

Lincolnshire Secure Unit

Lincolnshire County Council
Lincolnshire Secure Unit, Rookery Avenue, Sleaford, Lincolnshire NG34 7TY

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this secure children's home

This home is operated by a local authority and is approved by the Secretary of State to restrict children's liberty. It provides care for up to 12 children aged between 10 and 17 years. At the time of this inspection, the home was providing care for nine children.

The home provides care for up to 11 children placed by the youth custody service and one child placed under section 25 of the Children Act 1989. Admission of any child who is under 13 years old placed by local authorities under section 25 of the Children Act 1989 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.

The manager registered with Ofsted in 2008.

Inspection dates: 5 to 7 November 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
Children's education and learning	good
Children's health	good
How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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: 12 December 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/12/2023	Full	Good
10/01/2023	Full	Good
16/11/2021	Full	Good
18/05/2021	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children make remarkable progress at this home. One child created his own intervention that he has delivered to local schools. This reflects the significant self-reflection and awareness he has developed with the support of staff. It demonstrates benefits he can pass on to others through the insights he has gained about himself.

Staff form positive relationships with children, which means that children settle quickly. Building relationships with children is both a strength and a core aim of the home. Children have a trusted adult who they can talk to and confide in. This enables children to make significant progress. One professional said that staff show a clear passion and understanding for the needs of children in their care.

Children's views have a direct influence on the development and changes at the home. Two children have contributed to an animation for new children to watch during their moves to the home.

There is an inclusive culture at this home. Care staff engage children in curious conversations about their cultural heritage and the impact of gender dynamics. Staff create safe spaces for children to discuss and explore their values and identities.

Children's visits from loved ones are actively supported. Staff build highly positive relationships with children's families and offer fantastic support to ensure that children can make the most of their visits. One professional described the approach from staff as 'jovial and therapeutic'. Staff have helped children to engage in family therapy to improve their connections and repair the relationships with their parents.

Children take active roles, which teaches them independence and skills for adulthood. They take ownership and pride in their living spaces. One child said that they have learned things in this home that they have not done before. Some children take care of the sensory garden, and others work with staff on a project to improve the visitors' space. This helps children to develop a sense of ownership and empowers them to effect the changes that they perceive as most important to their home.

The valuable employment and enrichment opportunities available have enabled a child to secure a 'Leaders Unlocked' internship that he continues to pursue following his parole. Children have enjoyable and fulfilling experiences. These encourage healthy competition between children and help them learn new skills, such as baking and marketing.

Children confidently express their views and negotiate the decisions that affect them. Complaints and issues are responded to meaningfully. However, there are times when the actions recorded are not explicitly clear. The registered manager took action to address this during the inspection.

Children's education and learning: good

Children benefit from calm environments that support their learning. Teachers and teaching assistants know the needs of the children and support them well in class. This helps children to make progress in all aspects of their learning.

Leaders, managers and staff use the information from assessments, including English and mathematics and from education, health and care plans (EHC plans) to identify what children already know and can do when they arrive at the home. They plan a personalised curriculum for each child that meets their needs, including any additional learning needs.

Leaders and managers carefully plan curriculums so that children study a wide range of academic and vocational subjects that support their personal development and career aspirations. These include creative and design technology and cookery skills. Children make good progress during their time at the home and achieve qualifications up to two levels above their identified starting points.

Children develop their skills and knowledge through a range of well-planned and interesting activities. For example, teachers and teaching assistants in cookery and digital technology work together to plan joint learning projects. In cookery, children make increasingly complex dishes starting with poached eggs and porridge before moving on to French toast and roast dinners. Children produce cookery books in digital technology classes that showcase their most popular dishes.

Teachers provide children with useful and constructive oral and written feedback. This helps children to know what they have done well and what they need to do to improve the quality of their work. They act on the feedback provided and, consequently, their work improves over time.

Children receive effective careers advice and guidance from education staff. They attend individual career interviews with teachers to help them to make informed and realistic decisions. This helps children to plan the next steps in education, training and employment after moving on from the home.

Leaders and managers have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement in education. They have addressed the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. For example, staff now support children effectively to develop their reading skills. Children voluntarily attend reading intervention sessions and most now use the home's lending library to select books to read for pleasure.

Children's health: good

Children benefit from access to a multidisciplinary health team that is skilled and experienced. The health team works creatively to build positive relationships with children. The team knows the children well and focuses on listening to children. As a

result, children's physical, mental and emotional well-being improves. The children feel comfortable when discussing their health needs with health professionals.

Children's health needs are met and responded to effectively by staff because the integrated framework, Secure Stairs, is fully embedded in the home. Children feel safe to talk about their physical, emotional and mental health. Children are offered after-school consultations by the health team, which means that they do not miss their education time.

Children with EHC plans have improved oversight from the health team since the last inspection. The health and education team regularly reviews the EHC plan to ensure that it fits with the child's current needs.

