

SC035409

Registered provider: Northumberland County Council

Assurance inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this secure 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 home can accommodate up to 15 children who are aged between 10 and 17. There were 11 children living in the home at the time of this inspection.

The home 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. Health and Education is provided on site in dedicated facilities.

The manager registered with Ofsted on 30 January 2012. She is suitably qualified and experienced.

Inspection date: 27 July 2022

Date of last inspection: 1 March 2022

Judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Information about this inspection

At these inspections, the inspector evaluated:

- the care of children
- the safety of children
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers.

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children, using the social care common inspection framework. This assurance 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'.

Findings from the inspection

The care of children

Children are happy and relaxed. They are comfortable in the company of staff and the relationships between children and staff are positive. Interactions are meaningful and there is a warm and welcoming atmosphere in the home. At the time of this inspection, the children were on school holidays and enjoying a range of activities. For example, one child was having a facial and three children were playing badminton in the sports hall.

The home is a comfortable and pleasant home for the children. There are good-quality decor and furnishings throughout, making this home a nice environment for children to live in.

Children share their experiences and worries with staff, who listen and support them. Regular meetings are held with children to gain their views about the running of the home. The records of these meetings show that children can talk about their life and care, and that staff encourage them to suggest ways that things can be done better. Although children's suggestions are recorded, these are not brought forward to the next meeting so that children receive feedback on what has happened about the things they have raised.

Children are making good progress and have positive experiences. They settle in well to the home with good support from staff. Staff help children to understand what brought them to secure care. There are good-quality, clear plans for children that set out their diverse needs and how these needs will be met. Children spoke highly of staff and of the care that they receive.

Staff plan well for children moving on. One child left the home very recently. A comprehensive plan demonstrates good joined-up work and care across professionals and agencies. Prior to the child moving on, staff from the new placement visited the child and the child visited the placement. This helped the child to start to form positive relationships. The child's family was also fully involved. This was a successful transition and the child is doing well in their new home.

The safety of children

Risks relating to each child are quickly and comprehensively assessed on admission and regularly reviewed and updated throughout their time in the home. Staff understand these risks and know what to do to help keep children safe.

There have been incidents where physical restraint has been used. Staff only use physical restraint as a last resort and when absolutely necessary to protect children from immediate risk of harm. The quality assurance of incidents is thorough, and managers also use closed-circuit television to review these, and identify both good

practice and any learning. Children's views are sought, including learning from children about what will help them going forward.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

The manager has significant experience and holds suitable qualifications for this role. There are quality assurance systems in place and the manager regularly reviews the effectiveness of these. This ensures that these monitoring tools help her to identify and address shortfalls and also build on good practice.

There is good external monitoring by an independent visitor. In addition, managers from the local authority's other provisions also provide scrutiny of practice. This supports the continuing improvements in the quality of care that children receive.

The home has a number of staff vacancies. Recruitment is challenging in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, but managers are persistent. Not having a full staff complement means that the home has restricted the number of children it can look after to 10. Managers are hoping this is a temporary measure with recruitment to posts pending.

Complaints made by children are few and low level. Managers respond to these complaints in a timely way. They ensure that children understand what has been done to address their concerns, and check with them that they are happy with the outcome.

The one statutory requirement and the recommendations raised at the last inspection have been fully addressed. For example, improvements have been made to children's care plans, staff supervision and in identifying learning from physical restraint incidents. These improvements ensure that children receive good-quality care.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
01/03/2022	Full	Good
21/09/2021	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
26/11/2019	Full	Good
04/07/2019	Interim	Improved effectiveness

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendation

- The registered person must ensure that children are consulted regularly on their views about the home's care, to inform and support continued improvement in the quality of care provided. In particular, suggestions or requests raised at children's meetings should be brought forward into the records of the next meeting with the decision or outcome recorded. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.11)

Secure children's home details

Unique reference number: SC035409

Provision sub-type: Secure unit

Registered provider: Northumberland County Council

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

Responsible individual: Adam Hall

Registered manager: Julie Tinkler

Inspector

Shaun Common, Senior Officer Secure Estate

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