by young people.

Leisure interests and activities are discussed with young people and organised to meet young people's needs. There is flexibility in how activities are arranged and delivered and there are appropriate resources to cater for both group and one-to-one activities. Popular activities such as cooking and gardening provide young people with transferable skills that can prove useful in later life. These skills also boost self-esteem and drive ambition as well as being fun.

The secure children's home's location, design and size supports its purpose and function and is appropriate to meet the needs of the young people. Appropriate service contracts along with regular health and safety checks are in place. Young people understand what action to take in the event of fire in order to keep themselves safe. Living areas have recently been decorated with colour schemes chosen by young people.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people feel safe at the home. They did not raise any concerns about bullying with inspectors. The home has a bullying policy, which is clear, up-to-date and implemented to help keep young people safe.

Staff carry out an assessment of young people's vulnerability on admission to the home. A risk assessment is devised and sets out young people's individualised needs and actions to be taken to keep them safe. The risk assessments are very regularly reviewed by staff and again by managers to ensure they are fit for purpose and contain the required information. At every staff handover, including handover to night care, new information is shared and staff read the risk assessments so they fully understand what is required to care appropriately and effectively for young people. All relevant records, such as night care logs and single separation records show that young people are cared for in line with their risk assessments in order to help keep them safe.

There have been six child protection matters since the last inspection. All have been appropriately managed in line with the home's policy and procedure. All matters have been referred to the local authority and/or local authority designated officer in a timely manner, for consideration and action. Records are kept of all incidents and show the action taken to keep young people safe.

There are good links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). The Registered Manager is a member of a sub-group of the Board focused on work around child sexual exploitation and delivering training to staff in the local authority

area. The home liaises with the local authority designated officer (LADO) about safeguarding matters where appropriate and this supports staff to keep young people safe.

The home has a well-embedded incentive scheme that supports young people to develop positive social skills and behaviour. Young people fully understand how the scheme works and discuss any matters with staff on a day-to-day basis. 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. Staff develop individualised programmes to further support young people who are not able to manage on the standard scheme. Behaviour management plans are developed that show how young people are supported to develop internal controls and improve their behaviour. Some of these plans lack some detail, but generally have good information for staff to follow. Staff were seen to manage behaviour well and fully understand the needs of young people, so the impact of lack of some detail in behaviour management plans has minimal impact.

Approved sanctions are used where inappropriate behaviour is exhibited by young people. Sanctions are appropriate to the misdemeanour. Young people can have their comments recorded about any sanctions imposed and this helps them to develop understanding and responsibility. Records fully reflect sanctions imposed, however the effectiveness of the measure is not recorded accurately to show whether the sanction is having the desired effect of stopping inappropriate behaviour. The Registered Manager routinely assesses the effectiveness of sanctions and this is fed back to staff who respond accordingly and adjust practices. Therefore, this is a recording issue that does not impact upon the care of young people. 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.

Physical restraint is used at the home in line with the home's policy and procedure. Staff are trained to use the home's agreed methods. The Registered Manager confirmed that no pain compliance methods are used at this home. Young people are able to see a health professional following a restraint, though this is not recorded in the home's records. A restraint minimisation policy is in place that shows how the home intends to reduce the use of physical intervention and is focused on staff using de-escalation and diversionary techniques. Staff and young people are provided with good support via a debriefing following any physical intervention incident. 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. Managers review all records and randomly use closed circuit television (CCTV) to monitor incidents to ensure young people are managed in line with policy and best practice.

Single separation is used in accordance with the home's policy, procedures and in line with relevant government guidance. Managers monitor any use of single separation to ensure it is appropriate. Records reflect that young people are always

monitored when in their rooms to ensure they are safeguarded. They also reflect that the criteria for keeping a young person in single separation is reviewed throughout the incident and when the criteria is no longer met, the single separation ends and young people are re-integrated back into the group. Records of single separation are kept in a book with a plastic spine that can be opened and is not tamper proof and this does not fully protect young people's information.

The home has clear policies and procedures for individual searches of young people and for the searching of communal areas and bedrooms in order to promote safety and wellbeing. Any decision to carry out an individual search of a young person is risk-led. The home has two levels of searching. One level is a pat down and use of an electronic wand and the other is a dressing gown search. This involves young people removing clothing out of view of staff and then wearing a dressing gown. A pat down and electronic wand are then used. No dressing gown searches have been used since the last inspection. The home's procedure determines that any use is authorised by a senior manager. There are very regular checks and searches of communal areas and young people's bedrooms. Records are kept of all such matters, showing what was found, if anything and whether any action is needed.

