

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.

The inspector spoke to the three children who live in the home.

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 June 2022

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| Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account | good |
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| How well children and young people are helped and protected | good |
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| The effectiveness of leaders and managers | requires improvement to be good |
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 25 January 2022

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 |
|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| 25/01/2022 | Full | Requires improvement to be good |
| 10/09/2019 | Full | Requires improvement to be good |
| 30/05/2018 | Full | Good |
| 16/05/2017 | Full | Good |

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children benefit from a stable and consistent staff team. The children have formed strong relationships built on trust and affection with the staff. Staff demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of the individual support needs of the children. This has helped the children to make good progress in all areas of their lives.

Since the last inspection, one child has successfully returned to live with their family and another child has moved into the home. The manager ensures that that staff are skilled and equipped to meet all of the children's needs. This enables the staff to prepare and support the children well, so that their move into and out of the home is smooth and successful. In addition, the staff help the child to personalise their bedroom. This bespoke care and support helps the child to settle into the home quickly.

The staff plan, arrange and support the children to enjoy time with their family and friends when it is appropriate to do so. This ensures that the children have a positive experience with their family and friends, and maintain their relationships. Because of this, one child now has regular overnight stays with their family. For children who do not wish to have contact with their family, staff respect their wishes. Support is offered to help the children to understand their feelings towards family time. This helps the children to develop their identity.

Children are encouraged to become more independent according to their ability. For example, they learn to manage their finances, prepare some of their own meals and tidy their bedrooms. They also learn to attend to their own personal care needs. This helps to build the children's confidence and independence.

The children are in good health. Staff support them to attend all their health appointments. Children's mental health needs are accurately identified. This means that the children receive the specialist help that they need.

Staff prioritise the children's education. When children do not have a school place, the manager actively engages with educational professionals to secure an educational placement that meets the child's needs. For children who find attending education challenging, the staff work hard to motivate the children to engage with education providers. This support has helped some children to re-engage with their education and begin to make progress, which increases the children's later life chances.

The home's physical environment is well maintained for the children. The home is warm and welcoming and has a family atmosphere. The children have their own personalised bedrooms. This helps the children to feel comfortable and have a sense of belonging in their home.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Staff know the children's individual risks and vulnerabilities. Children's comprehensive individual risk assessments and de-escalation protocols are regularly reviewed and updated following any significant events. The staff work well with the children so that the children understand behaviour that may present a risk to them, and the triggers that may cause them upset. This work has supported some children to become increasingly safe.

Staff regularly check in with the children to make sure that they feel happy and secure. When children witness behaviour from another child that worries or concerns them, the staff reassure the child, and spend time with them to give them the opportunity to talk about this. Children said that they feel safe living at the home.

When children are absent from the home without permission, the staff follow the appropriate safeguarding protocols. Staff spend time and speak to the children following any missing-from-home incidents so that they have an opportunity to talk about their experiences. This reinforces that the staff care about the children.

When children are unkind to each other, the staff identify and address this immediately. Children are supported to learn to be kind to each other, and helped to understand why bullying behaviour is not acceptable. This helps the children to develop socially acceptable behaviours.

Staff support the children to have an active but safe internet presence. The staff recognise the potential risks that children may be exposed to when the children access social media, or take part in online gaming. The staff undertake the necessary checks that are required when any risks are identified, and they work closely with the children to educate them on these potential risks. This helps the children to become increasingly safe.

The manager works closely with the children's social workers, medical professionals and the police to safeguard children when significant incidents occur. However, the manager has not notified Ofsted of one serious incident. This oversight prevents Ofsted from consistently scrutinising the safeguarding arrangements for the children.

Children are supported to understand the consequence of their actions using reparation, so that they can develop socially acceptable behaviour. The manager reviews and evaluates these records to ensure that the action taken is fair and reasonable. However, these records do not identify when the manager has completed her review. Therefore, Ofsted cannot be assured that the manager's evaluation and review have been completed within the required timescales.

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

Children's records are detailed and provide a picture of each child's needs, experiences and progress. Internal documents, such as the children's risk assessments, are frequently reviewed and updated. However, the children's records are incomplete. Children's records do not consistently contain a copy of the minutes from the reviews of their pathway plan meetings or from their personal education plan meetings. This oversight prevents the children from having access to their own complete records. In addition, the manager cannot be assured that she and the staff are providing care in line with the child's most up-to-date care plan.

Staff receive regular supervision and are up to date with the provider's mandatory training. However, despite having regular supervision, some staff do not feel able to seek support from the manager.

The manager has developed a realistic development plan for the home and her staff. She has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home.

The manager feels well supported by senior leaders in the organisation. Managers from other children's homes in the local authority meet regularly to discuss their findings and themes. This provides ongoing learning opportunities for personal and leadership team development.

The manager is reflective in her thinking and she values the importance of continued professional development for the staff. She encourages the staff to look for learning opportunities from any events that occur at the home. This promotes a positive learning culture for the staff.

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 prepare and implement a policy ("the behaviour management policy") which sets out—</p> <p>how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the children's home; and</p> <p>the measures of control, discipline and restraint which may be used in relation to children in the home.</p> <p>The registered person must ensure that—</p> <p>within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")—</p> <p>has spoken to the user about the measure; and</p> <p>has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and</p> <p>within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (1)(a)(b) 3(b)(i)(ii)(c))</p> | 8 July 2022 |
| <p>The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which—</p> <p>include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child;</p> <p>are kept up to date. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b))</p> <p>This specifically relates to the manager ensuring that the children's looked after review documents and personal education plan meeting documents are obtained and kept up to date.</p> | 8 July 2022 |

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| <p>The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if—</p> <p>there is any other incident relating to a child, which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(e))</p> | <p>8 July 2022</p> |
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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

Cherie Chen, Social Care Inspector

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