

# **Children's homes inspection - Full**

Inspection date	28/07/2015
Unique reference number	SC036740
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Secure Unit
Registered person	Nottinghamshire County Council
Registered person address	NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL, COUNTY HALL, LOUGHBOROUGH ROAD, WEST BRIDGFORD, NOTTINGHAM, NG2 7QP

Responsible individual	Ms Shelagh Mitchell
Registered manager	Ms Thirza Smith
Inspector	Mr Shaun Common



Inspection date	28/07/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Improved Effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Outstanding
The children's home provides highly effective services that meet the requirements for outstanding.	
how well children and young people are helped Good and protected	
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding
outcomes in education and related learning activities	Outstanding



#### SC036740

#### **Summary of findings**

#### The children's home provision is outstanding because:

- Young people make exceptional progress in all aspects of their lives including building self-esteem, confidence and feelings of self-worth.
- Young people have excellent relationships with staff empowering them to engage with the care provided.
- Preparation for transition and/or return to community living is excellent and effectively supports young people.
- Education provision is excellent. Young people have high attendance and achieve to the best of their ability.
- Managers and staff are skilled, experienced, proactive and child centred. They have high aspirations for young people and support them well to deliver the best possible outcomes.
- Quality assurance processes that very regularly review young people's care and sentence planning is excellent. This process evaluates progress and identifies any actions to ensure the best possible outcomes and quality of are achieved.
- Young people's views are carefully and fully considered. Their views influence the way they are cared for and the running of the home.



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

#### **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 (England) Regulations 2015 and the *Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards*. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
6 (1) The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who-	31/10/2015
(a) Understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children;	
(b) Use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential.	
(2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to-	
(vii) provide to children living in the home the physical necessities they need in order to live there comfortably;	
Specifically, ensure that Loxley's living and outside spaces are in a suitable state of repair and decorated to the same standard as the other units in the home. Regulation 6 (2) (b) (vii))	
The registered person must maintain the records ("case records") for each child which-	31/10/2015
(a) Include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child;	
Specifically, ensure records set out under item 14 of Schedule 3 relating to when a child goes missing from the home are fully maintained and kept up to date (Regulation 36 (1)(a))	



#### Recommendations

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

- where appropriate, sanctions used to address poor behaviour should be restorative in nature, to help children recognise the impact of their behaviour on themselves, other children, the staff caring for them and the wider community. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, Page 46, Section 9.38)
- ensure that staff can access appropriate resources to support their training needs; specifically, ensure that staff are trained in identifying and managing those young people at risk of being drawn into terrorism (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 53, paragraph 10.11)
- ensure that sufficient provision is available to meet young people's needs; specifically, managers should ensure that all learners are offered individual career advice and guidance (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 29, paragraph 5.17)
- ensure the home makes available suitable facilities, equipment and resources for learning; specifically that the outside PE area is resurfaced and padding applied to lighting posts (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 29, paragraph 5.18)
- plan staffing levels to ensure they can respond flexibly to unexpected events or opportunities; specifically, managers should put in place effective succession plans to ensure that the quality of the education provision is maintained (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 54 paragraph 10.15)



### **Full report**

#### 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. The children's home can accommodate up to 18 young people, who are aged between 10 and 17 years. It provides for up to 14 young people placed by the Youth Justice Board and up to four places for young people accommodated under section 25 of the Children Act 1989 who are placed by local authorities. Admission of any young person under section 25 of the Children Act 1989 who are under 13 years of age requires the approval of the Secretary of State. Education is provided on site in dedicated facilities.

#### **Recent inspection history**

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
17/03/2015	CH - Interim	improved effectiveness
17/06/2014	CH - Full	Good
26/02/2014	CH - Full	Good
25/06/2013	CH - Full	Good



#### **Inspection Judgements**

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Outstanding

The staff team are highly committed and nurturing. They fully understand the strengths and vulnerabilities of young people and are aspirational for them to achieve to the best of their ability. As a result, young people feel valued and enjoy excellent relationships with staff. A young person said, 'Being here is the best place I've ever been. I feel safer here than I have anywhere else. All the staff know me and care about me as me so I can be myself and find things about me that I like.' Young people enjoy being able to openly express their affection for staff. A social worker said, 'I think the staff especially (name) and (name) are responsive to the needs of the young person. They have been able to build a good relationship with her and this has made her feel secure.'