There have been three absconding incidents since the last inspection. The home has a procedure for staff to follow and staff know and understand this. There is a clear protocol that has been developed with the police and local authority that is up to date. Records are kept of all incidents that show the home's procedure is followed and all actions taken during the incident and afterwards are in line with best practice and guidance. These matters help keep young people safe.

Managers have clear procedures for the oversight of systems and processes in the home. Matters such as restraint, single separation, risk assessment and their implementation, are monitored regularly and closely to ensure young people are kept safe. Any trends, themes and patterns are analysed to improve the care provided.

There have been two new staff that have started work at the home since the last inspection. Records examined 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 **adequate**.

The Registered Manager has responsibility for the secure unit and a children's home located on the same site. The manager is experienced and committed, but the increased responsibilities on occasions affect capacity to dedicate sufficient time to her role as secure unit manager to ensure effective leadership and management. For example, the effective monitoring of all records and some systems, including an element of security, has not been robustly undertaken. However, the supporting management team have ensured that staff have maintained high standards and continue to meet young people's needs. Therefore this has not affected the good quality of care and outcomes for young people.

Most security matters at the home are appropriately managed and monitored well to ensure that young people are safe. However, a specific aspect of the home's systems and procedures is lacking meaning there is the potential for security to be compromised. This issue although significant and important, does not place any young people at risk, though lack of robust monitoring has failed to identify this weakness.

Effective processes ensure that almost all complaints are thoroughly monitored and as a result young people are satisfied with the outcome. However, not all records are robustly and routinely examined by the manager and therefore not all opportunities to learn from issues raised by young people are being utilised.

There were no requirements or recommendations made at the last inspection. The home has demonstrated its continued capacity for improvement. For example, both the external and internal monitoring processes have been updated to reflect the recent changes in legislation. In addition, the manager is proactively responding to the presenting needs of young people by arranging for specialist training and awareness raising sessions for staff. These have included engaging the services of a specialist in child sexual exploitation as well as enrolling staff on a pilot programme in 'restoring neglectful parenting'. Young people fully benefit from this holistic approach to their care which ensures their diverse needs are understood and addressed.

Young people, their parents and professionals are provided with good information about the secure unit. The Statement of Purpose and the children's guide set out the aims and objectives of this home and the services provided. These comprehensive documents detail the ethos of the organisation and the specific care provided. Information about meeting equality and diversity needs is particularly strong and demonstrates the home's understanding of cultural and gender specific needs. As a result, young people are appropriately placed thereby increasing their opportunities for enrichment and success.

Much improved external monitoring processes identify positive practice as well as areas for improvement and incorporate the views of young people, their parents and placing authorities. This ensures that all are provided with the opportunity to contribute to the care and development in the home. The manager's internal monitoring procedures comply with legislation and use consultation with young people and other interested parties productively to clearly identify strengths of the provision and areas for development. For example, a young person's suggestion that bedtimes be staggered in line with age and risk assessment was implemented. This boosts young people's self-confidence and increases their sense of belonging in the home. However, there are shortfalls in some auditing processes. For example, the monitoring of a security issue, complaints and sanctions.

The knowledgeable, capable and experienced management team understand the strengths and most weaknesses of the home. Comprehensive business plans detail the progress made across the site and future growth initiatives. However, this

document includes the needs of the open children's home provision and is not specific to the secure unit.

Records are clear, up to date, stored securely, and contribute to an understanding of the young people's lives. Young people are safeguarded by the attention to detail, which ensures that all significant events are notified to appropriate professionals and agencies in line with legislation. Appropriate action is taken following any such incidents.

There have been recent high levels of sickness absence among staff and the home has some staff vacancies. Staff numbers are sufficient to meet the needs of young people; however, on occasions there has not been consistency in permanent staff being on duty. The manager has begun addressing staffing levels by completing a recent recruitment programme. Staff report positively about the support and good quality supervision they receive in order to meet the needs of young people. As a result young people benefit from being cared for by enthusiastic, committed and caring staff. A staff member stated, 'I love the work with the young people. I can see how far they have come' and a new member of staff said, 'I feel like I've come to a family all the other staff are so good. I love it here and know I'm making things better.'

Managers fully understand the importance of regular, good quality training to promote and maintain staff skills and motivation. All staff, including relief workers, are appropriately trained to meet the individual needs of young people in their care. Core skills are enhanced by specialist training sessions on a range of subjects, such as Child Sexual Exploitation, mental health issues and autism. Young people fully benefit from being cared for by a committed and nurturing staff team who understand and can meet their needs.

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.