

2615067

Registered provider: Northamptonshire Childrens Trust Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

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

The manager registered with Ofsted in October 2020.

At the time of the inspection, three children were living at the home.

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 June 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: 14 May 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/05/2024	Full	Good
02/10/2023	Full	Good
09/08/2022	Full	Good
11/08/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The home is generally well presented, clean and maintained to a good standard. However, some areas are beginning to show signs of wear and are due for refurbishment. Renovation work is scheduled to take place in the coming weeks. Children have been actively involved in the consultation process and have contributed to decisions about the design and finishing touches, promoting a sense of ownership and belonging.

Positive behaviour and good decision-making are actively encouraged through rewards and praise. Children respond positively to this approach and are motivated by a range of incentives, from small, thoughtful gestures to larger, planned events. When consequences are necessary, they are proportionate and used as learning opportunities to help children reflect on their actions. Children are also offered the chance to engage in restorative work, either as an alternative to, or in conjunction with, a consequence. This promotes accountability and supports the development of empathy and social understanding. Managers maintain oversight of all consequences and restorative interventions, using this information to evaluate effectiveness and inform future practice.

Children attend school regularly and benefit from structured routines that support their engagement and learning. Staff maintain strong, positive relationships with the schools and are proactive in working collaboratively to address any concerns relating to behaviour, attendance, or presentation. When exclusions have occurred, staff have responded swiftly and supportively to minimise disruption to the child's education. Children are supported to continue their learning at home through structured activities and tailored routines. This approach helps maintain stability, reinforces the importance of education, and ensures that children do not fall behind academically or emotionally.

Staff recognise the importance of children maintaining relationships with their families and actively support this. While communication with one child's parent is regular and informative, this practice is not consistent across all families. One parent raised concerns about the lack of updates regarding their child's well-being. However, the manager was quick to respond to ensure improvement without delay.

A recent shortfall in local authority planning has created uncertainty around one child's care plan, with the potential to disrupt the stability of their placement. The manager has acted swiftly to advocate on the child's behalf, escalating concerns to the relevant professionals and clearly articulating the likely impact on the child's well-being and continuity of care.

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

Staff demonstrate a strong understanding of the risks associated with children's behaviours and respond effectively to manage and mitigate these risks. The team navigated a particularly complex situation in which three children were simultaneously

engaging in high-risk behaviours, often influencing one another. Consequently, this also led to a high number of physical interventions being used during this period. The manager acted decisively, recognising that the dynamic posed a significant safeguarding concern and that the children could not be kept safe while living together. Although this situation ultimately required a change in placement, staff made sustained efforts to support the children and resolve the challenges before reaching this decision.

Staff respond promptly when concerns about children's safety arise, taking appropriate action to manage risks. This has included searching children's bedrooms where necessary to ensure children's welfare. Children are not always present or informed when these searches take place. One child expressed that this lack of communication felt intrusive and impacted her sense of privacy.

Key-work sessions in the home demonstrate the team's skill and sensitivity in navigating difficult and often uncomfortable conversations with children. These sessions are underpinned by empathy, curiosity and a non-judgemental approach, enabling children to explore complex emotions in a safe and trusting environment. This has been especially evident in the case of one child, where the external therapist recognised the therapeutic relationship established with the child's key worker and entrusted them to continue the delivery of targeted therapeutic input.

Allegations and complaints are taken seriously and responded to promptly and appropriately. Children are listened to and supported to express their views and concerns. Where staff misconduct has been identified, managers have acted decisively, ensuring a robust and transparent response. These actions reflect a strong safeguarding culture and a commitment to maintaining high standards of professional conduct.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager brings a wealth of experience and continues to demonstrate unwavering commitment to delivering positive outcomes for children. Her passion and motivation remain evident after many years in post. She is well supported by an experienced assistant manager and, together, they provide strong, consistent leadership. A clear sense of teamwork and shared purpose is embedded across the staff team, contributing to the delivery of stable, nurturing care that supports children's well-being and development. This positive culture has fostered good staff morale and strong retention, ensuring that children benefit from consistent, trusted relationships with familiar adults.

Concerns regarding staff performance are addressed promptly and in line with established policies and procedures. This ensures that appropriate processes are followed, and that staff receive the necessary support to improve their practice. These actions reflect the high standards set by managers and their commitment to ensuring that children consistently receive high-quality care. Performance issues are explored through regular supervision, with targeted training and development opportunities provided to build staff confidence and competence.

Staff receive regular and meaningful professional supervision that promotes a culture of support, reflection and professional growth. Supervision sessions encourage staff to celebrate successes and thoughtfully consider areas for development, fostering a reflective and learning-focused environment. The manager maintains strong oversight of the supervision process, ensuring that records are thorough and that the process is used effectively to monitor practice.

Team meetings are regular and efficient. Staff are encouraged to share their views and contribute to the ongoing development of the home. Each team member holds a designated area of responsibility or professional focus, which they present during meetings to share insights and learning. This encourages and supports a culture of shared accountability, reflective practice and continuous professional development across the team.

The previous requirement from last year relating to staff achieving the relevant qualification has not yet been fully met. While the team brings a wealth of experience and holds a range of alternative qualifications, the manager has not provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate how these meet the regulatory equivalence criteria. Delays in staff completing the required qualification have been influenced by external factors, including issues with the training provider, which are beyond the manager's control. In response, the manager has sourced an alternative provider and has implemented a monitoring system to ensure that all staff are supported to meet the regulatory requirements within an appropriate timeframe.

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
For the purposes of paragraph (3)(b), an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification if, by the relevant date, the individual has attained— the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England) ("the Level 3 Diploma"); or a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the Level 3 Diploma. The relevant date is— in the case of an individual who starts working in a care role in a home after 1st April 2014, the date which falls 2 years after the date on which the individual started working in a care role in a home; or in the case of an individual who was working in a care role in a home on 1st April 2014, 1st April 2016. The registered person may defer the relevant date if the individual— does not work, or has not worked, in a care role in a home for a prolonged period; or works, or has worked, in a care role in a home on a part-time basis. (Regulation 32 (4)(a)(b) (5)(a)(b) (6)(a)(b)) This requirement was set at the last full inspection and is restated.	1 September 2025

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff support children to develop skills to have positive relationships with others. This particularly relates to the relationships that children have with their parents or other significant family members. The manager should support these relationships and, where appropriate, maintain contact and share information with these significant people. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 38, paragraph 8.6)
- The registered person should ensure that they actively seek independent scrutiny of the home and make best use of information from independent and internal monitoring (including under regulations 44 and 45) to ensure continuous improvement. This also includes ensuring that the point-in-time surveys are distributed to all relevant people so they have the opportunity to provide feedback. In the absence of the registered person, the responsible individual should ensure that this task has been completed. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)
- The registered person should ensure that a child's bedroom should not generally be entered without the child's permission, though it may be necessary to establish routines to allow for rooms to be cleaned regularly. Usually, rooms should only be searched if the child has been informed or asked for their permission. Immediate searching may be necessary where there are reasonable grounds for believing that there is a risk to the child's or another person's safety or well-being. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 16, paragraph 3.20)

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: 2615067

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Northamptonshire Childrens Trust Limited

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

Responsible individual: Sarah Kennedy

Registered manager: Nicola Ahern

Inspector

Kayleigh Spinks, Social Care Inspector

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