

SC035500

Registered provider: South Gloucestershire Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this secure children's home

This secure children's home is managed by a local authority. It is approved by the Secretary of State to restrict children's liberty. The home can accommodate up to 24 children aged between 10 and 18 years. There were nine children living at the home at the time of this inspection.

All places available at the home are commissioned on a contractual basis by the Youth Custody Service (YCS). The YCS may, under certain circumstances, permit local authority children's services to spot-purchase a vacant bed at the home, to enable a local authority to place a child on welfare grounds under section 25 of the Children Act 1989. 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.

The commissioning of health services at 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.

There has been no registered manager since 17 May 2022.

Inspection dates: 2 to 4 August 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
Children's education and learning	not judged
Children's health	not judged
How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good

The secure children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 20 April 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection:

The home was judged inadequate at the last full inspection carried out on 20 to 22 April 2022. The YCS took the decision to stop placing children at the home. Following that inspection, Ofsted issued compliance notices in respect of regulation 13, the leadership and management standard, and regulation 20, relating to physical restraint.

No additional enforcement action was taken following a monitoring visit conducted on 8 June 2022. The two compliance notices were judged as met.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
20/04/2022	Full	Inadequate
08/06/2021	Full	Good
20/04/2021	Full	Inadequate
21/01/2020	Interim	Declined in effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

There have been improvements in the care and safety of children since the last full inspection. These are recent and not yet embedded. As a result, the impact on achieving consistently good care, experiences and outcomes for children currently living at the home, and any additional children who arrive when the restriction on admissions imposed by the YCS is lifted, is not yet known.

Children are feeling safer and better cared for. One child told inspectors that, 'It now feels like the staff want to help us.' Children appreciate the support that they receive from staff and recognise that this is helping them to make progress.

Children know how to complain if they are unhappy about any aspect of their care. Complaints are taken seriously, and children receive feedback about how complaints have been investigated, and the outcome. However, children are not offered the opportunity to escalate their concerns to external agencies if they are unhappy about the outcome of their complaint. As a result, there is a risk that children may not be confident that their voice has been fully heard.

Children's bedrooms contain personal items that reflect their interests and identity. Some of the living areas are sterile and lacking a more homely feel. Additionally, some of the outside spaces that children can see from their bedrooms have been neglected. Consequently, children are not experiencing an environment that is as comfortable and homely as possible.

Staff understand and implement children's care and support plans, which are written in collaboration with children. As a result, staff are looking after children and keeping them safe in line with their preferences and are helping children to achieve goals which are important to them.

Staff understand the importance of predictable routines for children. Children are supported to engage in education and their attendance and progress improves from their starting points. Activities are planned around the education timetable and children can participate in a range of activities that they enjoy. During the inspection, children joined in a football match against staff. Staff also recognise the importance of ensuring that children have new experiences to expand their interests and learning. In one example, a child entered a poem into a national competition and was successful in having their work published. Children's achievements are recognised and celebrated.

An inclusive culture that promotes equality and diversity enables children to explore their developing sense of identity. Carefully planned intervention programmes teach children skills that improve their life chances. For example, they learn how to manage their emotions and how to build and maintain healthy relationships.

Following incidents of physical restraint, healthcare staff meet with the children to check on their welfare and well-being. The system for recording and reporting any concerns raised by children has been improved and promotes children's safety.

Children's education and learning: not judged

The recommendation in relation to children's education and learning made at the last full inspection in April 2022 will be considered at the next full inspection.

Children's health: not judged

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Since the last inspection, there has been one safeguarding concern that was appropriately reported to the child's placing authority. Managers did not receive a response, despite repeated requests. However, the escalation process was not actioned in a timely way. There has been no impact on the safety and well-being of the child, but there has been an avoidable delay in reaching a resolution. During the inspection, managers took immediate action to escalate the concern to senior staff in the placing authority. They have also put a system in place with the intention of ensuring that concerns are escalated in a timely way in the future.

Safeguarding and security procedures prohibit certain items from being brought into the secure children's home. Several staff and a senior leader were observed wearing smart watches. This has the potential to risk compromising the privacy and protection of children, though there was no evidence of any impact at this point.

Managers are in the process of reviewing the incentive scheme; a scheme that intends to assist children to develop improved social skills and behaviour. In the meantime, children speak positively about the current scheme and how it helps them. They say it encourages them to behave in more responsible and considerate ways and assists them to take manageable steps towards an increasing amount of independence.

Children said that they are enjoying improved positive relationships with staff, and the use of physical restraint has reduced significantly. There have been two incidents since the last inspection. Improved management monitoring and oversight identified poor practice in relation to one incident and an investigation has begun. The other incident demonstrated safe and proportionate practice.

Single separation (where children are locked in an area when they meet the legal criteria of being a significant risk to themselves or others) has been appropriately used twice with children since the last inspection. Staff understand the legal criteria that determine when single separation can be used, and this is further evidenced through good records. Staff ensure that single separation ends at the earliest opportunity.

