

SC035409

Registered provider: Northumberland County Council

Interim inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This secure children's home is operated by a local authority and is approved by the Department for Education to restrict children's liberty. The children's home can accommodate up to 15 children who are aged between 10 and 17 years.

It provides care for children accommodated under section 25 of the Children Act 1989 who are placed by local authorities. Admission of any child under section 25 of the Children Act 1989 who is under 13 years of age requires the approval of the Secretary of State.

The commissioning of health services in 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 on 30 September 2014.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

We last visited this setting on 7 January 2021 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection date: 21 September 2021

Date of last inspection: 26 November 2019

Judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection:

Ofsted carried out an assurance visit to the home on 16 to 19 November 2020 and found serious failings with regard to the protection of children, the leadership and management of the home and the use of physical restraint. As a result of that visit, Ofsted issued three compliance notices. Inspectors monitored these notices on 7 January 2021 and deemed them to be met.

This inspection

The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection

This home was judged good at the last full inspection.

At this interim inspection, Ofsted judged that it has sustained effectiveness.

Leaders, managers and staff have worked hard to minimise the emotional and physical impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children's progress and development. This is supported by enhanced cleaning procedures and staff reminding children of the importance of regular handwashing. This, coupled with strong staff retention, means that the home has maintained a good standard of care during this challenging time.

Children quickly build trusting relationships with staff. One child spoke of his eagerness to return to visit the home when he leaves, because of the positive relationships that he has built with the staff. Another child shared his pride at now attending school after a long absence, praising the support of staff in helping him to achieve this. These relationships promote a good sense of community in the home and help children to feel safe and make progress. Feedback from other professionals and social workers is universally positive. One social worker commented, 'Staff do a fantastic job in developing a positive connection with the children.'

The quality of case recordings in children's files is variable. Despite ongoing improvement work with regard to staff completing risk assessments and case recordings, inspectors found that a risk assessment for one child did not reflect a recent major incident. This meant that staff may have been unaware of the concerns or the actions expected of them to protect children.

Staff successfully challenge placing authorities and social workers when plans for children to leave the home are too premature. This means that staff have adequate time to complete all the necessary direct work sessions and assessments with children before they leave. This increases the likely success of their next placement.

Staff have continued to work creatively during the pandemic. Recently, this involved posting a child's memory box, favourite snacks and bed sheets to their new placement in advance of their move to a new home. These items were posted at a time when COVID-19 restrictions prohibited staff from visiting the new home. This helped to ensure a positive transition for the child.

Staff are ambitious and eager to develop the service. Children's moves to new homes are supported by a 'plan presentation'. This is a document drafted by children and their key workers that outlines children's likes, dislikes and other important information, such as their behaviour trigger points. This initiative supports well-

planned discharges from the home and ensures that important information is not lost.

The use of physical restraint is lawful and proportionate, and only used as a last resort to protect children and others from immediate harm. Staff ensure that they use the lowest level of hold for the shortest duration to give children the opportunity to calm and remain safe. Leaders, managers and staff take learning from each incident, and children complete debriefs to help them to explore alternative coping strategies that can be used to prevent incidents from reoccurring.

Leaders and managers ensure that other measures of control, including managing children away from their peers and single separation, are only used when necessary and that these interventions are proportionate to the situation. When children pose a risk to themselves or others, staff support them to use the time that they are away from their peers to reflect on their actions and to look for alternative coping strategies and ways to rebuild positive relationships. Managers continually review these interventions to make sure that children are not away from their peers for longer than necessary.

The recommendations made at the last inspection with regard to the healthcare and education services provided by the home were not considered at this inspection and are repeated. These will be reviewed at the next full inspection.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
26/11/2019	Full	Good
04/07/2019	Interim	Improved effectiveness
11/12/2018	Interim	Improved effectiveness
03/07/2018	Full	Good

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
<p>The registered person must maintain records (‘case records’) for each child which—</p> <p>are kept up to date. (Regulation 36 (1)(b))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that children’s case records accurately reflect their time in the home and that care plans and risk assessments are regularly updated.</p>	<p>1 November 2021</p>

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the ethos of the home supports each child to learn. In particular, ensure that the planned recruitment to vacancies is actioned urgently so that the school can make further improvements to the quality of provision and the children can benefit from access to the full range of vocational training options. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 29, paragraph 5.18)
- The registered person should ensure that children subject to restraint procedures see a healthcare professional as soon as possible after restraint and any injuries sustained are fully documented. (‘Healthcare standards for children and young people in secure settings’, page 30, paragraph 6.7.3)
- The registered person should ensure that children in secure settings are confident that healthcare professionals are focused on addressing their individual health and well-being needs, and healthcare staff in secure settings deliver high-quality services to support the physical health and well-being of the children in their care. In particular, review with NHS England the role and responsibilities for nursing provision so that they reflect the ‘Healthcare standards for children and young people in secure settings’. (‘Healthcare standards for children and young people in secure settings’, page 12, paragraphs 1.1.2 and 1.2)

Information about this inspection

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full 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'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC035409

Provision sub-type: Secure Unit

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

Responsible individual: Adam Hall

Registered manager: Julie Tinkler

Inspectors

Barnaby Dowell, Social Care Inspector (lead)
Cath Sikakana, Social Care Inspector
Debbie Holder, Social Care Inspector

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