

SC022448

Assurance visit

Information about this secure children's home

This secure children's home is operated by a voluntary organisation and is approved by the Secretary of State to restrict children's liberty. The children's home can accommodate up to 12 children who are aged between 10 and 17. The home provides for children 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 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 in dedicated facilities.

The manager has been in post since March 2020 and registered with Ofsted in August 2020.

Visit dates: 12 to 15 October 2020

Previous inspection date: 21 January 2020

Previous inspection judgement: 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 did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit.

The care of children

Children's needs are carefully assessed from the point of admission. These are detailed in each child's plans and risk assessments. Plans are continually reviewed through a whole-team multi-agency approach. Staff know the children well and demonstrate patience, tolerance and understanding when implementing these plans.

Care practice is underpinned by strong reciprocal relationships between the children and staff. These are used to good effect in helping children to reflect on past behaviours and make better choices moving forward. A social worker said, '[Name] is settled and has some very strong relationships with staff. Staff apply a holistic therapeutic approach that has helped [name] to reflect on past behaviours.' He went on to say, '[Name] comes with quite a number of risks and it is testament to the care and support from staff that he is so settled and doing so well.'

Staff have made good use of technology to ensure that children can keep in touch with the important people in their lives. They have adapted well to the ever-changing restrictions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, and are doing their best to limit their impact on the children. For example, the home has recently purchased a marquee so that face-to-face contact can be facilitated in the open, and within the secure perimeter, when local restrictions are lifted.

Children spoke positively about their experiences at this home. They are provided with good opportunities to express their views about the home and contribute to their plans. A social worker said, 'Staff make sure that [name] is involved in discussions about his care and will advocate on his behalf when he doesn't want to join meetings.'

Joint working between healthcare professionals and care staff has continued throughout the pandemic. Children have continued to have safe access to both physical and mental healthcare professionals. When this has been delivered on site, precautionary measures have been put in place to limit the spread of COVID-19. A recent incident where a visiting clinician tested positive for COVID-19 after being on site was dealt with in accordance with the commissioned health provider's policy.

Children have continued to engage in education during lockdown. They have been offered a wide and varied education curriculum and attendance has remained high.

Several professionals highlighted this as a major area of achievement for the children that previously would not have engaged in education.

The safety of children

Children's safety is given a high priority. Staff have an in-depth understanding of each child's behaviours, risks and vulnerabilities. Individual risk management plans are developed in conjunction with mental health professionals. Staff follow these plans to support children in managing and reducing risk-taking behaviours such as self-harm effectively.

Staff are trained in safeguarding and know what to do in response to any emerging safeguarding concerns. Policies and procedures are understood and followed. When necessary, information is shared with external safeguarding professionals. This ensures that concerns and allegations are managed effectively. The designated officer for the local authority said, 'The manager and staff are responsive to concerns and are open and transparent in their sharing of information. They ask the right questions and always follow the advice given.'

'Secure Stairs', a framework that addresses the broad range of needs of children in secure children's homes, is being successfully implemented by staff. This was particularly evident when the inspector reviewed closed circuit television footage of physical restraints for a child with highly complex needs and challenging behaviour. Staff could be seen taking a trauma-informed approach to calm and reassure the child to help him to regulate his emotions. When restraint was necessary, it was done in a calm and caring manner for the minimum length of time. The registered manager analyses each incident and is using this information to try to reduce the need for the child to be physically restrained.

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 government guidelines, while continuing to prioritise the needs of the children.

Staffing has presented a challenge at times. However, well thought-out contingency plans and reduced occupancy have ensured that children have continued to receive the appropriate levels of safe care throughout the pandemic. The manager shows good learning from the experiences of other settings and has recently moved her team into bubbles to reduce the impact should any member of staff test positive to COVID-19.

Strong leadership is evident in this home. Staff are highly complimentary about how the manager has implemented change and improved practice. Staff spoke with enthusiasm about how they have been supported to grow and develop their practice, and how happy they are in their work.

Staff receive regular formal supervision that focuses on their professional development. In addition, one day a week is dedicated to a staff enrichment programme which includes group clinical supervision and training around themes such as adverse childhood experiences and attachment theory.

Monitoring activity has remained strong. The systems introduced at the last inspection have continued to be effective in assuring good practice. Internal processes have been further strengthened by the independent visitor who has undertaken visits remotely.

Eight of the nine recommendations from the previous inspection have been addressed. Governance arrangements in education have been introduced but are yet to be fully embedded into practice.

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

Recommendations

- Ensure that the ethos of the home supports each child to learn. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 29, paragraph 5.18) In particular, ensure that appropriate governance arrangements are in place to hold education managers to account for the quality of the provision.

Secure children's home details

Unique reference number: SC022448

Registered provider: Nugent Care 2019

Registered provider address: 99 Edge Lane, Edge Hill, Liverpool L7 2PE

Responsible individual: Sarah Swanson

Registered manager: Kate Herod

Inspectors

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

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