

2608872

Registered provider: Northamptonshire Children's Trust Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

A local authority children's trust runs this home and cares for up to two children between the ages of 11 and 17 who have emotional and social difficulties. The home accepts children in an emergency situation.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since October 2020.

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 July 2024

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: 20 June 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
20/06/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
11/01/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
09/03/2022	Interim	Improved effectiveness
14/12/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

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

While children may arrive in an emergency situation, the home no longer stipulates set timescales for how long children should remain. The responsible individual said the aim is to offer children who are arriving in crisis a place of safety and stability so that professionals can make longer-term planning decisions. The manager and staff are adjusting to a different approach to building relationships with children and their role in progressing children's plans. Children are making some progress. However, this is limited, as the help staff provide lacks focus and evaluation.

Children say they like staff, and they show affection towards them. Staff work hard to understand children and what their behaviour is communicating. Most staff have attended training on the impact of trauma. However, this work is not embedded. Staff sometimes use institutional language when speaking to and about children. The manager acknowledges the challenges for staff in finding the language to show the connection between a child's trauma, their behaviour and emotional well-being.

Staff regularly meet with children to discuss topics relevant to their day-to-day experiences. However, there is no coordinated approach to plan, evaluate and review the effectiveness of this work. This is a missed opportunity to help children make progress with their vulnerabilities and areas of difficulty.

Staff support children to attend education. Staff have helped one child to move to a specialist school that meets his needs.

Staff encourage children to take part in new experiences, such as going on a rollercoaster and trying new sports. They help children to persevere with regular activities. This promotes children's self-esteem and sense of belonging, as well as a healthy lifestyle.

Staff help children to spend time with their families. They have helped one child to reconnect with family members after a period of not seeing them. Staff provide support to one child who has moved out of the home. This helps children to feel valued, through lasting relationships.

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

Children say they feel safe. Staff work with children's wider network when emerging risks are identified. A social worker said that staff are forthcoming with their communication.

When physical interventions are used, they are brief. Staff do not receive effective debriefs afterwards. A staff member removed items from one child during a physical intervention. Staff have not recorded sufficient detail of this incident. The manager has consulted with other professionals, for example, the provider's trainer for physical intervention. However, the lack of curiosity and reflection are missed opportunities for staff to develop alternative responses to children and minimise intrusive practices.

There have been some allegations made against staff during incidents when they have used physical intervention with a child. The manager has worked with the child's social worker and a psychologist to understand the child's trauma responses when in crisis. He has also consulted with the local authority designated officer but there is no clear protocol in place for how the child's complaints and allegations should be managed. Staff speak to the child about when their strong emotions are shown in unsafe behaviour. However, staff do not enable the child to understand how staff will use physical intervention. This lack of clear planning leaves the child and staff vulnerable to situations where there is the potential for further allegations to be made.

When children leave home without authorisation, staff try to find them. They follow protocols. Following a recent episode of a child going missing, the manager provided a detailed evaluation after speaking with the child. On other occasions, this child has encouraged the younger child to leave the home together. Staff have not supported the younger child to explore peer pressure or develop strategies to manage this. This is a missed opportunity to help children make safer decisions.

Staff use a token system to recognise and reward children's achievements. However, when staff impose consequences in response to children's behaviour, these are not consistently recorded and if a child has acted on the consequence or reviewed the effectiveness of the measure. This limits the potential to use measures which help children make positive choices about their behaviour. Additionally, children can receive financial reward for positive behaviour, on top of their weekly pocket money. Greater clarity on how this system works would help children and external agencies to understand that they would not be financially penalised if they do not meet certain expectations of managers and staff.

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

Children are cared for by an enthusiastic team of staff. The manager and staff value the mix of experienced long-standing team members and newer staff. Staff say they like working in the home and the manager is supportive and always available to them.

The home has gone through a difficult time since the last full inspection. There have been periods when the responsible individual and manager have been absent at different times. The manager has developed a leadership team to promote continuity. Senior staff are positive about the tasks the manager delegates to them, such as training allocation and organising family time.

Management oversight and monitoring systems are not robust. The responsible individual visits the home regularly, reviews the reports of the independent person's visits and signs the logbook of incidents. On one occasion, the manager did not receive a debrief from a senior manager after his involvement in an incident. This limits oversight of the manager's own practice.

Managers ensure staff complete the relevant level 3 qualification within timescales. Managers have revised the induction process. Staff receive a detailed booklet to complete which they keep for reference. Staff say they feel supported to develop professionally.

Managers do not have effective processes to ensure actions are identified and followed through. The manager has not got established systems to ensure that children are informed of investigation outcomes, and for this to be recorded in the child's records in the home. The home's statement of purpose has been updated twice but the manager has not shared this with Ofsted.

A learning culture is not embedded in the home and there is a lack of professional curiosity. Supervision records and team meetings do not consistently evidence reflective practice. The manager does not ensure staff have opportunities to discuss significant events, to develop their practice. Staff receive regular supervision. However, the arrangements for supervision are not outlined in the home's statement of purpose. This is in breach of regulation.

The manager has not ensured there is a written record of gaps in a staff member's employment history. This is in breach of regulation relating to safer recruitment.

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 quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— understand and apply the home's statement of purpose; ensure that staff— understand and apply the home's statement of purpose; protect and promote each child's welfare; provide personalised care that meets each child's needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking account of the child's background; help each child to understand and manage the impact of any experience of abuse or neglect; help each child to develop resilience and skills that prepare the child to return home, to live in a new placement or to live independently as an adult. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)) This specifically relates to ensuring that all staff have all relevant information to understand children's needs and provide care to meet those needs, in accordance with their plans. The registered person must ensure that staff have the information and skills to use non-stigmatising language when speaking to and about children.	6 September 2024

The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that—

helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and

promotes their welfare.

In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—

lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose;

ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child;

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;

demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on—

research and developments in relation to the ways in which the needs of children are best met; and

feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received; and

use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.

(Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(c)(f)(g)(h))

This specifically relates to the registered provider ensuring that there are effective monitoring and oversight arrangements in place for all aspects of the home which improve the quality of care provided to children.

The registered person must ensure systems are in place for the whole staff team to develop their responses to children, based on developing a full understanding of children's needs.

In particular, the registered person must ensure that clear action is taken and recorded following allegations and complaints.

6 September 2024

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)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that the home's statement of purpose is updated and shared with Ofsted within the required timescales. The registered person must ensure the arrangements for the professional supervision of staff are included in the home's statement of purpose.	6 September 2024
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— 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)) The registered person must ensure gaps in employment are evaluated in deciding whether a person is suitable to take up a position in the home. The registered person should record details of verbal verification of references.	6 September 2024
The registered person must ensure that—	6 September 2024

within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes—

the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and

within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")—

has spoken to the user about the measure; and

has signed the record to confirm it is accurate.
(Regulation 35 (a)(b) (2) (3)(a)(vii)(b)(i)(ii))

The registered provider must ensure the registered person receives a debrief when they are involved in an incident.

The registered person must ensure other staff involved in restraint receive a reflective debrief from an uninvolved staff member.

The registered person must ensure all consequences are recorded and evaluated and their effectiveness reviewed.

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: 2608872

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Northamptonshire Children's Trust Limited

Registered provider address: One Angel Square, Angel Street, Northampton, Northamptonshire NN1 1ED

Responsible individual: Sarah Kennedy

Registered manager: Scott Beasley

Inspector

Helen Gronhaug, Social Care Inspector

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