

# 1233307

Registered provider: Newcastle City Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

A local authority owns and manages this home. The home is registered to provide care for up to six children with emotional and/or social needs.

Four of the five children living in the home were consulted and observed by inspectors.

The manager is registered with Ofsted.

### Inspection dates: 17 and 18 May 2022

<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:** 16 November 2021

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
16/11/2021	Full	Good
17/02/2020	Full	Good
04/02/2019	Full	Outstanding
30/01/2018	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

## Inspection judgements

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

Children's experiences of living in the home are mixed. Most of the children have lived in the home for several years, which has provided them with stability. They have made progress in some areas, for example self-confidence, self-care and social skills. However, the quality of the care provided to children requires improvement.

Children's care plans do not comprehensively identify their needs. The documents lack focus and do not link well with others. Therefore, the staff do not have well-defined plans to follow. This affects how well the children's day-to-day care is coordinated.

Most areas of the property are homely, spacious and comfortable. However, by 11pm each day, every room on the ground floor is locked. This prevents children's access to the lounge and kitchen. The provider has not carried out an assessment or reviewed this arrangement to ensure that it is necessary and proportionate. When asked about the rooms being locked, a child said, 'It's like having security. Not like being looked after.'

Children's education experiences are mixed. Some children have successfully passed training courses and applied for work. This has helped to develop children's aspirations, such as careers that they wish to pursue. However, when other children are excluded from their educational provision, they wait too long for an alternative learning provision to be provided. For some children, this increases the lack of structure in their day and creates additional gaps in their learning.

Children's bedrooms are personalised and treated as the child's private space. When staff are concerned that children may have dangerous items hidden in their bedroom, a room search is carried out. Staff complete a written record and detail the reason for the search and what they find. However, the management oversight of these records varies. Some documents do not clearly show if the child's consent was obtained, or if the child was informed that the search had taken place. In addition, they are not consistently signed and dated.

Children know how to make a complaint. They have a variety of opportunities when they can talk about living in the home, such as during the children's meetings. However, records do not consistently show how the children's views have been listened to and acted on. While one child has an independent advocate, others do not. This means that not all children benefit from having an additional independent adult who can advocate for their rights.

Children do not have memory books that support their life-story work. Photos are stored on the office computers, which are not easily accessible to the children. While the provider has purchased books for each child, these have not been used.

Therefore, the recommendation that was raised at the last inspection to address this issue has been reissued.

Children have formed trusting relationships with staff, and they can identify an adult who they can rely on to provide them with help. The staff are sensitive to the children's emotional needs. They offer children emotional support, particularly when the children experience difficult times in their lives. The relationships that the children have developed with the staff help some of the children to feel valued. One professional said that a child has an 'excellent' relationship with their key worker and the child 'feels loved'.

Children are supported to be healthy. They attend their routine medical appointments. The staff have good links with health services and have a good relationship with the looked after children's nurse, who visits the home regularly and offers information and advice. When the staff are concerned about a child's health, they talk with the child and promptly seek a medical opinion. The staff follow the advice given, which helps to promote children's health and well-being.

Children have access to a range of positive activities, including cricket, trips to theme parks and visits to the seaside for ice cream.

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

The home has experienced an unsettled period, which has resulted in an increase in serious incidents involving children. However, the children say that they feel safe and that the staff talk to them about risks and danger, including ways to increase the children's safety.

When children are missing from care, the staff take effective action. They understand their roles and responsibilities, such as searching for the child and alerting relevant professionals. The manager carefully reviews the action taken by the staff to ensure that the correct procedures are followed. If shortfalls are identified, the manager addresses these through staff supervision and further training.

The need for staff to hold children when they are in distress has increased. However, children are only held when this is necessary to keep them safe. While the quality of these records has improved, the manager's monitoring systems have failed to identify that some records do not contain all the required information.

The quality of children's individual risk assessments varies. While some documents are specific and detailed, others are inaccurate. Some documents lack clear strategies for the staff to follow and some do not always include the child's current risks. Despite the absence of clear and consistent risk assessments, most of the staff understand the risks posed to the children and take effective action. This is because the manager and staff communicate effectively with each other.

The location risk assessment has not been reviewed for almost nine months. This is despite evidence that the risks in the local community have changed. This means that the risks in the community are not fully assessed. This may impact on the strategies that are in place to protect the children.

Some new staff have been recruited. However, in one example, the manager did not follow safe recruitment practice. The employment history of one staff member was not thoroughly checked and a reference from the previous employer was not obtained. This is despite the staff member working with children. The inspector raised this with senior leaders at the end of the inspection.

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

The staff and the manager work well together as a team. Together, they genuinely care about the children's well-being.

Staffing pressures, changes in the home's management team and an increase in incidents have resulted in the manager being more involved in the children's day-to-day care. While the manager has completed good-quality key-work sessions with the children, this has reduced his management oversight and the quality of leadership in the home. The manager acknowledges this shortfall and is determined to make the necessary improvements to address this.

Despite the challenges during recent months, the staff feel supported in their role. The staff have regular access to management advice. One member of staff said, 'The manager is available 24/7 regardless of where he is.'

