

2623842

Registered provider: Newcastle City Council

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 three children who may experience social and emotional difficulties and/or have learning disabilities.

Three children were living in the home at the time of the inspection. The inspectors spoke with all three children.

The home has been without a registered manager since April 2024.

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 July 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	requires improvement to be 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
15/08/2023	Full	Good
11/10/2022	Full	Good
14/09/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

There has been a significant change to the staffing structure, which has resulted in some children losing relationships with staff members that they value. However, a core staff team has remained at the heart of the care that the children receive, and they have supported the children through this difficult period. Children speak positively about the care they receive.

Staff talk about the children with warmth and affection. They take pride in the progress that children make and understand children's needs well. They are creative in how they communicate with children and adjust their approach when children's needs change. One child's social worker described the child's progress as 'significant'.

Staff take the time to get to know those who are important to the children. The children's friends and family are encouraged to visit the home, which helps children to understand that the staff care about them. Children feel comfortable introducing their friends and family to the staff. Staff advocate for children to visit family members whom children have not been able to see. Staff accompany children on long-distance journeys to support and develop these relationships. This helps children to better understand their identity and to feel valued.

Staff act as effective advocates for children and their educational needs. For example, they challenge inaccurate information contained in legal documents and have also challenged a child's exclusion from their educational setting. Staff support children to achieve their goals. This includes sourcing private tuition to help children achieve the qualifications they need for their chosen career. Staff are creative in their approach to identifying volunteering opportunities, training and apprenticeships. This help provides children with a range of skills and training that will support them to be successful in the workplace.

Children are well supported when they move into the home. However, the planned support provided to one child who moved out in an emergency was changed to enable another child to move into the home. The child's social worker said that this led to the child feeling abandoned. This does not demonstrate that the best interests of children are at the centre of the decisions made by leaders and managers.

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

Staff understand the children's vulnerabilities and associated risks. Staff are quick to respond when new risks to children emerge. Staff contact the relevant professionals to keep them informed and specialist services are identified to provide support to children. This helps to improve children's safety and shows children that staff care about their safety and well-being.

Staff make good use of therapeutic services to help them to better understand the emotional needs of the children. Staff are proactive in identifying events that may act as triggers for children's negative behaviours. Information is shared with professionals and used to ensure that plans to help children to manage their emotions are effective in reducing those associated behaviours. This has resulted in fewer incidents of self-harm, children going missing from home and substance misuse.

Staff sometimes rely on police to support them in managing children's behaviour. This exposes children to unnecessary police involvement and on one occasion resulted in a child going missing from the home. This places children at an increased risk of harm and is not aligned to the ethos of care set out in the home's statement of purpose.

Managers do not review the use of consequences to ensure that they are appropriate and effective. One child has had a financial penalty imposed for regularly using taxis when they miss the last bus home. This has not been recorded by staff and has not had effective oversight by managers.

Managers do not follow the local authority's safer recruitment policy. The documents that managers rely on to oversee staff recruitment are not always available. Therefore, the manager is not able to assure themselves that all checks and references are received and that gaps in employment have been explored. This leaves children exposed to working with staff who have not had the required safeguarding checks.

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

The home has been without a registered manager since April 2024. The new manager started in May 2024 but has been absent from the home for a significant period during this time. Consequently, she has only been in consistent day-to-day charge of the home since March 2025. The staff and the home have been supported by acting managers on an interim basis. The management of the home has been inconsistent and this has impacted on the care that children receive.

The manager does not ensure that there is an appropriate mix of experienced staff alongside newer staff caring for children. This means that at times the staff working in the home do not always have the sufficient skills and experience to meet the needs of children.

Not all staff feel well supported by leaders and managers. They say that communication is not effective and that this can lead to confusion when plans for children or the home change. Furthermore, not all staff have received supervision sessions in line with the local authority's policy and one staff member has not received supervision for six months. This hinders the manager's oversight and understanding of the development needs of the staff team.

The manager has a monitoring system in place to track children's progress and experiences. The manager also maintains oversight of documents that capture significant

incidents. However, staff use stigmatising and blaming language throughout these documents and this is not addressed by the manager. This is not helpful to children who may access these documents in the future.

The manager has not escalated concerns to the local authority that there is no plan for a child who is due to move on from the home. The child is approaching their 18th birthday but does not know where they will live or when they will be moving on. This places unnecessary stress on the child, who is uncertain about their future.

Leaders and managers have not ensured that a review of the quality of care has been completed. This limits leaders and managers from gaining a good understanding of the impact that practice in the home has on the experiences and progress of children. It also prevents them from understanding what needs to improve and how those improvements will be achieved.

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— 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; 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)(h)) In particular, the manager must ensure that there is an experienced member of staff in the home at all times.	26 August 2025
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—	

that arrangements are in place to— 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. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(iii))	
In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— seek to involve each child's placing authority effectively in the child's care, in accordance with the child's relevant plans; seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child's needs; if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 5 (a)(b)(c))	26 August 2025
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— the individual is of integrity and good character; the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform; the individual is mentally and physically fit for the purposes of the work that the individual is to perform; and	26 August 2025

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)(a)(b)(c)(d))	
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality of care review") at least once every 6 months. After completing a quality of care review, the registered person must produce a written report about the quality of care review and the actions which the registered person intends to take as a result of the quality of care review ("the quality of care review report"). The registered person must— supply to HMCI a copy of the quality of care review report within 28 days of the date on which the quality of care review is completed. (Regulation 45 (1) (3) (4)(a))	26 August 2025

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that consequences are kept under review. When financial penalties are not effective, consideration should be given to a more effective, restorative approach. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 57, paragraph 9.38)
- The registered person should ensure that they and the staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Staff and managers should use language 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)

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: 2623842

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Newcastle City Council

Registered provider address: Civic Centre, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE1 8QH

Responsible individual: Liz Spaven

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Dawn McCluskey, Social Care Inspector
Julia Hagan, Social Care Inspector

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