Medication management has improved across the home. There are safe and effective systems in place to ensure that children are provided with timely administration of their medication.

The healthcare staff regularly refresh their mandatory training. They benefit from reflective supervision sessions and appraisals. These ensure that they have the skills to meet children's needs. The monitoring of the healthcare service by leaders and managers is effective and ensures that any identified shortfalls are quickly addressed.

Children are prepared for their next steps and reintegration into the community or adult estate because planning conversations begin early. The health team coordinates planning by working closely with the resettlement practitioner; however, this role is very new, so the impact is not yet realised.

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

Children said that they feel very safe living at the home and have a trusted adult who they can speak to. On the rare occasion that there is an incident of bullying, the staff are quick to address this in a way that is non blaming to the child.

Children are able to recognise risks through the engagement, support and encouragement from staff and intervention team. Children have learned how to keep themselves safe in the community. Children are supported to recognise and reflect on their behaviours and take ownership of their actions to help them to move forward with their life.

Careful planning and a trauma-informed approach support children to make meaningful and sustained changes to their lives. This enables children to navigate conflict healthily and to be accountable for their actions through restorative approaches.

Allegations from children are taken seriously. Leaders and managers take appropriate actions. They have a multi-agency approach and work in consultation with the relevant agencies. This collaborative working means that children are kept increasingly safe.

Leaders and managers keep up to date with research regarding adverse childhood experiences and good practice. They share this knowledge with the staff team. This ensures that staff have the knowledge to help keep children safe and meet their changing needs. There has been a significant reduction in incidents since the last inspection due to the introduction of a trauma-informed approach.

Physical restraint is used appropriately. Children and staff are spoken with following incidents to obtain their views and to support learning. These discussions increase the support provided to children and help to improve staff practice. Children are seen by a member of the health team following an incident.

Managing away and single separation are used appropriately. Staff speak to the children to gather their views and opinions. The input from the health team following these incidents is not consistent. The incidents when the health team is not involved are very short and therefore the impact is minimal.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The manager has a highly productive balance between his strategic leadership responsibilities and managing the day-to-day running of the home. The members of the management team have delegated responsibilities, which promotes consistency and a shared accountability that supports the smooth running of the home.

The manager has a long-standing history of strong and consistent leadership. He is ambitious for children and creates a culture that influences positive change in their lives. He is highly respected and valued by his colleagues and is held in high regard by external professionals.

The senior leadership team is a visual presence in and around the home. Children describe their manager as 'great' and say that he gets involved in fun activities. Managers know all the children well. Their involvement with the children encourages a relaxed and settled atmosphere. All staff strongly advocate for the children, and managers actively challenge other services when actions and decisions taken are not in children's best interests.

A strong emphasis is given to the home being a learning environment for staff and the children. Staff's professional development is a strength and sits alongside a needs analysis that informs the support staff need to meet children's ongoing needs. The trauma-informed model of care is embedded in staff practice and is reflected in how settled the current cohort of children are and how well they are doing.

Regular team meetings take place across the service, which maintains a healthy working environment. Staff have opportunities to take on additional responsibilities and participate in delivering reflective sessions that often include presentations on relevant and emerging issues, such professional boundaries, room searches and trauma-informed

key work. There is an effective integration between staff in all disciplines that contributes to consistency in practice and care.

The induction for new staff is excellent. Support and guidance from induction, probation and formal supervision are person centred. The staff are encouraged to self-reflect on their practice. Career pathways are fully embedded, which impacts positively on the retention of staff and promotional opportunities.

Leaders and managers keep up to date with research and disseminate this to the staff team. The sharing of this research allows staff to continue to develop in their role to make a positive difference to children's experiences.

Occupancy levels have been consistent since the last inspection. There are always some vacancies in youth custody commissioned homes because of the demand for beds when children are placed on remand. The one welfare bed at this home, is occupied throughout.

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

- The registered person should ensure that healthcare professionals retain access and proactively monitor the health and well-being needs of a child who is separated from their peer group or placed on intermittent or constant care and supervision. This includes access to medicine where required. Healthcare staff should also ensure that any new healthcare or well-being needs which arise (physical or psychological) are identified and met. If support is refused, the reason why should be recorded, and repeated attempts should be made. ('Healthcare Standards for Children and Young People in Secure Settings April 2023', page 40, paragraph 6.8.2)

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: SC042921

Provision sub-type: Secure unit

Registered provider: Lincolnshire County Council

Registered provider address: County Offices, Newland, Lincoln LN1 1YL

Responsible individual: Tara Jones

Registered manager: David Clarke

Inspectors

Cath Sikakana, Social Care Inspector

Gemma McDonnell, Social Care Inspector

Tash Williams, Social Care Inspector

Anita Pyrkotsch-Jones, His Majesty's Inspector, Further Education and Skills

Sarah Smith, Health and Justice Inspector, Care Quality Commission

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