

2710606

Registered provider: Hartlepool Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and run by a local authority. It provides care for up to two children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

The manager registered with Ofsted in December 2022.

There were two children living in the home at the time of the inspection. The inspector spoke with both children.

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 September 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: 2 December 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
02/12/2024	Full	Good
26/09/2023	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children benefit from the stability and nurturing care that they receive. Children identify various things that they like about their home. Most of all, they characterise their relationships with the staff as positive, trusting and meaningful. Children know who to talk to when they need something or are worried. As a result, children make progress in various areas of their lives, particularly in their emotional well-being. Children recognise this. One child said, 'I'm speaking out loud, and I'm talking to new people.' Another child said, 'My emotions are better.'

Children are supported to try new activities and experiences. Staff adapt and respond as children's interests change, encouraging them to join clubs, even if they attend for only one session. Staff are persistent, and when children's enthusiasm wavers, staff recognise this and search for new opportunities or interests that the children may benefit from. This helps children to explore their world and promotes their self-confidence.

Children are encouraged to live a healthy lifestyle. Children's diets are comprised of a variety of foods and supplements when required. Children access urgent and routine medical appointments and are well supported by staff to follow medical advice. This helps children to be healthier.

Children are supported to make educational progress. The staff ensure that children have age-appropriate evening routines so that they are well-prepared for the school day. Children's school attendance is good, and their progress and achievements are celebrated. Effective communication ensures that staff and teachers share information about home education at the start and end of the school day. This helps staff in both settings meet the children's needs.

Children's voices and views are valued. The staff encourage children to express their opinions and views about their care and how they spend their days. Staff act on children's requests, including when these are dynamic and change frequently. Children attend the local authority children in care council, where they use their voice to inform wider service development. This helps children to feel empowered and influence matters affecting them.

Children enjoy regular family time in accordance with their care plans, and family members visit the home, where appropriate. Children benefit from this because family time takes place in the relaxed, familiar setting, where they can play with their brothers and sisters. Children are well supported by staff to cope with their feelings related to being separated from their families and missing their loved ones. The staff advocate for children when their family time plans need to be changed in accordance with what is in the children's best interests.

Children's bedrooms are regarded as a private space, and children are encouraged to personalise and enjoy their rooms. When children struggle with this, the staff offer support and follow children's plans. However, when approaches are not effective, the actions are not always reviewed with the home's therapists. This means that staff repeat approaches that are not always effective.

The quality and frequency of direct work provided to children varies. Sessions do not consistently follow children's needs and do not always clearly identify the purpose and impact for the child. There is not an effective system to monitor this area of practice.

Children are very settled at nighttime and consequently incidents do not occur. Staff therefore work alone overnight caring for the children. The manager's formal assessment of this arrangement is brief, and it does not fully explore the implications of solo care. As a result, the required elements related to lone-working training have been overlooked. For example, on two occasions, children have been cared for overnight by staff who do not have first-aid training. This was brought to the attention of the management team during the inspection, and immediate effective action was taken.

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

Staff have a clear understanding of the children's vulnerabilities and how to increase the children's safety. As a result, risks to children reduce, and children say that they feel safe.

Children's use of mobile phones and the internet is carefully monitored so that associated risks are well understood and targeted effectively. Parental controls on children's phones alert staff to unusual or unauthorised activity, enabling them to intervene quickly. Staff talk with children about potential risks online. This helps children to be aware of these dangers and talk about worries.

Children's behaviour is improving because of the encouragement and consistent boundaries provided by staff. Staff take a nurturing approach to encourage children's positive behaviour by using incentives, conversations with the children and positive role modelling. Children know what to expect and the plan for their day. This means that children are usually settled, enabling them to enjoy their day.

Serious incidents involving children are rare, and they receive a quick and effective response from the staff. Staff liaise with the child's network and seek appropriate management advice and support when needed. The manager reviews incidents thoroughly to identify themes and any actions needed to avoid recurrence and increase children's safety.

Children are supported to live together and be kind to each other. When children struggle with getting along, staff appropriately intervene to resolve grumbles and conflict. Staff show empathy and understanding for each child. Positive relationships

between children are encouraged by staff, in accordance with children's needs and at their pace.

There have been no allegations against staff or complaints. Staff practice and conduct is appropriately monitored by the manager and deputy so that when shortfalls are identified, proactive approaches are taken. This helps to provide staff with guidance and improve the quality of care for children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is managed effectively by an experienced and committed management team. The manager and deputy work in partnership and deliver consistent leadership. Children are the priority for the manager and staff, and they are at the centre of decision-making. The manager and staff know the children well and have a clear understanding of the children's needs and how to meet those needs.

The manager is dedicated to delivering high standards of care to the children and uses learning from inspection activity and external scrutiny to improve the children's experiences. The manager engages with other leaders and managers in regular meetings, where learning from practice is shared and used to influence changes in the home. The manager has ensured that the requirements and recommendations of the previous inspection have been fully met.

There have been some new staff join the team since the last inspection. The children have been well supported through this change. The manager, deputy and well-established staff members have reassured the children and introduced them to their new staff gradually. This has resulted in children continuing to be settled and coping well with new faces.

Staff communicate effectively and carry out daily handover meetings to discuss each individual child's needs and experiences. The open dialogue between the team members helps the staff to be clear about that day's plan for the children, thus promoting consistent care.

Staff are well supported in their role. New staff are supported with an induction and a period of shadowing experienced staff. Staff are encouraged to reflect on their practice through regular supervision and group meetings. The manager and deputy are approachable and have an open-door policy for staff so that they feel confident asking questions and seeking advice at any time of the day.

The home's chosen model of practice is not fully embedded. This is partially due to changes in staff but also because staff meetings with the therapeutic team are infrequent and not sufficiently prioritised. This has reduced the staff's opportunities to consult therapists about the children's needs and take advantage of their expertise. The manager intends to address this.

The manager and staff work positively with children's networks of professionals and relatives. This helps to build effective working relationships. Decisions about the children's care are made in partnership with these networks. The manager relies on the independent person's visits to obtain the view of others because there is no other formal consultation process in place. This is a missed opportunity to use different methods to consult with family members and professionals and use their feedback to inform improvements.

Staff changes and a busy summertime mean that some of the children's records are not up to date and some lack detail. This affects the quality of information available, including to the children in the future.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff connect with and are part of the wider support system for each child in their care. The registered person should evidence what they have done to achieve engagement, including consultation and any actions taken to escalate concerns. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 11, paragraph 2.3).
- The registered person should ensure that at least one person on duty at any given time in a children's home has a suitable first-aid qualification. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 34, paragraph 7.13).
- The registered person should ensure that if it is likely that there is only one member of staff on duty at any time, the manager makes a formal assessment of the implications for children's care, including any likely risks. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.18)
- The registered person should ensure that effective monitoring systems are in place to oversee the welfare and progress of children in their care. In particular, to monitor the effectiveness of support provided to children through direct work. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.23)
- 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. All children's case records must be kept up to date. 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: 2710606

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Hartlepool Borough Council

Registered provider address: Civic Centre, Victoria Road, Hartlepool TS24 8AY

Responsible individual: Laura Gough

Registered manager: Lindsay Cummins

Inspector

Catherine Heron, His Majesty's Inspector

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