

SC046524

Registered provider: Sheffield City Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

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 children's liberty. The home can accommodate up to 10 children who are aged between 10 and 17 years. At the time of this inspection, there were six children living at the home.

The home provides care and accommodation for up to five children placed by the Youth Custody Service and five children accommodated under Section 25 of the Children Act 1989 placed by local authorities.

Admission of any child under Section 25 of the Children Act 1989 who is under 13 years of age requires the approval of the Secretary of State. Education is provided on site in dedicated facilities.

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 registered with Ofsted in June 2014. He is suitably qualified and experienced to undertake this role.

Inspection dates: 1 to 3 February 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
Children's education and learning	outstanding
Children's health	outstanding
How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding

The secure children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 1 September 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
01/09/2021	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
10/03/2020	Interim	Improved effectiveness
10/12/2019	Full	Good
08/01/2019	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children form meaningful and supportive relationships with staff. There is an atmosphere of genuine warmth between children and staff, with both clearly enjoying each other's company. This embedded culture of mutual respect means that children's achievements and successes are celebrated. Children make exceptional progress because of this shared ethos.

Children work with a knowledgeable and skilled team of staff from across all disciplines. This partnership approach means that all staff have an incredible insight into children's personalities and behaviours. Consequently, plans for children are detailed and carefully thought through. In turn, children receive excellent levels of personalised support.

A significant strength of this home is the cohesive and collaborative multi-disciplinary working. All staff share their skills, expertise and knowledge. This approach informs practice and means that each child receives the care and nurture they deserve and need. Integrated meetings between all professionals across the home result in the fluid sharing of information, and the constant review of how the care provided benefits each child. This promotes a reflective culture that adapts as children's needs change.

There is a shared research-based focus across the home of supporting children's emotional well-being. This understanding directly influences children's individual progress. Staff help children to express their feelings and to understand their emotions, and to not be afraid of these. Children learn to develop strategies and skills that help them to cope with situations that they may find frustrating or unsafe, and this improves their life chances.

Feedback from professionals is unanimously positive. One social worker said, 'I wish [name of child] could stay there longer. He is getting an experience that adults will act in his best interests.' Communication between staff and other agencies and professionals is extremely effective. All incidents or concerns are swiftly shared so that children are protected. Children's well-being is at the centre of practice.

Children's views and opinions are central to the development of the home. The principle of having an independent advocate is threaded into their daily lives, and children are constantly reminded that the advocate is there to represent and help them. Additionally, children take part in regular in-house community forums as well as individual key-work sessions. Each child has a key team of staff around them. These staff are readily available to support and guide the children, and they have a genuine interest in helping children to move forward with their lives.

Children enjoy a variety of stimulating, enhancing and educational activities. They are encouraged to make suggestions and express their preferences and these are acted on when possible. For example, children enjoyed having a magician visit the home and a zorbing activity. They have a wide choice of on-site facilities such as a multi-use games area, a well-equipped exercise room and gymnasium, and a music studio. Children use these facilities with enthusiasm and these activities help them to develop their social skills, team-working skills and their ability to positively express themselves. The benefits of these activities, apart from sheer enjoyment, are also therapeutic and form an important part of the children's developmental process.

Transition planning is a carefully thought through process. Bespoke plans are put in place to support children back into the community and to use the strategies they have learned while in the home. Local authority social workers are complimentary about the contact they have with managers to ensure that there are realistic plans in place for the children when they leave secure accommodation. This increases the likely success of children's future placements.

Staff fully understand how important children's relationships with their families and friends are, and how spending quality time with their loved ones supports their progress. When appropriate, staff also work with children and their families or carers to repair relationships which have broken down. This is underpinned by health staff helping families and carers to understand the trauma their children have experienced and how this may affect their behaviour. This means that families and carers are able to implement strategies to help support the child once they have returned to the community. The use of technology meant that this excellent work continued during the most restrictive periods of the COVID-19 pandemic, and that children's relationships were prioritised.

The ongoing refurbishment of the home continues. Since the last inspection, the lounge has been redecorated and is now more homely and comfortable. This addresses the recommendation made at that time. Children are able to personalise their bedrooms and are rewarded for keeping them tidy. This teaches children to take responsibility for their room and pride in their environment.

