

# 1155757

Registered provider: Northumberland County Council

Monitoring visit

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 date: 7 December 2022**

## **This monitoring visit**

The monitoring visit was carried out in response to potential safeguarding concerns identified within the regulation 40 and regulation 44 notifications. The information included within these notifications indicated that there may be insufficient staffing arrangements effecting the care and safety of the children.

During the monitoring visit, significant breaches in the regulations were found.

Leaders have failed to ensure that all staff working in the home have the necessary skills and training to meet the children's needs. This includes a high number of staff who have not received the provider's mandatory training, such as safeguarding training and the provider's identified method of physical intervention training. There are times when staff are on shift without any relevant training. This has resulted in children not being supported in line with their relevant plans, which has resulted in the police being called to manage the children's behaviour.

Senior leaders have not fully considered all of the care needs for all of the children when they have agreed to a child being placed in the home. The decision makers did not give sufficient consideration to how the registered manager and the staff could meet all of the children's needs safely. This has had a detrimental effect on the child who moved

into the home and on those children who were already living in the home and deemed to be settled and progressing well prior to this decision.

The manager does not apply safer recruitment checks to agency staff and non-permanent staff. The manager does not consistently check the applicants' employment history, or if their employment references are relevant, suitable or have been verified. In addition, she is unaware if the agency staff have been subject to any disciplinary investigations or actions, or if there are any safeguarding or practice concerns. This practice has the potential to expose the children to the risk of harm.

Children are not helped to build positive and trusting relationships with the staff. Staffing shortages mean that a high level of agency staff are used. These unfamiliar staff do not provide a consistent level of care to the children, and the children are prevented from building positive relationships based on mutual trust and respect.

Staff struggle to implement consistent boundaries and to manage the children's behaviours effectively. This has left some children feeling scared and worried. Furthermore, some children isolate themselves in their own spaces. One child said, 'I never know who is going to be here, I must have had eight different staff this week who I've never met before, I just stay in my bedroom'.

Staff have not been able to meet the children's behavioural needs as set out within their individual plans, and the staff have failed to de-escalate a recent incident. This resulted in the police be called to manage the child's behaviour. This practice increases the risk of children being criminalised.

Children's privacy is not respected. Closed-circuit television devices and bedroom door alarms are used to monitor the movement of the children. There is no rationale for this practice, nor is it reviewed. This practice is not reflected in the children's risk assessments, and the necessary consent has not been obtained from the children's placing local authority to acknowledge their agreement to this practice.

The registered manager has failed to submit all of the relevant information regarding a safeguarding incident to Ofsted within the required timescale. This oversight prevents Ofsted from reviewing and monitoring the safeguarding arrangements for children to ensure that the correct action is taken to safeguard the children.

Leaders and managers have failed to send the independent person's report to Ofsted in a timely way. Additionally, the local authority designated officer (LADO) was not promptly informed of an allegation made about a staff member. These failings prevent safeguarding agencies from having oversight of the home, and taking prompt action, when children may be at risk of harm.

Following this monitoring visit and the shortfalls identified, a decision was made to issue an urgent notice to reduce the numbers of children living at the home. Additionally, compliance notices were issued under regulation 12: The protection of children standard, regulation 13: The Leadership and management standard, regulation 14: The

care planning standard and regulation 32: Fitness of workers. Requirements were also raised under regulation 11: The positive relationships standard, regulation 24: Monitoring and Surveillance, regulation 40: Notification of a serious event and regulation 44: The independent person: visits and reports.

The previously issued requirements under regulation 35 and 36, and elements of regulation 40 were not fully reviewed during the visit. For this reason, they are reissued.

## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
07/06/2022	Full	Good
25/01/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
10/09/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good
30/05/2018	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 positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on—</p> <p>mutual respect and trust;</p> <p>an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and</p> <p>positive responses to other children and adults.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>meet each child's behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child's relevant plans;</p> <p>are provided with supervision and support to enable them to understand and manage their own feelings and responses to the behaviour and emotions of children, and to help children to do the same;</p> <p>de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c)(2)(a)(i)(x)(xi))</p>	29 January 2023
<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>have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm;</p>	29 January 2023

<p>understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person;</p> <p>take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and</p> <p>are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies;</p> <p>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)(iii)(v)(vi)(vii)(b))</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>ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child;</p> <p>ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child;</p> <p>ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child;</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)(c)(d)(e)(h)))</p>	29 January 2023
<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>	29 January 2023

<p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home's statement of purpose. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b)(2)(a))</p>	
<p>The registered person may only use devices for the monitoring or surveillance of children if—</p> <p>the monitoring or surveillance is for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child concerned, or other children;</p> <p>the child's placing authority consents in writing to the monitoring or surveillance;</p> <p>so far as reasonably practicable in the light of the child's age and understanding, the child is informed in advance of the intention to do the monitoring or surveillance; and</p> <p>the monitoring or surveillance is no more intrusive than necessary, having regard to the child's need for privacy. (Regulation 24 (1)(a)(b)(c)(d))</p>	<p>29 January 2023</p>
<p>*The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety.</p> <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, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3).</p> <p>The requirements are that—</p> <p>the individual is of integrity and good character;</p> <p>the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform;</p>	<p>29 January 2023</p>

<p>the individual is mentally and physically fit for the purposes of the work that the individual is to perform; and</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)(2)(a)(b)(3)(a)(b)(c)(d))</p>	
<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>	29 January 2023
<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>	29 January 2023
<p>The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if—</p>	29 January 2023



<p>a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation;</p> <p>an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious;</p> <p>there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there;</p> <p>a child protection enquiry involving a child —</p> <p>is instigated; or</p> <p>concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry); or</p> <p>there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious.</p> <p>A notification made under this regulation—</p> <p>must include details of—</p> <p>the matter;</p> <p>the other persons, bodies or organisations (if any) who or which have been notified; and</p> <p>any actions taken by the registered person as a result of the matter;</p> <p>must be made or confirmed in writing.</p> <p>(Regulation 40 (4)(a)(b)(c)(d)(i)(ii)(e)(5)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(b))</p>	
<p>The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month.</p> <p>The independent person must produce a report about a visit ("the independent person's report") which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether—</p> <p>children are effectively safeguarded; and</p> <p>the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being.</p>	<p>29 January 2023</p>

<p>The independent person must provide a copy of the independent person's report to HMCI. (Regulation 44 (1)(4)(a)(b)(7)(a))</p>	
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\*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

## Information about this inspection

The purpose of this visit was to monitor the action taken and the progress made by the children's home since its last Ofsted inspection.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

## **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**

Claire Webster, Social Care Inspector

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