

# 1243962

Registered provider:

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

This home provides short-break placements for children who have severe learning disabilities and associated complex needs. The service provides overnight short-break care to up to six children at a time.

The home is operated by a Combined Health Care NHS Trust. The manager was registered with Ofsted in November 2017.

**Inspection dates:** 15 to 16 May 2018

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,</b> taking into account	<b>requires improvement to be good</b>
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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The 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:** first inspection post registration

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** not applicable

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## What does the 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
In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must ensure that staff seek to develop and maintain effective professional relationships with such persons, bodies or organisations as the registered person considers appropriate having regard to the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the children's home is to provide care and accommodation. (Regulation 5 (d))	31/10/2018
The quality and purpose of care standard requires the registered person to ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to meet the needs of each child; and enable each child to participate in the daily life of the home. (Regulation 6 (1)(c)(i)(ii))	30/11/2018
The enjoyment and achievement standard is that children take part in and benefit from a variety of activities that meet their needs and develop and reflect their creative, cultural, intellectual, physical and social interests and skills.  In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff help each child to develop the child's interests and hobbies; participate in activities that the child enjoys and which meet and expand the child's interests and preferences; and make a positive contribution to the home and the wider community; and that each child has access to a range of activities that enable the child to pursue the child's interests and hobbies. (Regulation 9 (1)(2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(b))	31/10/2018
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that ensures that helps children aspire to fulfil their potential and promotes their welfare  In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(2)(d))	31/10/2018
The registered person may only employ an individual to work at the children's home if full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the	31/10/2018

matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (3)(d))	
The registered person must ensure that any individual who works in the home in a care role has achieved the appropriate qualification by the relevant date. The relevant date is, in the case of an individual who starts working in a care role in a home after 1st April 2014, the date which falls 2 years after the date on which the individual started working in a care role in a home; or in the case of an individual who was working in a care role in a home on 1st April 2014, 1st April 16. (Regulation 32 (5)(a)(b))	29/11/2019
The registered person must ensure that all employees undertake appropriate continuing professional development. (Regulation 33 (4)(a)). This is in relation to training to raise awareness of communicating with disabled children, sensory needs, autistic spectrum disorder child sexual exploitation, play and online safety.	30/11/2018
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child. (Regulation 36 (1)(a))	31/10/2018

## Recommendations

- The home should work in partnership with relevant people as appropriate to ensure that each child is provided with support (appropriate to their age and understanding) to communicate their views, wishes and feelings and participate as fully as possible in all aspects of their care planning and daily care. This may include the use of and support to use communication aids, equipment and/or any necessary language support. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.6)
- The children's home must produce a children's guide. The children's guide must be made available to all children when their placement in the home is agreed (or on arrival at the home if the placement is made in an emergency) and must be age appropriate, provided in an accessible format and explained to each child to make sure they understand it. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 24, paragraph 4.21)
- Ensure that there is a workforce plan in place, which can fulfil the requirements of regulation 16 schedule 1. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)
- Record information about the child in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

## Inspection judgements

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

This home was registered with Ofsted in November 2017.

Children do not always receive the help and support they need to enable them to express their views and opinions about their short-stay experiences. For instance, although staff are very caring, they lack the basic knowledge around children's diverse communication needs. For example, staff are not trained in how to use Makaton to help children with limited verbal communication to express their views through signing.

While the staff take steps to provide a safe and secure environment for children, there are weaknesses in the presentation of the home. For example, the decor in many of the children's bedrooms is bland and uninviting for children. There is limited storage space for toys in one lounge, and a sofa in another lounge is broken. Managers are acting to develop a garden area into a useable space for children. However, progress is slow. A lack of attention to providing an attractive and fully accessible environment for children detracts from children being able to maximise their short-stay experiences.

Staff miss opportunities to promote children's personal and social development. For example, opportunities to take part in creative play, including the benefits of sensory play area limited. Staffing levels are sometimes not sufficient to give the required support to help children who may want to participate in activities away from the home. Consequently, the opportunities for staff to engage children in activities in the home and in the local community are limited.

One key strength of the service is the staff team's ability to meet children's health and dietary needs. Staff are diligent at ensuring that the privacy and dignity of children are preserved.

Parents value the service, and communication between members of staff and parents is positive. One parent told the inspector, 'I like the review of the day. They don't just say she is fine. It's a genuine communication, which is good for me.'

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

Staff are vigilant about children's health and safety and have received training to help them understand their safeguarding responsibilities. Despite staff having a clear understanding over their duty to protect children in their care, members of staff have not had the opportunity to complete training to help them understand more about online safety and the signs of child sexual exploitation. This means staff are less informed about how to manage the risks posed to children by social media and identify signs of child sexual exploitation.

The vetting of new members of staff is weak. For example, personnel records do not hold evidence of staff qualifications. There are gaps in employment histories that go unchallenged. The reason why staff have left their previous employment with children or vulnerable adults is not verified. Records are not clear that the outcomes of Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks are satisfactory. All these shortfalls demonstrate a lack of attention to safe recruitment of staff. This means that there is potential for children to be exposed to unsuitable adults.

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

The manager was registered with Ofsted in November 2017. She is currently undertaking the level 5 diploma in leadership and management. She is expected to complete the award within the timescale set by regulation.

Staff are supported to feel confident in their work, including receiving regular supervision. However, nine members of staff do not hold a level 3 diploma in residential childcare or equivalent qualification. Furthermore, staff have not received specific training in autistic spectrum disorder, despite caring for children who are on the spectrum.

The registered manager has not collated the workforce plan into one document. This has delayed her in identifying the full range of training that staff need to support the aims and objectives of the service.

Relationships between staff, social workers and health professionals are positive. However, the manager and staff have been slow in realising the benefits for children of wider partnership working. For example, the manager and staff have not formed a network with the different schools attended by children. Consequently, children's short-break plans do not consider information about friendship groups and children's education goals. Furthermore, the manager and staff do not have the knowledge of the range of services available to support children who have disabilities in the local area. For example, staff are not aware if the area has a sensory team. These shortfalls mean that opportunities for partnership working to strengthen care planning and services for children are lost.

Children's records do not include key information from the placing authority. For example, some children's records do not contain a copy of the child's education health and care plan or the minutes from children in need meetings. This means that managers and staff do not have access to important information relevant to the child's care.

The registered manager is beginning to use self-evaluation to help her develop an in-depth understanding about the strengths and areas for development in the service. For example, the registered manager is using the independent visitor's reports to help her focus on improving the service through a child-centred approach.

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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'.

## Children's home details

**Unique reference number:** 1243962

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider address:** North Staffordshire Combined Health Care And NHS Trust, Lawton House, Bellringer Road, Stoke On Trent ST4 8HH

**Responsible individual:** Alastair Forrester

**Registered manager:** Tracey Flanagan

## Inspector

Alison Cooper, social care inspector

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