

2672877

Registered provider: North Lakes Children's Service Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned by a private company. It is registered to provide care for four children with social and emotional difficulties.

The home was first registered in March 2022. Four children moved into the home on 26 August 2022. At the time of the inspection two children lived in the home.

The home does not have a registered manager.

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 June 2023

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: 17 January 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
17/01/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Since the last inspection, one child has moved out of the home. Transitions are child-centred and ensure that children have positive endings.

Children say that they are happy living in the home and that they receive support from those who care for them. Staff spend time with children, helping them to develop new skills, including cooking meals, shopping for food and budgeting. This will help children as they progress into adulthood.

Children are healthy and supported to attend medical appointments. Good-quality direct work helps children to understand and reflect on their lives and understand their health needs. A registered nurse is employed by the provider. She provides oversight and involvement in the children's healthcare arrangements. Staff seek specialist support from external professionals when children need additional services.

Children are all making progress from their individual starting points. Staff consistently promote education and learning. This is developing children's confidence. Children's achievements, however small, are celebrated and appropriately rewarded. One child said, 'Even if I get a little bit right, they [staff] say well done.'

Children are supported by staff to pursue a range of hobbies and interests. This is developing their confidence and self-esteem.

Children understand how to raise a complaint. However, staff do not always record or respond appropriately to complaints. This does not ensure that children's views are listened to or evidence that appropriate action is taken. During the inspection, a child raised a concern that his previous complaints had not been dealt with. This was discussed with the operational manager who took appropriate action.

The home is well presented, and children have the opportunity to personalise their bedrooms. However, children are not able to access all areas of their home. There is a toilet on the ground floor which is locked. This is because potentially unsafe items are stored in this room. This was identified during the last inspection. Leaders have not taken action to make this toilet accessible to children. In addition, children cannot access the bath as this is in a locked room. Leaders accept that these areas should be accessible for children.

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

Staff understand their roles and responsibilities in protecting children. They have access to a wide range of training opportunities. This ensures that staff understand

the risks that children may face and the actions that they need to take to keep children safe.

Children who go missing from care receive coordinated responses. Staff take action to locate children and welcome them back into the home on their return. Children have the opportunity to speak to an independent person when they return to the home.

Staff have established positive working relationships with external professionals, such as social workers and independent reviewing officers. Staff support children to attend and contribute to their care reviews and planning meetings, to inform decisions about their care.

Children have positive relationships with those who care for them. Direct-work sessions focus on children's individual needs. This is supporting children to understand the risks that they may face in the community and in the home.

Physical intervention is only used when necessary to keep children safe. Records evidence that children's views have been sought about any physical interventions used. Consequences which are used are not always recorded. One child was unclear how long a consequence would be in place or when it would be reviewed, as the reasons had not been discussed with them. This does not support children to learn about appropriate behaviours.

Health and safety checks are routinely carried out in the home. The physical environment for children is safe and secure. However, door alarms are routinely used on children's bedrooms. There is no evidence to show that monitoring and surveillance is required for safeguarding or promoting the welfare of the children.

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

The registered manager left the organisation in May 2023. Before leaving, he had had been absent from the home for several weeks. There has been insufficient monitoring of children's care records. Leaders do not ensure that children's plans identify all their care needs or provide sufficient information to help staff understand the actions they need to take to keep children safe. This means that new members of staff or agency staff caring for the children do not always have the information needed to meet the children's individual needs.

The language used in children's care records does not help children to understand their backgrounds or their journey through care. Language used in records to describe children is at times blaming and derogatory.

Staff said they receive support from managers in the company. Staff have regular supervision and have opportunities to attend team meetings. The quality of supervision is variable, and not all supervisions support staff development. Induction and training for permanent members of staff are developing them in their roles.

Leaders ensure that there are enough staff in the home to meet the needs of individual children. Consistent agency staff are used to minimise disruption to the children. However, leaders do not ensure that all agency staff have the relevant skills and training to keep children safe.

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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 protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)) This specifically relates to children's plans providing staff with sufficient actions to take to minimise the risks for children.	31 August 2023
The registered person may only use devices for the monitoring or surveillance of children if— the monitoring or surveillance is for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child concerned, or other children. (Regulation 24 (1)(a)) This specifically relates to the blanket approach to the use of alarms on children's bedroom doors.	31 August 2023
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. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)) This specifically relates to children's records being accurate and language in children's records being child-centred.	31 August 2023

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; 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)(h)) This specifically relates to a registered manager being in place, and use of effective monitoring and evaluation systems.	31 August 2023
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. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child; and enable each child to participate in the daily life of the home; (Regulation 6 (1)(a) (2)(c)(i)(ii)) This specifically relates to children being able to access all areas of the home.	31 August 2023
The children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who—	31 August 2023

take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives.

(Regulation 7 (1)(c))

This specifically relates to supporting children to understand how their views have been taken into account, and giving children reasons for any decisions made about their care.

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that any external agency staff should meet the requirements in regulation 32 (4) regarding mandatory qualifications. The registered person should consider their skills, qualifications and any induction necessary before they start work in the home. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.16)

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: 2672877

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: North Lakes Children's Service Limited

Registered provider address: Malvern View, Hanbury Road, Stoke Prior,
Bromsgrove, Worcestershire B60 4AD

Responsible individual: Joanne August

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Sally Griffiths, Social Care Inspector
Michelle Edge, Senior His Majesty's Inspector

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