

Inspection report

The Elms Close Support - Dundee Care Home Service

The Elms - Close Support Unit
317 South Road
Dundee DD2 2RT

Inspected by: Linda Paterson
(Care Commission Officer)

Type of inspection: Announced

Inspection completed on: 28 September 2005

Service Number

CS2003034640

Service name

The Elms Close Support - Dundee

Service address

The Elms - Close Support Unit
317 South Road
Dundee DD2 2RT

Provider Number

SP2003004034

Provider Name

Dundee City Council

Inspected By

Linda Paterson
Care Commission Officer

Inspection Type

Announced

Inspection Completed

28 September 2005

Period since last inspection

6 months

Local Office Address

Central East Regional Office, 4th Floor, Nethergate
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Introduction

The Elms Close Support Unit is located in the Lochee area of Dundee. The unit shares a building with the secure unit and secure education unit, but operates as a separate facility, having its own entrance and dedicated staff team. It has five bedrooms, all of which have en-suite facilities. In addition there is a spacious living/dining room and a multi-purpose recreation room, a laundry, meeting room and a general office.

The stated aim of the unit is "to provide young people whose behaviour is a threat to their wellbeing with a safe, supportive and stimulating environment in which it is hoped that they can achieve their full potential, develop respect for themselves and others, and understand the skills and attitudes they will require when they move on from the unit."

Basis of Report

This report was written following an announced inspection of the unit over two days, with two Care Commission Officers attending on the first day.

All communal areas of the home were seen, and one bedroom was visited with the permission of the young person occupying that room.

Two young people were interviewed, and informal discussion took place with a third.

Discussions took place with the manager and depute manager of the service, the residential resource worker and three members of care staff.

The inspection focussed on the following National Care Standards for Care homes for Children and Young People:

- Standard 6: Feeling safe and secure
- Standard 7: Management and staffing
- Standard 9: Making choices
- Standard 12: Medication
- Standard 15: Daily life
- Standard 16: Supporting communication

Action taken on requirements in last Inspection Report

There was one requirement arising from the last inspection of the service, this in relation to staffing. It was noted that there had been considerable improvement in the staffing levels within the unit, and the capacity of care staff to take forward planned work with young people had greatly improved. However, there had still been some occasions when optimum staffing levels had not been achieved

Comments on Self-Evaluation

The self-evaluation form was completed in detail prior to the inspection. Key strengths were identified, as were areas for development. The information provided was helpful to the inspection process.

View of Service Users

Discussion took place with three of the young people at The Elms. All were generally positive

about The Elms, and particularly about the support offered by staff.

Other comments and observations have been incorporated into the evaluation of the care standards in the body of this report.

View of Carers

The views of parents or carers was not sought for this inspection

Regulations / Principles

National Care Standards

National Care Standard Number 6: Care Homes for Children and Young People - Feeling Safe and Secure

Strengths

The service had benefited from a settled period in terms of the staff group and the young people. Staffing levels had stabilised, and staff morale was high.

Staff had established positive relationships with young people, and good systems were in place to ensure that young people could talk to staff in confidence, or seek independent support outwith the service if they wished.

The young people who were interviewed said that they felt safe at The Elms. One young person commented that bullying was not tolerated at all by staff, and expressed confidence in their ability to maintain a safe environment. Staff demonstrated a commitment to supporting young people who were vulnerable, and there were examples of innovative strategies being put in place to build resilience and address bullying issues.

Staff were clear about their role in relation to child protection, and child protection awareness training was included in basic core skills training for staff during their first year of employment. There had been no child protection issues within the service since the last inspection.

A balance had been achieved between accessibility and security within the building. One young person commented positively on the increased flexibility of the security arrangements compared with a previous stay in the unit. Another said that staff respected their privacy, but accepted the need for their enquiries into their whereabouts.

Recording of incidents of restraint was detailed and showed improvement since the last inspection. There was evidence that staff were skilled in de-escalating potentially dangerous situations.

Staff worked with young people and their families to promote their safety when outwith the unit. Young people were encouraged to identify and manage risks for themselves in preparation for moving on.

Good fire safety and emergency procedures were in place. An incident of fire-raising had been dealt with efficiently and effectively.

Established procedures were in place for the maintenance of vehicles used by the unit.

Areas for Development

While it was noted that effective procedures were in place in respect of fire safety, the service should ensure that it routinely records the time fire drills were carried out and how long it took to evacuate the building. The service should also evidence that it can safely evacuate the building with night time staffing levels (see recommendation 1)

Young people at The Elms Close Support Unit did not as yet have access to the internet. It is recommended that the capacity of the service to provide young people with safe access to the internet should be pursued in order that they can benefit from the information available in this medium, particularly for educational purposes (see recommendation 2).

National Care Standard Number 7: Care Homes for Children and Young People - Management and Staffing

Strengths

The Elms had policies and procedures in place through Dundee City Council's Social Work Department covering all legal requirements.

Good recording systems were in place, including systems for recording accidents and incidents, and financial transactions.

Staff were recruited according to the council's safe recruitment procedures. Since the last inspection, the unit had benefited from the appointment of a new Head of Home and two Social Care Officers. The new appointments had had a positive effect upon the stability and morale of the staff team, and staff felt that they were able to forward plan more effectively as a result.

A programme of core skills training had been established to ensure that staff acquired essential skills and knowledge during their first year of employment, and new staff were well-supported through formal supervision and mentoring systems.

The Social Work Department had a training strategy in place to enable staff to achieve qualifications to meet registration requirements.

The new manager of the service had adopted a "hands on" approach to quality assurance, and spent time observing practice and modelling positive approaches.

She met regularly with other residential resource managers to discuss practice development issues.

