

1155757

Registered provider: Northumberland County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

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

The manager registered with Ofsted in May 2015.

Inspection dates: 26 and 27 September 2023

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: 7 June 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

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

Inspection judgements

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

There were two children living in the home at the time of the inspection. One child moved in and subsequently moved on from the home. This was an unexpected change of care plan for the child. As a result, children's overall experiences are not consistently positive.

Children and staff have experienced unsettled times in the home due to the high level of staff turnover. As a result, children have not been provided with a sense of stability and, therefore, their progress has been variable.

The children's progress in education is varied. The manager has not challenged the local authority when there has been a delay in identifying and securing an appropriate placement for a child. As a result, one child is without a school place. Furthermore, the staff have not provided structured activities for the child to support their learning at home.

Most of the children's health needs are well met; however, staff have not been effective in supporting all areas of health. Staff have not been able to encourage all children to complete self-care tasks, such as oral hygiene. This means that children are not learning the importance of caring for themselves, which may have an impact in later life.

Staff understand the importance of helping children to see their close family and friends. They support the children to keep in touch with those who are important to them. Staff proactively address any difficulties that arise so that the children can continue to have stable networks around them. This helps the children to maintain a sense of identity and connection to their loved ones.

The children have developed positive and trusting relationship with the staff. Staff speak about the children with enthusiasm, warmth and compassion. The staff demonstrate unwavering commitment to the children, and this is reflected in the feedback from multi-agency professionals.

Children are supported to become more independent and develop new skills, depending on their age and understanding. They are encouraged to complete chores around the house and learn about budgeting. This helps the children to learn the skills they will need as they become adults.

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

The manager completes an assessment prior to children coming to live in the home. However, not all the risks were fully explored in one child's risk assessment. Staff

did not have all the information needed to help manage the child's risks and support all children living in the home. This contributed to the child moving out of the home without secure plans for where they should live.

Not all staff have a good understanding of what actions to take should a child go missing from the home. The record-keeping of missing-from-home episodes is often incomplete. As a result, it is unclear whether staff have taken appropriate steps to find children while they are missing.

The manager has not ensured that all staff complete medication training. Staff who are not trained have been involved in administering medication to children. This has resulted in errors that could put children at risk of harm.

Children's bedroom doors have an alarm system that operates at all times. This is used as standard practice and does not reflect children's individual needs. This is an unnecessary intrusion into children's movements around their home.

Safer recruitment process has not been followed. The manager did not explore the gaps in employment for one staff member. This has increased the risk of children being cared for by inappropriate adults.

Staff use physical restraint as a last resort. When incidents take place, the manager and staff take time to reflect on what happened and consider what they could do differently to support children. This enables staff to improve the care provided to children. Staff consider ways that they can help to keep children safer. Staff help children to reflect on their behaviour and to understand why they may be struggling to manage their feelings.

The manager ensures that consequences for unwanted behaviour are proportionate and restorative. This has helped the children to make sense of their feelings and develop strategies to manage their emotions.

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

The manager is child-focused and speaks about the children with warmth and enthusiasm. She is supported by a deputy manager and the responsible individual.

The manager's systems for monitoring and evaluating practice in the home are not effective. The current systems do not support the manager to identify and critically evaluate the home's strengths and areas for development. This has hindered the manager's ability to improve outcomes for children.

New staff have yet to complete mandatory training, such as in first aid. The manager has not ensured that there is at least one person on duty at all times who has a suitable first aid qualification. This means the children may not be safeguarded effectively in the event of an emergency.

The independent person visits the home and produces a monthly report. However, Ofsted does not receive these reports in a timely manner. This hinders Ofsted's oversight of the home.

Staff said that they like working in the home and that morale is good. Staff value the support they receive from the manager. Staff receive formal supervision on a regular basis, which provides them with time to reflect on their practice and supports them with their ongoing development.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards'. The registered person must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<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. (Regulation (12) (1) (2)(a)(i))</p>	24 November 2023
<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>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)(h))</p>	24 November 2023
<p>The registered person must ensure that—</p> <p>at all times, at least one person on duty at the home has a suitable first aid qualification. (Regulation 31 (2)(a))</p>	24 November 2023

<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>understand the barriers to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child to overcome any such barriers. (Regulation 8 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii))</p> <p>In particular, the manager must ensure that there is suitable education provision in place for each child.</p>	<p>24 November 2023</p>
<p>The registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received into the children’s home. (Regulation 23 (1))</p> <p>In particular, the registered person must ensure that staff have completed relevant medication training prior to administering medication to children.</p>	<p>24 November 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,</p> <p>if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3).</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) (2)(a)(b) (3)(d))</p>	<p>24 November 2023</p>

<p>The registered person may only use devices for the monitoring or surveillance of children if—</p> <p>the monitoring or surveillance is no more intrusive than necessary, having regard to the child’s need for privacy. (Regulation 24 (1)(d))</p> <p>This requirement was made in the last inspection and is restated.</p>	<p>24 November 2023</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 provide a copy of the independent person’s report to HMCI. (Regulation 44 (1) (7)(a))</p> <p>This requirement was made in the last inspection and is restated.</p>	<p>24 November 2023</p>

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that staff encourage children to take a proactive role in looking after their day-to-day health and well-being. Where children have specific health needs or conditions, they should be supported to manage these, subject to their age and understanding. (‘Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards’, page 34, paragraph 7.10)

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

Cherie Chen, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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