Since the last inspection there have been some significant incidents including assaults on staff by young people. Although staff tried their best to provide appropriate care for these young people they chose not to fully engage with the ethos in the home. These young people have been moved on to appropriate alternative provisions.

Good care planning ensures that all of a young person's individual and diverse needs are assessed and met. Plans are reviewed robustly and at least every three weeks ensuring that all achievements are celebrated allowing young people to take pride in their successes. Any shortfalls are highlighted, identified and addressed. The proactive management team robustly pursue placing authorities to ensure they meet their responsibilities to young people. Consequently young people benefit from a collective partnership approach to their care. A social worker said, 'The communication is good. There is always someone to speak to. I do not have any concerns or issues.'

Young people's growth in self-esteem and feelings of self-worth enable them to engage with specialist interventions as well as their day-to-day care. Consequently their emotional and psychological health and well-being improves empowering them to make sense of the situations that have led to them being accommodated in a secure children's home. Young people learn appropriate ways of coping with stress and managing their emotions. They are in the process of learning alternatives to self-harming behaviours and for those placed by the Youth Justice Board, understanding why they became involved in criminal activity. This provides them with alternative coping strategies as they grow in to adulthood. A young person said, 'I'm really proud of myself and what I've achieved. I don't feel that I would have done any of that without being here.'



Excellent health care provision ensures young people's individual and holistic needs are well met. Generic health care services are complemented by specialist interventions which lead to positive physical, psychological and emotional outcomes. Young people feel healthier and start to understand the benefits of having a healthy lifestyle. A parent said, 'We have been saying her medication needed changing for a long time and they (the home) had it done within three days' of her moving in. This is the best place for her; she is getting the help she needs.'

Young people are actively engaged in age appropriate pursuits and enrichment activities. These expand young people's interests and preferences as well as having fun and building social and life skills. Activities include the Gold Art Award, sporting activities and becoming more physically active in the gymnasium or outside spaces or learning to play an instrument. Young people's self-confidence, self-esteem and emotional literacy are enhanced. One young person said, 'I had forgotten I was good at trampolining and now I know I am. I'm able to be proud of myself,' and another commented, 'I've learnt to play the guitar. I've learnt something I really wanted to and I'm going to take that forward in to my future life.' Importantly, young people enjoy themselves while making friends. One young person said, 'They are the best friends I've ever had in my life' and another stated, 'I've got real friends and I feel loved and I haven't felt that in any other home.'

Cultural diversity and religious observances are celebrated. For example, young people are able to observe Ramadan, are able to fast and pray when required and have a meal ready for them at the end of their fast. This reinforces young people's personal and cultural identity increasing their sense of belonging.

Capturing young people's views and acting on them wherever possible is integral to the ethos of this home. The Young People's Council has representatives from each of the three units ensuring that individual and collective voices are heard. They are actively involved in recruitment of staff. Young people learn social and negotiation skills while feeling valued because they see that their opinions and views are considered and acted upon.

Young people fully understand how to express any dissatisfaction. 'Grumbles' books, which are a way young people can raise low-level concerns, are available in each of the three units. Issues are responded to quickly by managers. The complaints system is robust and thorough and young people receive feedback quickly. Young people confidently use both systems appropriately sure in the knowledge their complaint will be addressed. A young person said, 'They listen to me and what I want.'

The three living units are appropriately secure and provide young people with a choice of rooms in which to share positive time together. One of the units is not as homely as the other two. Some damage has been caused by young people but delays in repairs have added to the less welcoming appearance. Although there have been delays in repairs, the Registered Manager provided evidence that this



was out of the home's control and that actions were taken to raise this matter with relevant people and departments to ensure this was resolved as soon as possible. Plans are now in place to undertake the repairs required.

Young people eat their meals together around the dining table. This adds to their sense of belonging and engenders a family atmosphere that young people like. They have a choice of meals and all dietary requirements are met. Young people enjoy trying new foods and develop their knowledge. A young person said, 'Food is good and I've had discovered I really like fruit. I wouldn't have known how many kinds of fruit there were.'