Areas for Development

It was noted by some staff that not all of the residents living at The Elms required the "close support" described in the statement of functions and objectives for the service, and that some had stayed beyond the short term period of intensive support originally envisaged. With three of the young people being 16, or very nearly, the main need was for independent skills development rather than close support. It was also apparent that changes in the provision of residential childcare elsewhere in Dundee had had an impact upon the population of young people within The Elms. Overall, it appeared that there had been a shift in focus, and there was a need to review the statement of functions and objectives of The Elms, and to ensure that admissions to the unit were consistent with the stated function (see recommendation 3) There was as yet no established way of systematically evaluating, reviewing and reporting the outcomes of the work of the unit. The manager said that this process was at an early stage, but had been prioritised for development by the external manager in the coming months. In developing its system, the service should ensure that the views of young people and their families and carers are taken into account (see recommendation 4).

National Care Standard Number 9: Care Homes for Children and Young People - Making Choices

Strengths

Young people were able to exercise choice in many aspects of their care. Their involvement in weekly planning meetings ensured that their views and wishes were central to the decisions made about their care and day-to-day living arrangements.

There was evidence in care plans that staff engaged with young people to help them to make good choices. Staff knew the young people well, and their understanding of their individual circumstances enabled them to offer appropriate advice.

Workers from independent advocacy services such as Who Cares? and the Children's Rights

Officers were regular visitors to The Elms, and provided support in the event of any conflict of interests.

On a daily basis, young people had choices about food, clothes, activities, how to spend their pocket money, and to a large extent, their time.

Areas for Development

none noted

National Care Standard Number 12: Care Homes for Children and Young People - Keeping Well - Medication

Strengths

A routine inspection of medication revealed shortcomings in the procedure in relation to the storage and administration of medication as follows: some medication wasn't labelled; medication belonging to a relative was stored for use by a young person; an open blister pack was found.

Areas for Development

The service needed to review its systems for the safe storage and administration of medication, and should ensure that all staff are familiar with the policy and procedure (see requirement 1)

National Care Standard Number 15: Care Homes for Children and Young People - Daily Life

Strengths

Young people were involved in the daily life of the unit through young people's meetings and through informal discussion with staff.

Some use was made of external agencies such as the Sports Outreach Service to promote young people's involvement in physical activity.

Staff showed a genuine interest in the activities and interests of young people on a day-to-day basis. Birthdays were celebrated, and young people said that they were looking forward to celebrating Christmas at The Elms.

Young people had ready access to advice on health and lifestyle issues through the specialist nurse for looked after children (the LAC nurse), and other outside agencies such as Caledonia Youth and The Corner.

A clear policy and procedure on sanctions was in place.

Areas for Development

The current needs of the young residents at The Elms were less for close support, and more for support towards the development of independent living skills, since three of the five residents were 16, or would be very shortly. As identified in previous reports, The Elms was not designed or equipped for the practice of independent living skills, and progress towards the development of the multi-purpose room has been slow. However, at the time of the inspection staff were hopeful that work would begin soon.

In addition, the centralisation of the catering facilities limited the opportunities for young people to be involved in many of the activities of daily life which revolve around the preparation and provision of food (see recommendation 5)

There had been ongoing difficulties in achieving a pattern of regular educational input for some of the young people at The Elms. While acknowledging that there were some resource issues outwith the control of The Elms which had an impact upon the educational provision for young people, it was felt that the service still needed to develop a clear strategy for maximising the educational development of young people whether or not they were in full-time education placements (see recommendation 6)

Some of the young people talked about leisure interests which did not appear to be reflected in their care plan. Some staff felt that the unit could do more to promote the young people's involvement in leisure activities outwith the unit (see recommendation 7)

National Care Standard Number 16: Care Homes for Children and Young People -Supporting Communication

Strengths

None of the young people at The Elms had been identified as having specific needs in respect of communication.

Young people were well-supported by staff to contribute their views to care reviews and planning meetings.

Areas for Development

none noted

Enforcement

There has been no enforcement action in respect of this service.

Other Information

Requirements

Requirement 1: The service must ensure that it has effective systems in place for the storage and administration of medication, and should develop its policy and practice in accordance with the details of Standard 12 - Medication.

This is to comply with The Regulation of Care (Requirements as to Care Services)(Scotland) Regulations 2002 (SSI/2002/114) Regulation 4(1)(a) - a requirement to make proper provision for the health and welfare of service users.

Timescale for implementation: within one month of receipt of this report.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: The service should ensure that it routinely records the time fire drills were carried out and how long it took to evacuate the building. The service should also evidence that it can safely evacuate the building with night time staffing levels. (National Care Standards for Care Homes for Children and Young People - Standard 6 - Feeling safe and secure).

Recommendation 2: It is recommended that the capacity of the service to provide young people with safe access to the internet should be pursued in order that they can benefit from the information available in this medium, particularly for educational purposes(Standard 6 - Feeling safe and secure)

Recommendation 3: The service should carry out a review of its aims and objectives, and should ensure that placements within the unit are consistent with the stated function (Standard 7 - Management and staffing)

Recommendation 4: The service should continue to develop its system for the evaluation, review and planning of the service, and should ensure that the views of young people and their parents and representatives are taken into account (Standard 7 – Management and staffing)

Recommendation 5: The service should ensure that it continues to develop opportunities for young people to become involved in the activities of daily life which will support independent skills development (Standard 15 – Daily life).

Recommendation 6: The service should develop a clear strategy to support young people to maximise their educational opportunities (Standard 15 – Daily life)

Recommendation 7: The service should ensure that young people's interests and talents are clearly recorded in their care plans, and that they are supported to develop these wherever possible (Standard 15 – Daily life)

Linda Paterson

Care Commission Officer