

1155757

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

The children's home is run by a local authority and is registered for the care and accommodation of up to three children and/or young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The manager is suitably qualified and has been registered since May 2015.

Visit dates: 9 to 10 September 2020

Previous inspection date: 10 September 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 and young people have caring and trusted relationships with staff and are making good progress.

The home is spacious and exceptionally well maintained. Children's and young people's bedrooms are clean and tidy, and they reflect their individuality and personal taste. Staff support and encourage children and young people to take pride in their surroundings. This enables them to feel cared for and have a sense of belonging.

Children and young people are supported by staff to stay in contact with those who are important to them. During the COVID-19 pandemic, this has been mainly through the use of technology.

During lockdown, staff were supported by youth workers from the local authority, to help to engage the children and young people in a range of fun activities. This included mini-golf in the garden, boxercise, bike rides and bike maintenance. As restrictions eased, the children and young people also enjoyed a holiday at a coastal caravan park. This enabled them to spend positive time with staff in a relaxed environment.

Staff are working collaboratively with specialist services to enhance their understanding of children's and young people's behaviours. The positive attachments the children and young people have with the staff team enables them to develop their self-esteem and confidence.

The safety of children

Children's and young people's individual risk assessments are understood and followed by staff in order to mitigate risk. This, along with clear and consistent boundaries, has enabled children and young people to cope well during lockdown.

Staff provide guidance to children and young people to help them to understand social distancing. A two-metre cord was used to demonstrate and educate children and young people, as this was exactly the distance they needed to be aware of when out in the community. This practical step supported safe care.

Staff support children and young people to spend time with friends in the community. As lockdown restrictions eased, individual risk assessments, with clear expectations and guidance, were shared with children and young people. As a

result, children and young people develop confidence in their decision-making and risk management.

Leaders and managers

The manager and leaders ensure that staffing ratios are appropriate for the needs of children and young people. The manager was provided with more staff from within the local authority to help support the children and young people through the lockdown period. She ensured that the new staff had relevant experience and skills, and that they were given an induction and supervision package. This ensured that the children and young people were supported during lockdown.

The manager has provided additional supervision and support for staff who have been absent through sickness and shielding. This has ensured that staff have returned safely to work in the shortest time possible, in-line with COVID-19 guidelines. Staff stated that they feel supported, and that they enjoy working in a positive and supportive environment.

On the day of the inspector's visit, the manager was eagerly awaiting a planned celebration evening in the home. This had been in planning for a while and was to recognise how well each child and young person had done throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. It also was to thank her staff personally for their commitment and the high level of care they provide.

Professionals from a variety of agencies consistently gave feedback to the inspector about the positive qualities of the manager and her team. They commented on the positive engagement with children and young people that has seen them all make progress, grow in confidence and develop a sense of belonging.

The requirements and recommendations made at the last inspection have been met.

No requirements or recommendations are made following this visit.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1155757

Registered provider: Northumberland County Council

Registered provider address: County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 2EF

Responsible individual: Karen MacDonald

Registered manager: Stephanie Scott

Inspector

Michael Dack, Social Care Inspector

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