Preparation for transition to new placements or return to the community is excellent. Planning commences as soon as young people arrive at the home and these plans are evaluated and re-assessed as young people make progress. For young people placed by the Youth Justice Board there is specific interventions work undertaken with them involving external agencies. For example knife crime and its impact. Interventions empower young people to explore their offending behaviours and adopt new positive coping mechanisms. One young person wrote on his exit plan that this was, 'the key to my success because reoffending is not my destiny.' Young people are well informed and prepared for semi or independent living. Commendably, staff continue to provide support to young people after they have left the home. Such are the positive relationships with staff that many young people maintain regular contact with the home long after they have left.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good

Young people stated they feel safe. There are occasional incidents of bullying and staff challenge these immediately and effectively. Young people did not raise any concerns about bullying.

On admission, young people's needs regarding any vulnerability and risks of suicide and self-harm are fully assessed and carefully planned for. Reviews of plans are carried out very regularly and a log kept that is reviewed every time staffing changes so all are aware of the on-going needs and vulnerabilities of young people and actions needed to care for them safely. Staff and managers have a detailed and clear understanding of young people's histories and current needs. They implement plans and risk assessments to help keep young people safe.

Managers and staff meet regularly with child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHs) who are on-site, to review young people's needs and risk assessments. They work together to ensure plans are clear and staff are supported with relevant



advice and guidance to help keep young people safe.

Arrangements for safeguarding young people are robust. There have been four incidents of a child protection nature since the last inspection. Three were related to matters occurring before young people were admitted to the home. All have been dealt with appropriately and promptly with referral to, and close liaison with, relevant professionals and agencies. Records are kept and show the actions taken to safeguard young people.

There are strong links with the local authority and the local authority designated officer (LADO), and good links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). The manager has forged links with the Board and ensures a report on restraint practices at the home is presented to the Board on an annual basis. However, the Board are not currently undertaking their own review of the home's restraint practices and reporting on this as set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015, in order to fully support the home in independently scrutinising practice.

There have been three incidents of absconding since the last inspection. All were incidents where young people were attending court hearings and transported by escort services commissioned by the Youth Justice Board. A protocol devised by the local authority and local police force is in place that was reviewed recently. Staff are aware of their role and responsibilities in helping to keep young people safe should an incident occur. In all three incidents, the relevant professionals and agencies were notified immediately. The young people were found and returned to the home quickly. Young people were spoken to by staff about the reasons they absconded, seen by someone independent of the home and plans and risk assessments updated. However, the home do not keep records to fully evidence required information.

Young people are encouraged to develop positive social skills and behaviour through positive staff role modelling and strong relationships with staff. Some young people expressed the view that one or two staff are occasionally not as consistent as they could be in managing behaviour. The manager was fully aware of this issue. She has evidence of work being undertaken and has a clear plan and strategy in place to improve this. The impact of behaviour management generally is positive and this issue is not seen as significant. The incentive scheme in place supports young people to improve their behaviour. The scheme is based on earning points for good behaviour. The scheme starts at bronze level and goes up to graduate with young people able to earn increased privileges and rewards as they progress through the levels.

Physical restraint is used appropriately and in line with regulations. Full and robust records are kept of all incidents. Young people and staff are debriefed after any incident of restraint and are therefore well supported. Managers ensure there is close oversight and monitoring of restraint practices. All incidents are view via



closed-circuit television recordings to ensure practice is appropriate and any learning can be taken forward.

Single separation is used appropriately and in line with government guidance. Clear and robust records are kept of all incidents. Records include observations of young people when in their rooms to support them to stay safe. There is close monitoring by managers of any use of single separation to ensure it is justified and appropriate.

Searching of young people's rooms and communal areas takes place on a scheduled basis. This is in line with assessed risk and balanced with the need to keep young people and staff safe. Individual searches of young people are risk-led. The main type of search used is a pat down with the use of an electronic wand. On rare occasions, full searches take place. This involves young people removing their clothing then putting on a dressing gown. This type of search must be authorised by a senior manager and only carried out if there are significant concerns or risks. All searches are fully recorded.

Staff use sanctions where young people's behaviour is negative or inappropriate. Sanctions used are fully recorded and are relevant to the misdemeanour. There is clear evidence of monitoring that ensures practices are appropriate and any shortfalls in recording are identified and addressed. The records have a prompt for staff to remember to consider the use of restorative practice. However, the records show limited evidence that this is routinely considered or used. Staff do use restorative practices in other ways and keep records to show this positive practice. For example, where young people have had an altercation or significant disagreement with each other that affects their relationships. Staff use a restorative approach to support young people to repair relationships and in so doing they develop a range of life skills.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding

This is a very well managed home. The manager is registered with Ofsted and has been in post for almost 15 years. She is very experienced and qualified. The manager is well supported receiving regular supervision.

