

# 2565716

Registered provider: Middlesbrough Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

This home is owned and managed by a local authority. It provides care for up to six children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

At the time of the inspection, the home was providing care for six children.

The manager registered with Ofsted in December 2023.

This inspection took place on 23 and 24 April 2024, but inspectors also returned on 5 June 2024 to gather additional evidence.

### Inspection dates: 23 and 24 April, and 5 June 2024

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| <b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account</b> | <b>requires improvement to be good</b> |
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| How well children and young people are helped and protected | <b>requires improvement to be good</b> |
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|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| The effectiveness of leaders and managers | <b>requires improvement to be good</b> |
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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:** 4 September 2023

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** requires improvement to be good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement            |
|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| 04/09/2023      | Full            | Requires improvement to be good |
| 14/02/2023      | Full            | Good                            |
| 19/10/2021      | Full            | Good                            |

## Inspection judgements

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

The home is located in a park that is accessible to the public. As a result, children experience the anti-social behaviour of others in the immediate vicinity of the property. This requires the staff to call the police on occasion to help to keep the children safe. This means that the children are unable to enjoy a safe and stable home environment.

Children do not have access to all areas of their home. The front door is locked due to ongoing external risks. This is due to youths entering the home uninvited and refusing to leave, requiring police intervention. In addition, cupboards containing board games and picture frames are locked for no safeguarding reason.

The home will welcome children in an emergency. The immediate arrival of children means that assessments are not always robust and can lack important information. Consequently, it is unclear whether staff can meet the individual and competing needs of children. This can lead to relationships between children becoming fractious and, in some cases, unsafe. For one child, this resulted in them being moved to an unregulated placement. This has a significant impact on children being able to feel a sense of security in their home.

The internal home environment is comfortable and well decorated. There are two reception areas and a dining room for children to spend time in. Children's bedrooms are personalised and decorated with items of their choice.

Some children undergo clinical assessments to help staff to quickly understand their needs. Communication passports are agreed and shared, these are easy to understand for children and staff. This helps children to communicate and be understood using their own words.

Children have positive relationships with staff. The staff are familiar with each child's history and how it affects their daily life. The staff have a good understanding of the children's trauma and the impact it has on their behaviours.

Most children make progress from their starting points. Attendance and engagement in formal education have increased for some children. Children's contact with family has increased in quality and frequency.

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

The behaviour of some children is increasing the vulnerability of others in the home. One child is using vapes that contain illegal substances and they share these with other children. These are being delivered directly to the home by unknown adults. The staff

are aware of substance misuse trends in the local area. They receive training to understand current risks and deliver direct interventions to the children to increase their knowledge of the dangers. There is joint work at the home with substance misuse workers to reduce harm and increase awareness. However, this has not been effective in reducing the risks to some children.

The staffing arrangements of the home have not been sufficient to consistently manage the risks and behaviours of the children. Staff teams have been led by staff in their probationary period, and children are cared for by staff who are unfamiliar to them. Children have been able to purchase alcohol and drink it in the home. Staff did not take effective action to address this and, subsequently, two children were involved in a physical altercation in the home.

When children go missing from care, staff act quickly to locate them. Local and known areas are searched, and known people are contacted. The police and professionals are updated while the staff remain committed to searching for children alongside police involvement. This ensures that children are returned as quickly and safely as possible.

The manager and the staff try to help children to learn from their behaviours. When unwanted behaviours are observed, these are addressed directly with the children. Staff use calm tones and explain their actions. Other staff offer support and reaffirm their decisions. Children are taught to learn to accept responsibility and understand the consequences of their actions.

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

Poor decisions taken by leaders and managers have impacted on children's safety and their progress and experiences while living in the home. Effective action has not been taken to address some of the safeguarding concerns that have been highlighted.

Professionals do not always agree with the rationale for admitting children to the home. Some children move in successfully, whereas others have had a poor experience as a result of staff not being able to meet their needs or manage the competing needs of other children.

Safer recruitment checks are missing important information. The manager has not fully explored the reason for one member of staff leaving their previous roles. Furthermore, their full employment history was not recorded. These shortfalls could place children at risk of harm from adults who are not suitable to work with children.

The statement of purpose contained incorrect information regarding complaints procedures and contact details for the Office of the Children's Commissioner.

Notwithstanding this, leaders and managers advocate on behalf of children. The manager has escalated a child's concerns to the local authority and secured an advocate. The manager is working with the virtual school and the child's social worker to challenge the education provider.

The staff are trained to meet the children's needs. All new employees receive an induction and mandatory training in line with the statement of purpose. When additional or emerging needs are identified for children, specific training is sought and arranged.

The staff demonstrate resilience during challenging situations. This helps children to understand that staff are consistent in their approach to try to keep them safe, and care about them.

Supervision takes place regularly and is viewed by the staff as a positive process. The sessions are reflective and involve discussions about each child's needs and how support should be delivered.

Parents are listened to and feel part of their children's lives. The staff support family time and involve parents in planning. Family relationships are promoted and have improved for some children. One child has been reunited with their family and has a six-month support package from the staff.

## 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     |
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| <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;</p> <p>help each child to understand how to keep safe;</p> <p>manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other;</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. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iv)(vi)(vii))</p> | 12 July 2024 |
| <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>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 12 July 2024 |

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| <p>ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child;</p> <p>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.<br/>(Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(d)(f))</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                     |
| <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> <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;</p> <p>that arrangements are in place to—</p> <p>ensure the effective induction of each child into the home;</p> <p>manage and review the placement of each child in the home; and</p> <p>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.<br/>(Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(i)(ii)(iii))</p> | <p>12 July 2024</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</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <p>12 July 2024</p> |

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| <p>individual to work at the home, 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>The registered person must ensure that—</p> <p>the privacy of children is appropriately protected;</p> <p>children can access all appropriate areas of the children's home's premises; and</p> <p>any limitation placed on a child's privacy or access to any area of the home's premises—</p> <p>is intended to safeguard each child accommodated in the home;</p> <p>is necessary and proportionate;</p> <p>is kept under review and, if necessary, revised; and</p> <p>allows children as much freedom as is possible when balanced against the need to protect them and keep them safe. (Regulation 21 (a)(b)(c)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv))</p> <p>In particular, children should be able to access all areas of their home, unless there are reasons why this not safe.</p> | <p>12 July 2024</p> |

## Recommendations

- The register person should ensure that the statement of purpose is developed and kept under review (regulation 16 and schedule 1). ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 14, paragraph 3.5)

## **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:** 2565716

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered Provider:** Middlesbrough Borough Council

**Registered provider address:** Middlesbrough House, 50 Corporation Road,  
Middlesbrough TS1 2RH

**Responsible individual:** Robert Hamer

**Registered manager:** Jade Pybus

## Inspectors

Lee Riley, Social Care Inspector  
Julia Hagan, Social Care Inspector

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