

SC391993

# Assurance visit

## Information about this children's home

The home is owned and operated by a charitable organisation. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to six children and/or young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties and/or learning disabilities.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since February 2020.

**Visit dates:** 21 to 22 October 2020

**Previous inspection date:** 1 August 2019

**Previous inspection judgement:** Requires improvement to be 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 moving into the home receive a warm welcome from the staff. This is because children's admissions are well planned and sensitively conducted to meet their individual circumstances and needs. For one child, this meant that their mother was present to help them to move in and unpack. This creates a positive start to a child's placement and means that good relationships are a priority from the start.

Children say that they have good relationships with the staff and are comfortable to raise any worries or issues with them. Children know how to make a complaint and can identify a member of staff who they trust and can talk to. This gives children a sense of stability and emotional security, which helps them to make good progress.

Children enjoy a wide range of activities and have continued to do so during the COVID-19 pandemic. The staff have captured these memories in photographs for children's life-story books. These activities give the children opportunities to explore their interests and talents. This helps children to experience a sense of achievement and success.

Staff prioritise children's education and help them to understand why education is important. During the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, children either continued to attend school or completed their school work in the home. Staff advocate strongly for the right educational placements for children and two children have recently changed schools as a result of staff challenging the placements' suitability. This means that these children now attend suitable schools and are making good progress.

## **The safety of children**

Children learn how to keep themselves safer because of the support they receive from staff. Staff use key-work sessions to educate children about the risks associated with their behaviours. They use incentives to encourage children to make good choices. This helps children to take responsibility for their actions.

Staff consult children about their support plans and risk assessments, and their input is valued and recorded. Children say that they feel safe in the care of staff and trust them. As a result, incidents of negative behaviour continue to reduce as children learn how to manage their own behaviours and express themselves safely and appropriately.

Risk assessments are clear and easy to follow. They identify the risks to children's safety and effective strategies to reduce these risks. Leaders and managers ensure that staffing levels are suitable to provide all children with an appropriate level of support and supervision. This means that if incidents occur, there is an effective response to keeping children safe and protecting them from harm.

Staff complete detailed records of any incidents that impact on children's safety. The manager uses individual staff briefings to follow up on these incidents and to consider the effectiveness of the strategies used to support children. These briefings, and the subsequent wider team discussions, contribute to the continual development of effective behaviour management plans for children.

## **Leaders and managers**

The home is led by a manager whose focus is the well-being and progress of the children. Professionals are unanimous in their praise for the manager and for the staff team, and comment that 'the children are at the centre of practice'.

The manager and staff work collaboratively with professionals to deliver the outcomes as set out in children's plans. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the manager has utilised technology to attend meetings and reviews. This means that children's plans have been progressed without unnecessary delay.

The manager makes use of internal and external monitoring systems to monitor the performance of the home and the quality of care that children receive. The independent visitor completes a monthly report, which is scrutinised by the manager; actions from this report are carried out without delay. This ensures that leaders and managers have a good oversight of the strengths of the home and any areas for development. Consequently, service development plans focus on achieving good outcomes and positive experiences for children.

Regular reflective supervision, training and support provides staff with opportunities for professional development. Leaders and managers ensure that supervision focuses on the safety and progress of the children. One member of staff commented on how supervision gives them 'a fresh insight into their progress and development'. As a result, children receive high-quality, consistent care from skilled and knowledgeable staff.

The manager has met all of the requirements raised at the last inspection.

## **Children's home details**

**Unique reference number:** SC391993

**Registered provider:** St Cuthbert's Care

**Registered provider address:** St. Cuthbert's House, West Road, Newcastle Upon Tyne NE15 7PY

**Responsible individual:** Amanda Head

**Registered manager:** Amy Ward

## **Inspector**

Deb Duffy, Social Care Inspector

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