Children's education and learning: outstanding

Children make excellent progress in education. During the most restrictive periods of the COVID-19 pandemic, managers and staff prioritised the delivery of face-to-face education for children with only minimal disruption.

The head of learning has an accurate understanding of the quality of education and the progress that children make. Education staff work effectively with managers to make well-informed changes to the subjects provided and the content of the curriculum, ensuring that it always reflects children's different needs.

Managers and staff have very high aspirations that the education they provide will have a positive impact on children. Staff are well qualified and experienced. They teach flexibly across their areas of subject expertise and also in other areas where

they have sufficient knowledge. This ensures that, despite a relatively small staff team, children are provided with an ambitious curriculum of varied subjects that meets their needs, interests and starting points.

Staff assess children's starting points promptly and accurately. Staff also work very effectively with care staff and healthcare staff to ensure that they are well informed about each child's developing needs. Staff take good account of this information when planning personalised education programmes for children.

Education staff define the purpose for the curriculum well. It supports and enables children to re-engage in education, usually following significant periods of disengagement. Children do this successfully by following a range of core subjects of English, mathematics, physical education and design technology. In addition, they participate in a wide range of vocational and creative art subjects.

Teachers carefully plan lessons in their subjects that take good account of the progress that children have previously made and their current circumstances. They ensure that, through participating in lessons, children consolidate and develop fluency in applying knowledge they have previously acquired. Children then use this foundation to gain and apply new knowledge and skills. For example, in English, children learn about the structure of different poetical writing styles and methods of alliteration in published poems. Children then apply this knowledge to compose their own lyrics for songs that they plan to record during music lessons.

Teachers use assessment very effectively to confirm the rapid progress that children make in each subject. They use the outcomes of these assessments to ensure that the curriculum continues to have the intended impact on children's learning and progress and make changes where necessary.

A very high proportion of the children who remain at the home for long enough achieve accredited functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics. In addition, they achieve motivational accredited awards in vocational and creative subjects. This gives children confidence in their abilities and a desire to continue to learn.

Education staff work very effectively with health and care professionals in the home to provide specialist learning support for children. Healthcare staff assist very well with identifying previously undiagnosed learning disabilities and difficulties so that children are provided with the support they need.

Teachers include topics that raise children's awareness about cultural issues and British values very well in the curriculum. Education and healthcare staff work well together to plan and deliver effective personal, social and health lessons for children. Children take this learning to their next placements and this helps their development.

Current accommodation and resources that children have access to in education are of a high standard and include a newly commissioned 3G outdoor sports pitch. The

ongoing building work, when complete, will add additional specialist teaching and vocational training accommodation.

All staff consistently reinforce high expectations for children's behaviours in education. As a result, most children attend and behave very well in education. This contributes to the excellent progress they make. Staff work proactively with the minority who are unwilling or resistant to participate in education. Staff identify alternative approaches and adaptations to the planned timetable to encourage children to engage.

Education staff provide children with very effective advice and guidance about their next steps in education. Younger children who have left the home in recent months have settled back into school life in their local communities. Despite their best efforts, staff are not always able to establish from their placing local authorities the future plans for older children. This prevents education staff providing specifically tailored advice and guidance to help them to prepare for their next steps in education, vocational training or work.

Children's health: outstanding

Children benefit from the support of a highly skilled, knowledgeable and diverse multi-disciplinary healthcare team. This very well-led, flexible and effective service helps to ensure that children make excellent progress in improving their mental, physical and emotional well-being. Children benefit from many opportunities to express their views and verbalise their thoughts about their health needs, helping them to communicate what is important to them and why.

The healthcare team develops very detailed and personalised healthcare plans for each child, through inclusive and effective formulation meetings. Collaborative working across the home means that these plans are implemented consistently. Consequently, children's positive progress in this area of their development is significant. There is a unique emphasis on the importance of working with children's families to support them to gain a better understanding of their child's health needs. This approach helps to break down barriers and improve relationships.

