

1247670

Registered provider: West Cumbria Care and Support

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned by a charitable organisation and provides care under short-break arrangements for up to four children with learning disabilities.

The registered manager post is vacant. A new manager was appointed in January 2025.

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 February 2025

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	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 20 March 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
20/03/2024	Full	Good
25/01/2023	Full	Good
10/10/2022	Full	Inadequate
08/03/2022	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

This home provides good-quality short breaks for children with complex needs. Children are cared for by a nurturing staff team who know them well.

Staff keep children safe through a combination of appropriate levels of supervision and careful planning. However, on one occasion, the manager did not complete a full assessment of a child's needs before they visited for a short break stay. As a result, not all staff had the necessary information about the child's needs.

The home is spacious and fully equipped to meet children's individual needs. It has a relaxed feel and is a fun environment for children. There are a range of books, toys and games on offer for the children to enjoy. Children have a positive experience of the home and enjoy their short-break stays. They take part in a wide range of activities and the staff share these with parents via online platforms and social media. One parent said, 'It's like home from home. [Name of child] is always happy and excited about his overnight stays.'

Staff understand children's preferred methods of communication. This ensures that children are given the necessary support to make choices in their everyday life. The manager carries out wide consultation with children and their families. This is a key strength of the service. Feedback from parents and professionals is positive.

Staff encourage children to develop their independence. Staff support children with goals to help develop their life skills, such as self-care, exploring new activities and communication. The manager and staff use creative ways to celebrate children's achievements, with 'magic moments'. These achievements are individual to each child and displayed on the wall as a child-friendly visual aid. This helps children grow in confidence.

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

Risk assessments are clear and regularly reviewed. These include all children's known risks, and staff have a good understanding of the children that they support. Staff are vigilant in noticing any changes in children's behaviours. Following a recent incident in the home, the manager made the necessary changes and considered the individual assessments for each child's short-break stay. This ensures that all children experience their short breaks in a positive way.

Recruitment procedures are not robust. Some records of recruitment do not show a full employment history for staff. When there are gaps in employment histories, the manager has not taken sufficient action to explore these. This means that potentially unsuitable adults could be employed at the home, which would place children at risk of harm.

Children receive help and support from staff when they are upset or angry. Overall, staff manage incidents well. However, some incident records were unclear about the conclusion of the incident and what action staff had taken. A recommendation has been made to address this.

Staff work hard to build trusting relationships with the children. There are safe care practices in place during times of personal care to ensure all children are provided with privacy and dignity. Parents say staff ensure their child is well looked after and is kept safe.

Fire safety is prioritised in the home. All staff are trained in fire safety. Each child has their own individual personal evacuation plan, and they take part in regular fire drills.

Medication storage and administration arrangements are robust. The new manager has recently introduced new monthly auditing tools to monitor medication practices. When children need to have their medication disguised in food, there are appropriate consent documents in place.

Children do not go missing from the home due to the high staffing ratios in place. Staff understand children's risks and know what action to take should a child protection concern arise. However, not all staff have a full understanding of the role of the local authority designated officer (LADO). A recommendation is made to address this.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Since the last inspection, the registered manager has left. The new manager was previously the deputy and has worked in the home for several years. She knows the children well.

Staff say they love working in the home and find it rewarding. They say the manager provides them with a supportive environment and they are happy with the recent changes in the management team. One staff member said, 'The home will thrive under her leadership.'

There is effective partnership working with a range of professionals, in particular, the positive behaviour support teams, community nurses and occupational therapists. They provide advice and guidance to staff to ensure that they support children in all aspects of their health and dietary needs. One professional said, 'Children's plans are individualised and are tailored to meet the specific needs of each young person. There is good attendance at children-in-need meetings and school reviews.'

There is a wide variety of training for staff. When needed, additional training is sourced to enhance staff's knowledge. Staff spent time with the organisation's positive behaviour support lead and discussed a bespoke behaviour management approach and how this could be specially adapted for one child.

The new manager is making effective use of her internal and external monitoring systems. She has improved her monthly auditing systems following recommendations made by the independent visitor. There was one occasion when a child needed to stay in the home for an emergency stay. These arrangements were not in line with the home's statement of purpose at the time. Following this situation, the manager updated the home's statement of purpose. However, this was not shared with the regulator in a timely way.

The manager supports staff to develop their professional practice and skills. They have regular good-quality supervision and attend informative team meetings. There is a suitable annual appraisal system which allows staff to focus on their development.

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 care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home. (Regulation 14 (1)(a))	23 March 2025
The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ("the statement of purpose") which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1. The registered person must— keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16 (1) (3)(a)(b))	23 March 2025
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children's home; or 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). The requirements are that— the individual is of integrity and good character;	23 March 2025

the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform;

the individual is mentally and physically fit for the purposes of the work that the individual is to perform; and

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)(c)(d))

This specifically relates to ensuring that all staff have a full employment history on file and when there are gaps, that these are fully explored by the manager.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that all staff understand the role of the LADO when reporting safeguarding concerns. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 43, paragraph 9.15)
- The registered person should ensure that all children's incident records contain all relevant information and the action staff have taken. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

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: 1247670

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: West Cumbria Care and Support

Registered provider address: West Cumbria Care and Support, 26 Stanley Street, Workington CA14 2JD

Responsible individual: Catherine Parker

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Judith Birchall, Social Care Inspector

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