

1155757

Registered provider: Northumberland County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is operated and managed by a local authority to provide care for up to three children who may have emotional and/or social difficulties.

The manager registered with Ofsted in May 2015.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

We last visited this setting on 9 September 2020 to carry out an assurance visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 January 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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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: 10 September 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/09/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good
30/05/2018	Full	Good
16/05/2017	Full	Good
06/12/2016	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

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

There are three children currently living in the home. The inspector spoke to the children during this inspection.

The manager and her staff do not always manage the children's behaviour effectively. Some children say that they are unhappy about the incidents that have occurred. They also say that they are unhappy about the risk-taking behaviour that they have witnessed recently in the home. The children have trusting relationships with their caring adults and discuss their concerns with the staff. However, the staff do not always proactively seek to understand if the children's experiences have improved.

One child's care plan has not been updated despite there being significant changes to their presenting needs. The manager directly updates the staff when serious incidents occur. However, there is no inclusion of this information in the child's care plan, or written guidance to help the staff to understand how they should respond to the child's current and presenting needs. Additionally, the manager has not requested a review of the child's care planning arrangements to consider if the child's needs can continue to be met safely in this home.

Staff support the children who experience issues with school attendance to prepare for, and make a return to, education. As a result, all the children are making progress with their education. Staff help the children to value their learning to develop their aspirations. One child said, 'My course is going to help me to have a better future.'

Children are helped by the staff to view their health, including their mental health, as important. Staff offer the children guidance and advice on all health matters, which includes promoting the children's engagement with health professionals. One child has developed the skills to successfully manage their own health appointments and administer their own medication. These skills help the children to develop their independence, which helps them to prepare for their future.

The manager and her team recognise and celebrate the children's efforts and progress with thoughtful touches. The manager sends cards to the children to acknowledge their individual achievements. This helps the children to understand and see the progress that they make.

The staff help the children to understand the restrictions that the government has imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. One child said, 'It has been hard but it is for our own safety, and we have to look after people.'

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

The manager recognises that the risks have increased significantly for one child, and she has shared this information with the appropriate professionals. This supports a multi-agency approach to managing risk. However, the risk management strategies that have been identified have not been effective as repeat incidents occur.

There is a significant reduction of incidents involving self-harm for one child. Staff help the children to learn about online safety, which supports the children to become increasingly safe.

Children's risk assessments are not always updated when new risks emerge. Staff demonstrate that they understand the risks that the children face. However, the children's risk assessments contain conflicting information, which means that it is not clear which actions the staff should take to help to keep the children safe.

The staff impose sanctions on the children to help them to understand that there are consequences for their behaviour. Staff, who are suitably trained, hold the children when they are in crisis, to help to keep the children safe. The manager scrutinises these areas of practice to ensure that the staff's actions are proportionate and safe.

Staff support most of the children to practise regular fire evacuation procedures. However, one child has not taken part in a fire drill for over 22 months. This oversight prevents the manager from being assured that all the children know how to respond in the event of a fire.

The manager reminds the children of the complaints procedure and encourages them to raise any concerns that they have. The manager deals with complaints swiftly and provides the children with feedback throughout this process. This helps the children to understand that their views are taken seriously and acted on.

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

The manager's auditing processes are not effective. These processes have failed to identify inconsistencies in the children's documents and children's records which have not been signed. When the manager does identify an issue in the records, she does not always ensure that effective action is taken to address this. This means that the quality of the children's records remains poor.

Safer recruitment processes are followed when new staff are recruited. This provides assurance that these staff are suitably vetted prior to them caring for the children.

Supervision takes place regularly. The staff use this as an opportunity to share their views and concerns and to discuss the children's presenting needs. The manager ensures that the staff complete an annual appraisal. This acknowledges the staff's

strengths and the areas in which they can develop. These processes help to raise the standard of care that the children receive.

The manager has failed to ensure that the home's locality risk assessment is kept up to date. Significant information about the known risks in the local community has not been added. Consequently, this document does not provide enough information about the known risks in the local community, or the actions that the manager and staff will take to reduce these risks for the children.

The manager shares any significant incidents that involve the children with the relevant agencies. However, she has not notified Ofsted of one serious incident. This oversight has prevented Ofsted from having a full understanding of this incident. In addition, this omission has prevented Ofsted from being assured that all the necessary actions have been taken to safeguard the children.

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 quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who—</p> <p>understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children;</p> <p>use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>ensure that staff—</p> <p>provide personalised care that meets each child's needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking account of the child's background. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(iv))</p>	28 February 2022
<p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child;</p> <p>help each child to understand how to keep safe;</p> <p>manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other;</p> <p>take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare;</p>	27 January 2022

that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iv)(vi)(b))	
<p>The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that—</p> <p>helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and</p> <p>promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(h))</p>	28 February 2022
<p>The care planning standard is that children—</p> <p>receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and</p> <p>have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that the child's placing authority is contacted, and a review of that child's relevant plans is requested, if—</p> <p>the registered person considers that the child is at risk of harm or has concerns that the care provided for the child is inadequate to meet the child's needs. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(e)(i))</p>	28 February 2022
The registered person must review the appropriateness and suitability of the location of the premises used for the purposes of the children's home at least once in each calendar year taking into account the requirement in regulation 12 (2)(c) (the protection of children standard). (Regulation 46 (1))	28 February 2022

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that all the children's case records are kept up to date and are signed and dated by the author of each entry. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)
- The registered person should notify Ofsted and other relevant persons if one of the situations specified in regulation 40 (4)(a)–(d) occurs, or if there is an incident relating to the protection, safeguarding or welfare of a child living in the home which the registered person considers to be serious. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 63, paragraph 14.10)

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'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1155757

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Northumberland County Council

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

Responsible individual: Adam Hall

Registered manager: Stephanie Scott

Inspector

Paula Kelly, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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