Managers ensure that safe staffing levels are maintained. While the home has had some absences, they have ensured that there are always sufficient staff on duty to meet the young people's needs. This has included senior managers working at weekends, the use of bank staff and some agency staff. This has not compromised



continuity or quality of care. The home is actively recruiting new staff to consolidate and support the current staff teams.

There is an embedded culture of striving for improvement driven by managers that are very experienced and knowledgeable. Areas for improvement identified at the last inspection have been fully addressed. These included, ensuring that the offer of personal support to staff is recorded after any incident of restraint and that there is a policy and procedure that is implemented in relation to ensuring children's case records are secured in administration areas. Reflective practice and listening to the views of young people and stakeholders is threaded into decision making. For example, young people are actively involved in the recruitment of staff and parent's feedback is used effectively to positively influence the quality of care provided.

There are established and effective systems in place which monitor the quality of care and ensure that all professionals are meeting their obligations. Managers robustly advocate on behalf of young people if placing authorities are not ensuring that their care plans are being followed. For example, ensuring effective transition planning or ensuring that young people's education needs will be met when they return to living in the community. There are also checks in place to ensure appropriate security is maintained and monitored around the site.

External visits take place as required by an independent person and reports are provided of these visits to the home, Ofsted and other agencies as required. Reports identify the strengths of the home and any areas where improvement is needed. Managers and the professionals responsible for the visits are actively involved in reviewing these visits and the reports provided in order to ensure continued improvement.

There is conscientious monitoring of any complaints made by young people or others. This includes investigations by independent professionals if necessary. Robust monitoring and oversight by managers ensures complainants and concerns have been acknowledged and addressed.

Monitoring of the care and safety of young people is excellent. There are regular meetings involving on-site professionals from different disciplines, including care staff, child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) and education staff. These reviews assess the impact of their interventions and care delivery for all young people. This process ensures that each young person has a bespoke plan of care aimed at meeting their unique needs.

All members of staff are effectively supported through receiving regular and good quality supervision. These sessions include discussions about the emotional impact working with young people who may have very challenging behaviour. Performance objectives are set and assessed to ensure staff are competent in their roles. Records seen show that this support has effectively improved staff



performance. The majority of staff are qualified and the remainder are either undertaking a relevant qualification or will be registered for the qualification in due course after completing induction.

There is a comprehensive and well organised training plan for all staff. This includes ensuring that staff are competent in key areas such as safeguarding and working with young people who have been victims of sexual exploitation. Staff have not yet undertaken training in recognising and working with young people who are at risk of radicalisation. Particularly good assistance is in place for staff who have specific individual needs. This reflects inclusiveness and embeds the culture of valuing staff and promoting equality and diversity.

The Statement of Purpose is a comprehensive document that reflects the services provided to young people. The document is currently under review as managers are aware that there are some elements that require updating and including. The elements not included, for example staff qualifications, do not compromise the quality of care.

Managers ensure that any significant incidents are reported to the relevant agencies in a timely manner. Although there has been some recent issues where there have been minor delays due to technical problems, managers have assured that this is now fully resolved. The reporting processes ensure any incidents can be examined and addressed by external professionals if needed and oversight of the quality of provision maintained by Ofsted.

	Judgement grade
Outcomes in education and related learning activities	Outstanding

The leadership and management of the education provision are outstanding. Well-established communication and improvement procedures ensure consistently highly quality education; vocational training provision and outstanding outcomes have been maintained since the previous inspection. Very effective strategic planning has ensured that the curriculum reflects national and regional priorities well and further develop the range of activities for young people which improve their employability and life-long learning. A newly-built vocational training unit ran in partnership with a local employer is used to deliver vocational qualifications. This also gives young people 'work-taster' experience in motor vehicle maintenance and repair and construction skills.

Young people make very good progress during their time in education, often from a very low starting point. Most arrive with few qualifications and with reading and



numeracy skills well below those expected for their chronological age.

Staff carry out an excellent, very detailed initial assessment of learning support needs and potential barriers to learning immediately on arrival. The results of assessments and information retrieved from previous schools and colleges are used to ensure that programmes of learning match young people's needs very well. Most young people arrive with complex behavioural, emotional and mental health needs. Education staff use the results of initial assessment very skilfully to plan learning and anticipate areas of challenge for each young person. As a result young people develop clear educational and training aspirations and become well-motivated to progress.

