

SC036740

Assurance visit

Information about this secure children's home

This secure children's home is managed by a local authority. It is approved by the Department for Education to restrict children's liberty. The children's home can accommodate up to 20 children, who are aged between 10 and 17 years.

It provides accommodation for up to 12 children placed by the Youth Custody Service and has up to eight places for children accommodated under section 25 of the Children Act 1989.

Admission of any young person under section 25 of the Children Act 1989 who is under 13 years of age requires the approval of the Secretary of State.

The commissioning of health services in this home is the statutory responsibility of NHS England under the Health and Social Care Act 2012. Education is provided on site.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since May 2018.

Visit dates: 7 to 9 September 2020

Previous inspection date: 1 October 2019

Previous inspection judgement: Requires improvement to be good

Information about this visit

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), Ofsted suspended all routine inspections in March 2020. As part of a phased return to routine inspection, we are undertaking assurance visits to children's social care services that are inspected under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF).

At these visits, inspectors evaluate the extent to which:

- children are well cared for
- children are safe
- leaders and managers are exercising strong leadership.

This visit was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000, following the published guidance for assurance visits.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills is leading Ofsted's work into how England's social care system has delivered child-centred practice and care within the context of the restrictions placed on society during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Findings from the visit

We identified no serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit.

The care of children

Children spoke positively about their experiences at this home. During the visit, inspectors observed warm, caring and friendly interactions between children and staff. One child said, 'I feel safe and I get on with the kids. I can talk to my keyworkers but get on with most staff.'

Staff have a good understanding of each child's needs. Children are involved in developing their plan. This enables them to have a voice and express their needs. Children are listened to, and every effort is made to respond to reasonable requests. For example, most children complained to the inspector about the food. Positively, managers were aware of this and are taking steps to make improvements.

The home is providing care for children with highly complex and challenging needs. Each child has a comprehensive plan in place that outlines their holistic needs. Staff work closely with partner agencies, including mental health practitioners, speech and language therapists and sign language interpreters. This promotes a supportive and consistent approach to helping children develop. A youth justice officer said, '[Name] has consistency with those who oversee his care. He is thriving in all areas including education, health, independence skills and social interaction.'

Children have been supported to keep in touch with their families. Technology has been used well when face-to-face contact has not been possible due to social distancing measures. The recent return to face-to-face visits has been carefully thought through to minimise risk to children, visitors and staff.

The healthcare team moved to a more flexible, reduced rota during the pandemic. This was to help ensure the safety of staff and the children they support. A nurse-led primary care service with remote access to general practitioners has ensured that children's healthcare needs have been met without delay.

Attendance at education has remained high during the lockdown. Education managers have worked hard to support all parts of the home and, together, they have provided a productive learning day for children. Children have been offered a

full and varied education curriculum. They have particularly enjoyed participating in the vocational training areas such as hairdressing and construction.

The safety of children

The children are kept safe and said that they feel safe. This is because care practice is underpinned by well-understood and consistently implemented safeguarding policies, procedures and risk management plans. Staff are trained in safeguarding and recognise and respond to any emerging safeguarding concerns.

Children's safety is given a high priority. Individual risk management plans and safety plans are developed in conjunction with mental health professionals. The staff demonstrate a detailed understanding of these plans and are effective in supporting children to manage and reduce risk-taking behaviours such as self-harm.

Staff take a proportionate and considered approach when using single separation, managing away and physical restraint. Interventions of this type are kept under constant review, and managers routinely evaluate staff practice. Any issues of a safeguarding nature have been shared promptly and effectively with relevant agencies.

Staff are resilient and committed to helping children develop positive coping skills and self-regulation. It is positive that the ethos of 'secure stairs', an integrated care framework that addresses the holistic needs of children in secure children's homes, has been embraced by all staff. This was particularly evident when the inspector reviewed closed-circuit television (CCTV) recording of physical restraints and observed staff supporting children in crisis in a patient, calm and caring manner.

Leaders and managers

Managers and staff have made every effort to overcome the barriers brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Care has continued to be delivered in a way that recognises and responds to each child's unique and individual needs. When change has been necessary, it has been implemented in a way that has considered and minimised the impact on children.

The need for staff to isolate and/or recover from COVID-19 has meant that staffing has presented a challenge at times. Contingency measures were quickly put in place to ensure that enough staff were available to keep children safe. These measures, combined with significantly reduced occupancy, mean that continuity of care has been generally maintained since the home went into lockdown.

Staff said that managers have been visible and supportive. New staff have been inducted well, and all staff have benefited from regular formal supervision. Mandatory training has been kept up to date. Managers are in the process of re-establishing more purposeful training opportunities, such as conflict resolution and role-specific training.

Monitoring activity has remained strong. The systems introduced at the last inspection have continued to be effective in identifying and addressing shortfalls quickly. Monthly visits have been completed virtually by the independent visitor. The independent visitor confirms in each of their reports that they are of the view that children are effectively safeguarded and that the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being.

Three requirements and five recommendations were made at the last inspection. Care and education managers have taken suitable action to address these.

Secure children's home details

Unique reference number: SC036740

Registered provider: Nottinghamshire County Council

Registered provider address: Nottinghamshire County Council, County Hall, Loughborough Road, West Bridgford, Nottingham NG2 7QP

Responsible individual: Devon Allen

Registered manager: Paul Thomas

Inspectors

Paul Scott, Social Care Inspector
Cathey Moriarty, Social Care Inspector

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