

SC040500

Assurance visit

Information about this secure children's home

This secure children's home is operated by a local authority and is approved by the Secretary of State to restrict young people's liberty. The children's home can accommodate up to 27 children and young people aged between 10 and 18 years.

All places available at this children's home are commissioned on a contractual basis by the Youth Custody Service. The Youth Custody Service may, under certain circumstances, permit local authority children's services to spot purchase a vacant bed at the children's home to enable a local authority to place a child or young person under section 25 of the Children Act 1989. The admission of any child who is under 13 years of age under section 25 of the Children Act 1989 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 experienced and skilled manager is suitably qualified and has been registered with Ofsted since July 2007.

Visit dates: 12 to 21 January 2021

Previous inspection date: 7 January 2020

Previous inspection judgement: Outstanding

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 are being well cared for in this home. They form positive relationships with education, health and care staff. As a result, they develop confidence and increase their self-esteem.

A strength of the staff team is in supporting and facilitating visits and contact with family during restrictions that have been introduced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Staff ensure that information is provided to children about the home before they move in, including information about restrictions and isolation arrangements. There is a child-friendly welcome pack in each child's room, with visual guides to support each child to settle.

Staff ensure that there are clear and consistent boundaries in place from the start of the placement. Children's physical and emotional well-being is carefully monitored as they settle into the home.

Staff also ensure that children are well prepared to move on from the home. Staff recognise that children have experienced stability and positive relationships in the home and can be anxious about leaving. Staff prepare and support mobility plans that enable children to familiarise themselves with their new homes and new support workers. To support children to settle in their new placements, the staff continue to provide support and maintain contact after a child has left the home.

A number of activities are available for children. Staff consult with children effectively so that they provide activities that are interesting and stimulating. For example, while the gym has been closed due to COVID-19 restrictions, staff have made sure that exercise equipment is available in different areas of the home.

Education attendance and engagement have remained high throughout the pandemic restrictions. Education and care staff have worked hard to ensure that children are supported to access learning opportunities. Staff have delivered lessons in the individual houses, in line with arrangements to manage contact and risk of

infection. Children achieved good results in their GCSEs in summer 2020, demonstrating progress from their starting points. One professional said that the child she is working with has 'excelled in education, has been encouraged to make the most of opportunities to learn and has grown in confidence'.

Children's health has improved. They have received their immunisations, have improved their sleep patterns, eat balanced and nutritional diets, and engage with mental-health assessments and input from professionals. Inspectors saw a number of examples of children benefiting from the occupational therapist resource and the speech and language resource. Staff use guidance to support effective communication with individual children.

There are a range of ways in which all staff consult with children and capture their views. Children are well supported to contribute to their plans, know how to complain if they wish to, and feel that they are listened to.

Children are very positive about the care they receive. They say that staff are kind and respectful. One child said, 'Admission was hard. I didn't really know people. Staff were really good; they helped me to settle and they made me feel calmer.'

The safety of children

There have been very few safeguarding incidents since the last inspection and there have been no incidents of bullying. Children feel safe in the home.

Harmful behaviours are reduced as a result of effective multi-agency working, clear risk-management plans and the secure environment. For many children, there is reduced impulsivity. Children build trusting relationships and respond positively to interventions. The children take part in individual work to address offending behaviour and other risk-taking behaviours, such as substance misuse and self-harm.

Managers are good at learning lessons from incidents of self-harm. They carefully review their practice and seek opportunities to improve. For example, following a recent incident, all staff received updated guidance that helped them to have a better understanding of the needs of the child concerned.

There has been one incident of a child absconding during an essential visit to a hospital. The incident resulted in a rigorous internal enquiry, a review by the Youth Custody Service and a multi-agency safeguarding review led by the placing local authority. These reviews have resulted in a number of recommendations and actions for a range of agencies, including the home. These have been fully and quickly addressed by the home.

Staff know and understand each child's needs and recognise the impact of previous life experiences and relationships on their behaviours. Good-quality multi-agency working leads to improvements in children's understanding of their own risk-taking behaviours. Over time, children develop safer patterns of behaviour.

Leaders and managers

There is an established and experienced management team. Managers have adapted policies and procedures appropriately to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. They have fully adhered to public health advice and government guidance. Managers have worked closely with senior officers in the local authority and the Youth Custody Service to promote the safety of children and staff.

Maintaining safe staffing levels has been a challenge, due to COVID-19-related staff sickness and shielding. However, managers have ensured that this has not impacted on the care provided to children by employing new bank staff. When managers have employed bank staff, they have ensured that these staff receive a good-quality induction that includes essential guidance for working in a secure environment.

Staff feel well supported by managers and say that their managers have been flexible and understanding in response to the pandemic. All staff have laptops, which has enabled them to work from home effectively when necessary. Although there has been less face-to-face training, there have been more opportunities for online and virtual training. As a result, staff remain well trained.

Staff and managers are proactive in advocating for children when they are concerned about care-planning decisions. They are tenacious and escalate concerns when necessary.

Despite a range of challenges, managers have continued to ensure that the quality of care is monitored effectively. Each residential area produces a detailed review that is based on qualitative and quantitative information. These reviews generate recommendations that improve practice.

Secure children's home details

Unique reference number: SC040500

Registered provider: Salford City Council

Registered provider address: Civic Centre, Chorley Road, Swinton, Manchester M27 5DA

Responsible individual: Sayma Khan

Registered manager: Michael Lowry MBE

Inspectors

Cathey Moriarty, Social Care Inspector
Debbie Foster, Social Care Inspector

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