All young people leave the home with at least one accredited qualification and a few leave with higher level qualifications. This prepares them very well for moving on to further education or training. The large majority of young people make good progress in English and mathematics relative to their starting points. In English and mathematics young people make better progress than their peers in mainstream schools. Young people clearly understand the relevance of these subjects to their future employability, education and learning.

Young people's personal and social skills, self-esteem and confidence grow as they take part in a good range of activities. They develop good practical skills in art, music, hairdressing and beauty techniques.

Teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding. Teaching staff are highly skilled at helping young people overcome their individual barriers to learning and motivating them to study. Young people are enthusiastic about their learning as tasks are carefully matched to their ability, learning needs and individual circumstances. A variety of teaching styles are used in each lesson to help learners of all abilities increase their skills and knowledge and gain confidence. Staff strongly praise young people for their effort and achievement. The education rewards scheme is very effective and celebrations of learners' participation, effort and behaviour help them to focus on their learning objectives.

In the large majority of lessons young people participate well and complete appropriately challenging tasks. This contributes to the very good progress they make relative to their starting points and their length of stay.

Teachers make appropriate use of information computer technology (ICT) to enliven learning, where it is available. Teachers regularly make clear links between the learning taking place, future employability and the learners' career aspirations. Teaching assistants provide highly effective and valued personal and learning support to young people during lessons.

All young people have individual education plans that are very detailed and clearly explain how learning targets are to be monitored and achieved. Individual progress reviews are used very effectively to agree challenging progress targets, particularly



for the more able learners. Young people are clear about how well they are progressing with all aspects of their education and personal development.

The rigorous observation of teaching practice, including learning walks, supports the accurate self-evaluation process and leads to detailed staff training and development plans. Young people are routinely involved in discussions about their progress in education and are confident in raising issues and concerns as they arise. The education manager has developed useful links with a local school to help review and improve the quality of the provision.

Good attention is given to equality and diversity during lessons. There are frequent, interesting discussions on current affairs or topics of personal interest, which help young people, consider their personal prejudices and understanding of significant subjects.

The range of the curriculum offered is good. Teachers work well together to coordinate a diverse range of subjects and activities to meet the needs of individual young people, including supporting learners in completing their GCSE and A level studies. The range of accredited courses is good and the curriculum now provides good opportunities for young people to achieve vocational qualifications in motor vehicle and construction skills.

Young people enjoy a good range of educational and leisure sports, games and physical activities. The range of work experience opportunities includes appropriate external placements in a local hair salon and motor vehicle garage.

Learning resources are good and support learners to develop relevant vocational skills or to research future education and employment opportunities. Most classrooms have interactive whiteboards and access to personal computers. However, the outside PE area needs to be resurfaced and additional padding applied to the lampposts. Teachers make appropriate use of wall displays to support learning and to share young people's work, particularly in art. Learners are provided with good access to adaptive technology to support their individual learning difficulties or disabilities.

A varied enrichment programme is offered across the home, after school hours and during education holidays, which reflects the needs and interests of young people and enhances the education programme. This includes a variety of activities such as sports days, music lessons and drama.

Education staff communicate well with care staff in forming and influencing young people's care plans and contribute fully to transition planning. Teachers provide young people with useful informal careers advice during lessons and tutorials. Individual advice and guidance from a specialist agency is arranged, if required; but could be further improved.

Behaviour is generally good. Most relationships between staff and young people are mutually respectful and trusting. Young people get on well with their teachers



and peers which results in a relaxed and purposeful atmosphere in most lessons. Incidences of inappropriate behaviour are infrequent and short-lived. Staff offer consistent, considered challenge to poor behaviour and most are dealt with effectively.

Attendance is very high. Lessons start punctually and movements at break times throughout the day are managed very efficiently. Briefings from care staff at the start of each day identify any concerns that need to be shared about individual young people and are used to help plan education activities well. The number of lessons disrupted by the need for young people to attend meetings and appointments are kept to a minimum due to the close working with care staff and the prioritisation of education.

Young people work safely in classes and in practical activities. They learn about and demonstrate safe working practices, including the use of personal protective equipment within all activities.



#### What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection.* 

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place, however, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.



## Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, young people and their families. In addition the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This 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 Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the *Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards.* 



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