Managers are encouraging staff to respond to incidents in a way that promotes reflection and learning for the child. The use of sanctions is kept to a minimum, and a restorative approach supports children to have a positive experience of learning how to make amends for their mistakes.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

There has been no registered manager since May 2022. The interim manager, who is in day-to-day charge of the home, has not yet applied to be registered with Ofsted.

Children and staff speak positively about the impact the interim manager has had on the home in the short time he has been in post. There is a sharper focus on management monitoring and oversight, establishment of a positive and caring culture, and clearer expectations of staff. It is too early to determine whether there will be consistency and longer-term positive impact.

The independent person has not been providing a rigorous level of scrutiny. Ofsted had not received reports since January 2022. After requesting and reviewing reports directly from managers, it became clear that the independent person did not identify the failings found by inspectors at the last inspection, some of which were of a safeguarding nature. When inspectors pointed out shortfalls in the independent person's arrangements, the interim manager took action to raise these concerns.

Staff receive regular supervision and training that is relevant to the needs of the children that they are looking after. However, supervision records do not demonstrate opportunities for staff to fully discuss significant incidents. As a result, there are missed opportunities to embed learning from incidents and ensure that staff understand how to reduce the risk of similar incidents happening again. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.

There are sufficient staff in number to look after the children and meet their needs. The minimum ratios are always two children to one member of staff on duty. This is appropriate to care safely for children. Managers have demonstrated that they are aware that staffing ratios may need to increase if children with more complex needs move into the home.

Some staff told inspectors that communication and joint working between the care and health teams needs to be improved to ensure that there is an effective wraparound service. Working closely with external professionals is given high priority. Other professionals spoken to during the inspection reported effective joint working. They also spoke positively about the outcomes for children. However, some reported that practical arrangements around communication could be improved. During the inspection, managers introduced a system to address this.

Managers demonstrate that they recognise the criticisms and comments about the service as an opportunity to learn, reflect and improve. There has been a robust response to advice from independent advisors and some positive changes have been introduced to start to improve the culture.

What does the secure children’s home need to do to improve?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet 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 within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children’s home that—</p> <p>helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and</p> <p>promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on—</p> <p>feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(g)(ii))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that children are offered the opportunity to escalate their concerns to external agencies if they are unhappy about the outcome of their complaint.</p>	<p>30 September 2022</p>
<p>The registered person must ensure that—</p> <p>the privacy of children is appropriately protected. (Regulation 21 (a))</p> <p>Specifically, ensure that all staff follow the home’s prohibited items policy.</p>	<p>30 September 2022</p>
<p>The registered provider must appoint a person to manage the children’s home if—</p> <p>there is no registered manager in respect of the home; and</p> <p>the registered provider—</p> <p>is an organisation or a partnership;</p>	<p>30 September 2022</p>

<p>does not satisfy regulation 28; or</p> <p>is not, or does not intend to be, in day-to-day charge of the home. (Regulation 27 (1)(a)(b)(i)(ii)(iii))</p>	
<p>The registered person must ensure that all employees—</p> <p>receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(b))</p> <p>Specifically, ensure that staff supervision records fully reflect conversations about learning from significant incidents.</p>	<p>30 September 2022</p>
<p>The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children’s home at least once each month.</p> <p>When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the independent person—</p> <p>if they consent, to interview in private such of the children, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as the independent person requires; and</p> <p>to inspect the premises of the home and such of the home’s records (except for a child’s case records, unless the child and the child’s placing authority consent) as the independent person requires.</p> <p>A visit by the independent person to the home may be unannounced.</p> <p>The independent person must produce a report about a visit ("the independent person’s report") which sets out, in particular, the independent person’s opinion as to whether—</p> <p>children are effectively safeguarded; and</p> <p>the conduct of the home promotes children’s well-being.</p> <p>The independent person’s report may recommend actions that the registered person may take in relation to the home and timescales within which the registered person must consider whether or not to take those actions.</p> <p>The independent person must provide a copy of the independent person’s report to—</p>	<p>30 September 2022</p>

<p>HMCI;</p> <p>upon request, the local authority for the area in which the home is located;</p> <p>the placing authorities of children;</p> <p>the registered provider and, if applicable, the registered manager; and</p> <p>the responsible individual (if one is nominated).</p> <p>(Regulation 44 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3) (4)(a)(b) (5) (7)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e))</p>	
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Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the ethos of the home supports each child to learn. In particular, managers should embed and secure the new monitoring and tracking tools into the work of the school so that the increased shared understanding this provides informs the planning of the curriculum for each child, and, formalise the careers programme so that it can be tailored to the needs of individual children based on their aspirations and plans. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 29, paragraph 5.18)
- The registered person should seek, as far as possible, that the home maintains a domestic rather than 'institutional' impression. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

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: SC035500

Provision sub-type: Secure unit

Registered provider: South Gloucestershire Council

Registered provider address: South Gloucestershire Adults, Children's and Health, PO box 1955, Bristol BS37 0DE

Responsible individual: Jo Cross

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Helen Simmons, Social Care Inspector

Shaun Common, Senior Officer – Secure Estate

James Tallis, Social Care Inspector

Pauline Higham, Senior HMI – Quality Assurance Manager

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