There is a motivational and well-coordinated approach to implementing 'Secure Stairs' (an integrated framework that addresses the needs of children across the secure estate). This is firmly embedded in practice and supports children in their everyday lives. Staff ardently embraced this trauma-informed methodology. They use this effectively to create a nurturing environment that makes children feel safe. This improves children's emotional health and self-esteem.

The speech and language therapist helps to improve communication across the home in terms of both the written language and the spoken word. Children receive personalised support that improves their day-to-day experiences and confidence as well as their communication and social skills.

Healthcare staff deliver dialectical behavioural therapy (DBT) group work sessions to children. These help children to learn valuable skills, build resilience and help them to start to learn how to regulate their own emotions. This supports children's personal relationships and improves their long-term well-being.

The health and well-being team works persistently hard to engage with children who have complex and challenging mental health needs. The team develops and delivers well-thought-out tailored interventions to help children to better understand themselves and learn positive coping strategies. The team quickly identifies children's potential and gains an understanding of their aspirations. The team works closely with children to achieve their goals, enhancing their chances of having better life opportunities.

Children have good and quick access to a broad range of primary and secondary healthcare services. A strong approach to age-appropriate immunisation and vaccinations, as well as blood-borne virus protection, has a positive effect on children's outcomes. Furthermore, smoking cessation services are now available to children on admission. This provides children with immediate support and helps them to settle into the home.

Medicines management is safe, and care staff are knowledgeable around this area of practice. Medicines are stored safely, and refrigerator temperatures are recorded daily to ensure they are in the safe range.

Healthcare staff are valued and are extremely well supported in their role. They receive regular managerial and clinical supervision and have excellent access to training. This training supports their personal development and reflects children's needs. Governance arrangements are effective and efficient, and ensure that health services for children continue to improve.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Children say that they feel safe, valued and respected by staff. They express a confidence in staff and could identify a 'go to' person if they have any worries or concerns.

Children's relationships with staff are a major strength. They are nurturing and characterised by the emotional warmth and humorous interactions that inspectors saw throughout the inspection. Staff use these excellent relationships to manage group dynamics. This results in a calm and sociable atmosphere most of the time. It was a pleasure for inspectors to spend time with the children who were courteous, polite and respectful.

Managers and staff take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously. Staff practice is underpinned by policies and procedures that are understood and implemented across the home. The threshold for sharing concerns with external safeguarding professionals is very low. This promotes a multi-agency approach and ensures that

the appropriate action is always taken in the best interests of the child, when safeguarding concerns or allegations arise.

Staff clearly understand the impact that children's past experiences have on their behaviour. They use the multi-disciplinary formulation meetings to develop individualised and well-thought-out programmes of support. Implementation of these plans is effective in helping children to understand the risks to their safety and their offending behaviour. This is helping children to better understand the reasons for their placement in this secure setting and the importance of making good and safe decisions in the future.

Children understand and generally comply with the rules of the home. Routines are embedded into practice, encouraging children to engage positively in the daily activities of the home. Children spoke about the benefits of achieving 'graduate status', and how this incentivises them to behave well.

Staff are positive role models, and a culture of tolerance and respect is promoted. Negative behaviour is responded to using a restorative approach that encourages children to engage in dialogue that aids reflection, compromise and learning. This limits the need for imposed sanctions, but when they are used, they are measured, proportionate and time limited.

Staff take a calm and patient approach when responding to challenging behaviour, and physical restraint is only used as a last resort. Records demonstrate the rationale and justification for such measures and clearly evidence the importance of the child's safety.

Management oversight and monitoring of restraint is effective in ensuring that practice issues and learning points are identified and actioned. This process is further enhanced by regular scrutiny from external safeguarding professionals, who said that managers and staff are constantly looking at the best ways to support children and keep them safe. It is clear from follow-up discussions that staff are keen to repair relationships.

Children who need to spend time away from the group are given good support to address their individual needs. There is good evidence of staff supporting children to reflect and address the behaviour leading to this intervention. Some improvements to this process are needed. For example, target setting should be more specific and time limited, with regular opportunities to formally evaluate and assess whether the plan can be ended.

