

2623842

Registered provider: Newcastle City Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and operated by a local authority. It offers care for up to three children who experience social and emotional difficulties.

There has been no registered manager at the home since April 2024. Two children were living at the home at the time of the inspection. Inspectors spoke with both children.

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 May 2024

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: 15 August 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
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

Children said that they feel safe, well cared for and are happy living in the home. One child referred to the staff as being like 'a second family'. Children's family members say that the staff do all they can to help to support the children and to help to keep them safe. One professional said, 'I was in awe of the team and how they support the younger people in their care... they deserve a huge amount of credit.'

Children's progress in education is mixed. Although not all children have attended school regularly, one child who was not going to school is now sitting their GCSE exams due to the progress that they have made. In addition, the staff obtain tutoring for those children who require additional support. The staff also advocate for those children who are prevented from attending school due to ill-health. This makes sure that these children are not disadvantaged.

Children are well supported with all aspects of their health, including those who need help with their emotional well-being. The staff support the children to attend medical appointments and access treatment. Managers seek expert advice to help staff to understand the children's presenting behaviours and their needs. This improves the standard of care that staff provide.

The staff develop trusting relationships with the children's family members. When children spend time with their families, staff provide financial assistance and food. This helps to improve children's experience of spending time with their families and helps children to see that the staff care about those important to them.

Children are supported to participate in community activities. One child has held a coffee morning to fundraise for a national charity. This contributes towards children's sense of belonging and provides a wider social network; however, staff do not consistently capture these special memories for children.

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

Staff have a good understanding of the risks that children face. They know what may trigger a child to become upset, and what signs indicate that a child may be becoming distressed. Staff support the children during these times of crisis. Risks for children currently living in the home have reduced. This includes a reduction in children hurting themselves and using illegal substances.

Staff help to keep children safer when they go missing from the home. Staff try to stay in contact with the children by telephone and will search for them. Positive relationships with the police help to provide a coordinated response. This has significantly reduced the frequency that some children go missing; however, children are not consistently supported by having the opportunity to speak to someone

independent when they return home. The process in place is not effective in escalating requests for this support. This prevents the staff from having information about why the children have been missing, or who they have been with.

Children are rarely held. When they are, it is to keep themselves and others safe. Room searches are also rare and are only conducted when there are concerns for a child's welfare. These are effective in supporting children to stay safer. Staff use consequences to help children to learn about the impact of their behaviour on others. One child was supported to return to a shop and apologise to the shopkeeper for taking something that did not belong to them. This helps children to understand that they are accountable for their actions.

Children are supported by staff to make complaints. These are taken seriously, as is any allegation which is made by a child. They are thoroughly investigated, and children are informed of the outcome. This not only helps to keep children safer but helps children to feel listened to and valued.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is currently being managed by a committed deputy manager. She leads by example and holds strong values for making sure that the children get the best care and support possible. The deputy manager identifies areas for improvement demonstrating her desire to make continued improvements to the care that children receive.

The children benefit from a stable and dedicated staff team. The staff continue to support the children outside of their working hours. This has included redecorating the home after it has been damaged, to restore the homely environment. These actions by staff also reduce the likelihood of children being reminded of traumatic events.

Staff feel well supported and one member of staff referred to the deputy manager as being 'the heart of the home'. Staff supervision sessions and team meetings are held regularly. Team meetings are well attended and are used as a forum for staff to collectively review the needs of the children and to share learning. Professionals who support the children outside of the home are invited to these meetings, to provide insight and updates on how to best support the children. This helps children to receive a consistent level of care.

The staff sometimes use stigmatising language in children's documents; for example, referring to the children as 'YPs' rather than by their names. This is not helpful to the child and is not child-friendly language.

The deputy manager has made some improvements to the monitoring and auditing systems. However there continues to be shortfalls with documents not being kept up to date. Some children's risk assessments contain outdated information, they are not individualised and are not updated in line with the organisation's policy. Furthermore, the staff do not consistently have access to documents which contain important information

to help them to care for the children. This means the deputy manager cannot be assured that staff are using the most up-to-date information.

The planning and preparation for some children moving in to and out of the home is mixed. There is not always clear evidence of how the deputy manager has considered whether one child's needs may have an impact on the other children already living in the home. This is particularly when children have moved in to the home in an emergency. This has contributed towards some children making complaints, and some children moving out of the home and area. This prevents children from having a stable environment. Staff keep in contact with children who move on. This helps children to understand that the staff still care about them.

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 registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which— include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child; are kept up to date; and are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c))	15 June 2024

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that they have fully considered what impact any new child moving into the home, may have on the existing group of children. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 56, paragraph 11.4)
- The registered person should ensure that where the placing authority or another relevant person does not provide the input and services needed to meet a child's needs during their time in the home or in preparation for leaving the home, the home must challenge them to meet the child's needs. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 12, paragraph 2.8) In particular, the registered person should have an effective process in place to challenge the child's placing local authority when independent support is not offered to a child who has been missing from the home.
- The registered person should ensure that the staff understand the importance of carrying out life-story work or other direct work with the children. Life-story work should be kept up to date and treated with respect. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', pages 16, paragraph 3.14)
- The registered manager 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 that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. 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: Newcastle Civic Centre, Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne, Tyne and Wear NE1 8QH

Responsible individual: Liz Spaven

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Julia Hagan, Social Care Inspector
Kerry Chater, Social Care Inspector

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