

2571759

Registered provider: Northern Community Pathways Children's Residential Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

A private provider operates this home, which provides care for up to four children with social and/or emotional difficulties.

Two children were living at the home at the time of this inspection.

The manager registered with Ofsted in February 2020.

Inspection dates: 27 and 28 September 2023

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: 25 January 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25/01/2023	Full	Good
01/03/2022	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The children know that their carers have the children's best interests at heart. There is a good focus on safeguarding children across the team of carers. Over time, the children have learned to trust their carers, which has helped the children to follow their carers' advice and guidance.

The carers work hard to keep a homely environment. There are various framed photos of the children placed around the home. Framed photos show the children sharing enjoyable times with their carers. These efforts encourage the children to establish an emotional connection with their carers' and their home.

The children have access to a variety of activities and the opportunity to have holidays with their carers. They understand the value of creating different experiences for the children, both at home and abroad. These efforts broaden the children's horizons. Additionally, the children have opportunities to learn and develop their relationships with their carers outside of the home environment.

The manager respectfully challenges the local authority to ensure that the children have access to specific areas of support. The manager seeks solutions to overcome barriers so that the children can access education and receive support for their mental health. As a result, the children have received bespoke support that has enabled them to make much-needed progress.

The manager has shown flexibility in his decision-making in times of challenge. This has enabled a constructive dialogue with the children's local authorities to be maintained, despite differing views around the children's care planning. This has enabled the children to experience planned moves from the home as opposed to the children moving on prematurely or during a crisis.

The carers ensure that the children are well prepared when the children move on to semi-independent accommodation. The carers equip the children with bank accounts, provisional driving licenses, passports and national insurance numbers. This ensures that the children have important documents and resources that they will need in adulthood.

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

The manager and the carers are persistent and address any concerns about the children in the community. Safeguarding professionals have praised the carers' actions in their responses to safeguard the children and their responses to significant worrying events. Additionally, the information that the carers have passed onto safeguarding professionals has supported these professionals in their own respective roles with the children.

The children's risk assessments clearly inform and instruct the carers on how to better manage the children's known risks. Additionally, the language used in the children's risk assessments is not shaming or damning. On the contrary, the children's risk assessments are written sensitively and are child-focused.

There is effective collaboration between the team of carers and external professionals involved in the children's care. This practice ensures that there is a multi-agency approach to address significant issues that affect children's health and well-being. It has also given the children the opportunity to be consistently supported to address complex issues associated with their lives.

Important conversations that are held between the carers and the children are captured in the children's written records. This enables the children to reflect and learn about a variety of important issues. However, when restorative measures are used to address some of the children's undesirable behaviour, these records do not include clear timescales or the essence of the learning for the child.

The most significant incidents that involve the children are written clearly and reflect the chronology of events. However, some of the children's written records do not show clear decision-making associated with the incident. This means that the children, carers and professionals are likely to form a distorted understanding of these events when they are read back.

The manager ensures that an annual fire risk assessment is completed by a competent person. However, the manager has not addressed some of the required action points. This undermines the competent person's assessment. Additionally, in the unlikely event of a fire, the fire would be at increased risk of spreading.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager oversees a committed team of carers, many of whom are experienced. Carers feel that their role in the home is meaningful, and they report that they are making a difference in the children's lives. This outlook inspires and promotes good standards of care in the home.

The manager's ethos of supporting and nurturing the carers' career progression helps them to learn and develop. One carer talked positively about the support that they receive while working through the diploma in residential childcare. These opportunities, and the availability of face-to-face training in the organisation, give the carers confidence in their role.

The manager has good oversight of the organisation's recruitment of new carers. The manager scrutinises the carers' recruitment files and records his analysis. The manager follows through on issues that may challenge the carers' suitability to work with the children. This is a good practice that shows the manager's accountability for the children's welfare.

The manager is vocal and will highlight his views associated with the children's needs to the children's respective local authorities. However, the manager's analysis of the children's care planning is not consistently recorded in the home's records. Furthermore, the manager does not always get the written outcomes associated with the child's care following the children's social worker assessments. This dilutes the manager's accountability around decision-making and hinders the staff's ability to implement any actions that the local authority has identified following their assessment.

The team of carers strives to provide the children with a natural experience of childhood. This ethos has been instilled by the manager. However, certain practices, such as introducing personal family members to the home, have not been consciously thought through. Neither does the manager consult other partners of the child's care plan on this matter. Consequently, there is not a clear strategy to inform this practice.

The carers encourage the children to express their views on a variety of matters concerning their care. However, the children's views are absent from the surveys that Ofsted sends to the provider and from the manager's quality of care review report. This means that the children's wishes and views are not shared more widely. This diminishes other stakeholders' ability to form an understanding of what the child's views are and how they are being responded to.

The children's guide provides the children with some insight into their prospective carer's personalities and interests. This helps the children to learn about their carers before they move into the home. However, there is no information in the guide to inform the children of specific house rules. Neither is there any information about why the carers may need to physically intervene to keep the children safer. Therefore, the children could potentially be ill-prepared to experience these elements of care in the home.

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
After consultation with the fire and rescue authority, the registered person must— provide adequate means of escape from the home in the event of fire. (Regulation 25 (1) (a)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that any actions that are identified in the home's fire risk assessment are actioned quickly.	1 November 2023

Recommendations

- The registered person should seek to involve the placing authority that places a looked after child in the home, which in practice means working primarily with their statutory social worker. In particular, the registered person should ensure that they receive a copy of the assessment recommendations from the child's social worker that involve the child's care. Additionally, the registered person should ensure that they share their rationale and planning for involving their personal family members in the children's lives. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 11, paragraph 2.5)
- The registered person should provide a children's guide that helps the children to understand what the day-to-day routines of the home are ('what happens in the home') and important aspects from the statement of purpose of the home. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 24, paragraph 4.22)
- The registered person should consult with the children regularly on their views about the home's care to inform and support continued improvement in the quality of care provided. In particular, the registered person should consult with the children in the quality of care review report. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.11)
- The registered person should assist the staff to be familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('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: 2571759

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Northern Community Pathways Children's Residential Services Limited

Registered provider address: Office 3, 321 Red Bank Road, Blackpool FY2 0HJ

Responsible individual: Kenneth Croll

Registered manager: Alexander Muff

Inspectors

Steve Guirey, Social Care Inspector

Janine Shortman-Thomas, Social Care Inspector

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