Staff receive regular practice-related supervision. The agenda includes discussion about the children's needs, staff's well-being and their training and ongoing development. However, in most records of supervision, the safeguarding arrangements for children are not included as a standard agenda item. This oversight reduces the opportunity for the staff to consider and raise any safeguarding concerns. It also prevents the manager from reiterating the safeguarding procedures, including the whistle-blowing policy, which should be followed.

The manager has reviewed all staff's training records. When he has identified gaps in the staff's training, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, he has taken effective action to address these. While most staff have completed the required residential childcare qualification, one member of staff has not completed this in the required time frame.

The manager does not have an effective system to measure and monitor the children's progress. This means that the manager does not fully understand what the children have achieved and where they need extra support. Despite this being raised at the last inspection, this shortfall remains.

Professionals are positive about the home and state that, most of the time, communication is good. Staff ensure that professionals are consulted at appropriate times and are welcomed into the home for visits and meetings. When the manager is concerned about the service provided by another agency, he is not afraid to challenge. The manager escalates concerns to senior leaders in the organisation and, when appropriate, requests formal meetings to discuss the well-being of 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 education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>help each child to achieve the child's education and training targets, as recorded in the child's relevant plans;</p> <p>help a child who is excluded from school, or who is of compulsory school age but not attending school, to access educational and training support throughout the period of exclusion or non-attendance and to return to school as soon as possible. (Regulation 8 (1) (2)(a)(i)(viii))</p>	18 August 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>that the premises used for the purposes of the home are located so that children are effectively safeguarded. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(c))</p> <p>This specifically relates to ensuring that the children's risk assessments are accurate and include relevant strategies to keep the child safe, and that all other risks assessments,</p>	18 August 2022

<p>such as the group living risk assessment and the location risk assessment, are kept up to date.</p>	
<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>lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose;</p> <p>understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(f))</p>	<p>18 August 2022</p>
<p>The care planning standard is that children—</p> <p>receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that arrangements are in place to—</p> <p>ensure the effective induction of each child into the home;</p> <p>manage and review the placement of each child in the home. (Regulation 14 (1)(a) (2)(b)(i)(ii))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that the children's targets and needs are clearly identified in their plans, that these plans are kept up to date and that the children's progress is regularly reviewed.</p>	<p>18 August 2022</p>
<p>The registered person must ensure that—</p> <p>children can access all appropriate areas of the children's home's premises; and</p>	<p>18 August 2022</p>



<p>any limitation placed on a child's privacy or access to any area of the home's premises—</p> <p>is intended to safeguard each child accommodated in the home;</p> <p>is necessary and proportionate;</p> <p>is kept under review and, if necessary, revised; and</p> <p>allows children as much freedom as is possible when balanced against the need to protect them and keep them safe. (Regulation 21 (b)(c)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv))</p> <p>This specifically refers to ensuring that any decision to lock the doors is fully assessed and reviewed regularly. This process must include consultation with the children and all of the relevant professionals.</p>	
<p>The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety.</p> <p>The requirements are that—</p> <p>full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1) (3)(d))</p> <p>This specifically relates to ensuring that all of the required checks are completed before staff work in the home.</p>	18 June 2022
<p>The registered person may only—</p> <p>employ an individual to work at the children's home; or</p> <p>if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home,</p> <p>if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3).</p> <p>For the purposes of paragraph (3)(b), an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification if, by the relevant date, the individual has attained—</p>	18 November 2022

the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England) ("the Level 3 Diploma").

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 2016. (Regulation 32 (2)(a)(b) (4)(a) (5)(a)(b))

This specifically relates to ensuring that staff complete the relevant qualification by the relevant date.

## Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the manager and staff recognise the importance of understanding who we are and where we come from as is recognised in good social work practice, for example through undertaking life-story work or other direct work. The registered person is responsible for ensuring that the staff play a full role in work of this kind. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 16, paragraph 3.14)
- The registered person should ensure that a child's bedroom is not generally entered without their permission, though it may be necessary to establish routines to allow for rooms to be cleaned regularly. Usually, rooms should only be searched if the child has been informed or asked for their permission. Immediate searching may be necessary where there are reasonable grounds for believing that there is a risk to the child's or another person's safety or well-being. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 16, paragraph 3.20)
- The registered person should ensure that all children have access to appropriate advocacy support and, where possible, this should be provided by a person who the child chooses. Children looked after are entitled to an independent advocate to advise them and ensure that they have the support needed to express their views, wishes and feelings about their care and lives. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 23, paragraph 4.16)
- The registered person should ensure that supervision of staff practice is effective. Every adult in the home should engage in the safeguarding culture of the home so that they understand what they would need to do if they found other staff misusing or abusing their position to the detriment of the safety of a child. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 43, paragraph 9.14)

## **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:** 1233307

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

**Registered provider:** Newcastle City Council

**Registered provider address:** Newcastle Civic Centre, Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 8QH

**Responsible individual:** Jayne Forsdike

**Registered manager:** Reinder Dam

## Inspectors

Catherine Heron, Social Care Inspector  
Julia Hagan, Social Care Inspector

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