Other than random sampling using CCTV, there is no written record of when children have been checked during periods of elected separation. Records relating to directed or enforced separation are generally of a good standard. However, it is not always clear why children need to be re-secured at the direction of staff after spending time out of their room engaging in positive activities.

Processes are now in place to satisfy managers that agency staff are suitably vetted by their agencies, prior to working in the home. These principles are also in place for permanent staff whose suitability is thoroughly assessed. Inspectors are satisfied that any potential areas of concern are suitably explored, for example when staff have been subject to disciplinary measures during previous employment. However, managers should ensure that written records of such conversations are documented for future reference. This is not the case currently.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The senior leadership team across the home works collectively and cohesively to provide a coordinated and well-managed approach to meeting the care, education and health needs of the children. This well-ordered and efficient approach runs through every layer of the workforce. This helps staff to confidently, consistently and safely support children to make positive changes in all aspects of their lives.

Across all disciplines, leaders, managers and staff have embraced the need to change, not only as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic but due to innovative practice using a strength-based model of trauma-informed care. The effectiveness of this approach places children at the centre of everything that staff do and helps them to form positive and meaningful attachments with staff.

Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders and managers continue to strive for improvement. The delivery of high-quality care is driven by ensuring that all staff have the opportunity to gain the necessary knowledge, skills and experience to confidently do their work.

Staff continue to undertake training and the home has provided more specialist face-to-face training in areas such as substance misuse and advanced safeguarding. In addition, in-house use of specialist expertise in areas such as speech and language, trauma-led care and DBT is invaluable in providing individualised care to meet the complex needs of the children.

Effective communication systems and support mechanisms are in place for staff, with a focus on good care practice, their development and well-being. This is achieved through routine formal supervision and appraisals, debriefs, clinical group sessions and reflective practice meetings.

The atmosphere in the home is relaxed, homely and, at times, vibrant. Staff and managers at all levels have a visual presence, relationships with the children are informal and there is a culture in the home of mutual respect. Staff said that they feel valued and expressed high levels of job satisfaction. Equally, children said that they felt listened to and had a say in what they wanted to do. Children participate in staff interviews and their views are given credence.

Quality assurance and auditing processes are wide-ranging and undertaken at all levels. The oversight of the home is thorough, and any deficits or shortfalls are immediately addressed. New initiatives and the creation of the duty manager post

provide staff with immediate support and timely debriefs following significant incidents. Where restraint has been used, this has been reflected on and checked for proportionality and approach, and informs immediate best practice.

Leaders ensure that significant events that relate to the welfare and safety of the children are reported to relevant professionals and organisations. Immediate action is taken to protect and safeguard children. Managers act without delay to address any shortfalls in staff practice or in respect of conduct issues. There is an open culture of transparency and accountability. Equally, staff are praised for their commitment and resilience, regardless of how challenging the situation or circumstances.

The previous requirement and recommendation made at the last inspection have been met. There are effective and safe recruitment systems in place to ensure that individuals are appropriately vetted and safe to work with children.

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

- The registered person should ensure that a detailed record is maintained of the checks and observations completed for children on elected separation, and that records relating to directed and enforced separation make clear why the re-imposition of this measure of control is necessary when children have been engaging positively before and after being released. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 50, paragraph 9.65)
- The registered person should ensure that recruitment records include any additional information that may have been considered when assessing a person's suitability to work with vulnerable children. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)
- The registered person should ensure that any targets set for a child as part of their additional support plan are specific, time limited and subject to regular formal review. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.5)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, using the 'Social care common inspection framework'. This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, 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'.

Secure children's home details

Unique reference number: SC046524

Provision sub-type: Secure Unit

Registered provider: Sheffield City Council

Registered provider address: Town Hall, Pinstone Street, Sheffield S1 2HH

Responsible individual: Carly Speechley

Registered manager: Kieran Hill

Inspectors

Cath Sikakana, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Paul Scott, Social Care Inspector

Paul Taylor, Social Care Inspector

Malcolm Fraser, Her Majesty's Inspector, Further Education and Skills

Gary Turney, Health and Justice Inspector, Care Quality Commission

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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