

2608872

Registered provider: Northamptonshire Children's Trust Limited

Assurance inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

A local authority children's trust owns this home and cares for up to two children between the ages 11 and 17 who have emotional and social difficulties.

The manager has been registered since October 2020.

Inspection date: 20 March 2024

Date of last inspection: 20 June 2023

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Information about this inspection

At this inspection, the inspector 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 did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance inspection.

This visit was to monitor the requirements set at the last inspection in June 2023 which graded the home as requires improvement. A whistleblowing concern was also reported to Ofsted in March 2024. No evidence was found to substantiate the concerns raised.

Since the last inspection two children have moved out of the home. Staff are committed to helping children move to permanent placements as described in the homes statement of purpose.

At the time of this inspection two children were living at the home. Both children moved in within a week of each other. The registered manager gathers important information about children before they move in. One child said '[name] is like my little brother and I am like his big sister'.

Staff understand the importance of building trusting relationships with children. They use an approach which helps children feel safe and valued. The inspector observed children seeking adults out for reassurance and being happy to see adults when they arrived at the home. Both children said they trusted the adults.

Staff encourage children to take part in a wide range of activities. Both children enjoy going to the gym and are members of a local boxing club. One child attends cadets and is a keen skater. One child plays football for a local team. Staff understand the benefits of children taking part in physical exercise to improve their wellbeing and sense of purpose.

One child is in full time education. The registered manager has worked with the local authority to create a bespoke educational package. This has helped the child to improve attendance. One child has an educational placement identified but at the time of the inspection had not yet attended. Staff are helping the child to learn informally until their placement begins.

Staff understand their responsibility to report any safeguarding concerns. One child experiences distress when speaking with their family. Staff have worked with the child's social worker to agree how to support the child while maintaining this important relationship.

There have been improvements in the safer recruitment of staff. References are received and verbally checked from the most recent employer. The induction of new staff has been improved and is now more detailed. This means staff are fully considered for their roles and provided with relevant knowledge.

Since the last inspection the layout, design and furnishing of the home has been improved. The home is clean and welcoming. There are spaces for children to be alone and socialise. Childrens artwork is thoughtfully displayed on the walls. This means children feel a sense of pride and comfort.

The registered manager monitors the quality of care provided to children. He regularly evaluates staff practice. As a result, he identified that when one child feels anxious female members of staff are more calming for the child over males. This change in approach means the child feels more comfortable when upset. However, there was no evidence that the responsible individual evaluates and monitors the quality of care provided to children. This oversight means the additional layer of scrutiny is missing. This was raised at the last inspection and is restated.

There have been two occasions when both children have been missing together. In both incidents staff acted without delay and looked for them. Staff recordings evidence how they used reassurance to help children safely return home. Despite the registered manager requesting return home interviews from the local authority this has been unsuccessful. This means children have not spoken to an independent person on their return to the home.

Staff use physical intervention as a last resort and only to keep children and staff safe. On one occasion the registered manager used a physical intervention, however, his involvement was not escalated to a more senior manager. This means scrutiny of the managers practice was not considered. Furthermore, some of the language used to describe children's behaviour could be considered child blaming. This means if children choose to read their files, they may feel a sense of shame and guilt.

Staff complete the organisations mandatory training. Staff are either qualified or working towards the relevant level 3 qualification in timescales. However, staff have not received training in helping children who have experienced trauma. This oversight means staff may lack the skills to help children talk about their past.

The manager has met five requirements and two recommendations from the previous inspection. One requirement has been restated.

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

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 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— use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(h)) This specifically relates to the responsible individual ensuring there are effective systems to monitor the quality of care provided to children. This was raised as the last inspection and is restated.	26 April 2024

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way. 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)
- The registered person should ensure that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs. In particular, they should ensure that staff are offered training in childhood trauma. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11)
- The registered person should ensure that when a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority must provide an opportunity for the child to have an

independent return home interview. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)

- The registered person should ensure that all incidents of control, discipline and restraint are subject to systems of regular scrutiny to ensure that their use is fair. In particular, when the registered manager has carried out a physical intervention this should be scrutinised by a more senior manager. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.36)

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

Mandy Start, Social Care Inspector

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