

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC035409
Inspector	Philip Cass
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Secure Unit

Registered person	Northumberland County Council
Registered person address	Northumberland County Council County Hall Morpeth Northumberland NE61 2EF
Responsible individual	Daljit Lally
Registered manager	Julie Anne Tinkler
Date of last inspection	04/06/2014

Inspection date	16/12/2014
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Previous inspection	good
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection

This home was judged good at the last full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judge that it has **improved effectiveness**.

At the previous inspection one requirement and three recommendations were made. These have been fully addressed.

The home was required to improve the way that it records the use of restraint. Records are now more detailed and contain all necessary information. This enables more effective monitoring. The home was also asked to improve the way that restraint practice is evaluated by managers. As a result, a new system is in place. Each incident of restraint is now comprehensively reviewed by experienced managers who are independent of the home. The very open and transparent process significantly reduces the possibility of abusive practice developing. It also ensures that lessons are learned from challenging incidents so that future practice is improved. Better recording and monitoring of restraint significantly improves the home's safeguarding practice.

The home was also asked to change the way that sanctions are imposed. Sanctions are now less punitive and more relevant to the behaviours displayed by young people. They are now a more effective tool to address anti-social behaviours. In addition, the home has positively addressed a recommendation to improve complaint processes. Prompt feedback is now given to individuals who raise concerns about the service. This means that the home is better able to establish whether the complaint is satisfactorily resolved.

Managers and staff have a proven track record of delivering good quality care. They provide a secure, stable and nurturing environment. The home works very successfully with young people whose complex needs have resulted in the breakdown of placements in other secure settings. Staff are highly skilled at building and maintaining positive relationships with young people. They demonstrate great warmth and empathy in their interactions. They act as good role models because

they are respectful and courteous at all times. Young people value the commitment of staff. They say that the home is good because, 'the staff care about you'. Education arrangements also remain strong. Young people continue to make good progress in education. They grow in self-confidence as they experience educational success.

Since the last inspection, the home has built on these established strengths. An improved working relationship with the Local Authority Designated Officer for safeguarding has been developed. This means that any allegations or disclosures of abuse are very well managed. The home has also commissioned packages of work that help young people understand issues around child sexual exploitation. This reduces the risk of abuse when young people return to community settings. Good working relationships with local police means that emergency situations are managed well, with minimal disruption to young people.

Health care arrangements are also significantly improved. A wider range of specialist resources are now available to the home. These include speech and language therapists who work with young people to improve their communication and social skills. The development of a health promotion strategy means that commissioners have a better understanding of the health care needs of young people and can tailor resources more efficiently. Better commissioning arrangements mean that young people have significantly greater access to school nurse services and mental health professionals. As a result, their physical and emotional health is improved.

Care arrangements have been strengthened by the recruitment of six new members of staff, many of whom are experienced in residential care. Managers and staff adopt innovative approaches to provide young people with work experience opportunities. For example, one young person regularly works in the home's kitchen alongside the catering staff. The home also creates opportunities for young people to develop entrepreneurial skills. Young people successfully apply for enterprise grants from the local authority to create their own small business. They take considerable pride in their ability to earn money from their creative endeavours.

Staff go to great lengths to enable young people to spend time in the community as part of their preparation for discharge. This reduces anxieties and helps young people to adapt well to future placements. However, there are isolated incidents where timely arrangements for discharge and resettlement have not been put in place by social workers. As a result, smooth and well-planned transitions are not provided for all young people. The home has not been sufficiently robust in notifying placing authorities of this shortfall and encouraging suitable transition plans to be produced.

Information about this children's home

This secure children's home is managed by a local authority. It is approved by the Department for Education to restrict young people's liberty. Education is provided on site.

The children's home provides two separate units that can accommodate up to 12 young people who are aged between 10 and 17 years and accommodated under section 25 of the Children Act 1989. Admission of any young person over the age of 10 but under 13 years of age requires the approval of the Secretary of State.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
04/06/2014	Full	good
21/01/2014	Interim	good progress
18/07/2013	Full	good
19/02/2013	Interim	good progress

What does the children's home need to do to improve further?

Recommendations

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

- notify placing authorities whenever timely arrangements for discharge and resettlement have not been put in place. (NMS 23.2)

What inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspections we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

Information 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 framework of inspection for children's homes.