

1159884

Registered provider: Spark Of Genius North East LLP

Assurance inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and managed by a private company. It provides care for up to five children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

There were three children resident at the time of the inspection.

There has been no registered manager since December 2023.

Inspection date: 11 December 2024

Date of last inspection: 10 September 2024

Judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Information about this inspection

At this inspection, the inspectors 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

We identified the following serious and/or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance inspection:

- There are no appropriate management arrangements in the home. The home has been without a registered manager for more than 49 weeks. Staff have not had sufficient management oversight of their practice.
- Senior leaders have failed to ensure that staff have adequate support or sufficient oversight of their practice.
- Staff have failed to respond effectively to children's needs in line with children's plans, including poor behaviour management.
- There are insufficient staff to manage children's behaviour.
- Leaders have not considered the impact on all children when ending the placement. Therefore, children living in the home have had no preparation for such a significant change.
- Staff are not sufficiently familiar with all children's risk assessments.

The registered manager's post has been vacant since December 2023. The provider has not made sufficient progress in appointing a manager for this home.

The interim manager is currently overseeing two children's homes belonging to this provider. Leaders have not ensured adequate support for the interim manager to ensure that standards of care are maintained. She does not have the necessary skills to lead and manage staff across both homes. Consequently, staff have been without sufficient support and oversight of their practice.

Children's behaviour is not always effectively managed. Risk assessments and behaviour management plans contain inconsistent information on how to manage children's behaviours. Furthermore, there are not sufficient staff to support children when they are angry or upset. For one child, their risks have increased since coming to live in the home.

Children are not provided with consistent care by staff who are familiar to them. There has been a significant number of staff who have left, and there are insufficient numbers of staff to provide appropriate care to children. The children said that they do not like being looked after by unknown adults.

Staff do not prepare children for moving on from the home. Some children are discharged from the home without notice and without any discussion with the local authority on allowing them to maintain the child's placement. Consequently, children are not provided with sufficient time to prepare for this significant change. This also prevents children from experiencing positive endings to the relationships they have built with the staff and other children.

The condition of the home is not of a good standard. Bathrooms are dirty and there is damage to some carpets, walls and furniture. This makes the environment less homely for children.

Staff are not consistently recording incidents that happen in the home. There are no records of children or staff taking part in discussions following incidents to allow for learning and reflection. Therefore, leaders and managers cannot maintain adequate oversight of the home and be assured that incidents are managed appropriately. This also means that staff are not routinely reflecting on their practice or how they support children at the times when they are dealing with difficult emotions.

The manager does not routinely notify Ofsted of significant incidents that occur in the home. This prevents Ofsted from being assured that safeguarding concerns are managed effectively, and that children are safe.

Following a case review on 11 December 2024, which confirmed that there are serious and widespread concerns at the home, a restriction of accommodation notice was served alongside two compliance notices under Regulations 12 and 27.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/09/2024	Full	Good
22/08/2023	Full	Good
15/02/2023	Full	Good
24/01/2022	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, The 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
*The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— 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)(b))	26 January 2025
*The registered provider must appoint a person to manage the children's home if— there is no registered manager in respect of the home. (Regulation 27 (1)(a))	2 March 2025
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child; and 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(b) (2)(d)(e)(f))	23 February 2025

The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children’s home; and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that arrangements are in place to— plan for, and help, each child to prepare to leave the home or to move into adult care in a way that is consistent with arrangements agreed with the child’s placing authority. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(iii))	23 February 2025
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation; an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious; there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; a child protection enquiry involving a child— is instigated; or concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry); or there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(a)(b)(c)(d)(i)(ii)(e))	23 February 2025

*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that children's homes are nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of the children. Children's homes must comply with the relevant health and safety legislations (alarms, food, hygiene and so on). Homes should seek as far as possible to maintain a homely rather than 'institutional' impression. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1159884

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Spark Of Genius North East LLP

Registered provider address: King Edwin School, Mill Lane, Stockton-on-Tees,
Cleveland TS20 1LG

Responsible individual: Stephen McGhee

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Lisa Gordon, Social Care Inspector

Laura Roberts, Social Care Inspector

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