

2730932

Registered provider: Westmorland and Furness Council

Assurance inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is operated by a local authority. It is registered to provide care for up to six children who experience social and emotional difficulties.

The home and manager registered with Ofsted in April 2023.

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

Inspection date: 4 March 2025

Date of last inspection: 13 August 2024

Judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection:

This inspection was triggered by a safeguarding notification in February 2025 following an incident in which a child lit a fire inside the home.

Information about this inspection

At this inspection, the inspector evaluated:

- the care of children
- the safety of children
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers.

The inspector has looked closely at the experiences and progress of children, using the social care common inspection framework. This assurance 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'.

Findings from the inspection

The inspection identified serious and widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children.

Staff did not take appropriate action following an incident of fire-setting by a child in the home. Following the fire incident, a room search to remove items that could be used to start another fire was not carried out until the following day. This placed all children and staff at continued risk of harm.

Staff were concerned about the possible repercussions from the child of undertaking a room search, and one staff member stated that they were not suitably trained to manage this. A deputy manager left the shift without considering alternative ways to ensure that a room search was completed.

The incident was not reported to the police, the fire service or the local authority until the following day. This meant that there was a lack of oversight and support to help to manage the incident effectively to ensure that children were kept safe.

After the incident, one member of staff did not receive a full debrief. Practice issues for the staff involved were not addressed by the manager or reported to the local authority designated officer, despite the safeguarding risks this left all children exposed to.

The manager has purchased additional fire blankets for the home and checks have been completed on firefighting equipment. Most staff have been trained in fire awareness, but only managers have been trained to act as fire wardens. Therefore, there are gaps in staff knowledge in the event of a fire when a manager is not on shift. However, training for all staff is planned to take place.

Two children living at the home are in a relationship with each other. The relationship is described as abusive and toxic, with one of the children involved being fearful of the other. Resources around domestic abuse have been provided by a support agency, but the children involved have not engaged. The resources have not been used with the other children living in the home, who are concerned about the impact the relationship is having on them.

A safety plan is in place, with increased staff supervision and door alarms being used at night. For several months, the manager has continued to escalate her concerns about the relationship to senior managers in the local authority. However, a decision to look for a new placement for one of the children was only made recently. This demonstrates that children have been exposed to ongoing abusive behaviours in the home for some time.

Most children attend education. However, there has been a lack of progress with a formal education provision being identified for one child. The manager has escalated

her concerns to other professionals. She is advocating for the child to get the right type of education provision to meet their needs.

Staff support children to attend health appointments and make referrals for specialist assessment and advice when needed. One child made a complaint about how their medical needs are not understood by staff and the child not being offered medication when they are unwell. A senior manager is investigating this complaint. Another child is happy that their concerns about the other child's health needs not being met have been addressed by a deputy manager. The manager has identified learning because of the complaint.

Staff appraisals are carried out. Children's views are sought about the people who care for them. Children have developed relationships with staff and have identified staff whom they trust and can speak to if they have any worries or concerns.

Children are supported to spend time with the people who are important to them. Children's individual interests are understood, and there is support in place to help them to pursue these. Children are supported to eat healthily and to engage in exercise that supports their well-being. Older children are helped to develop their skills to prepare them for independent living.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
13/08/2024	Full	Good
22/08/2023	Full	Good

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, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; help each child to understand how to keep safe; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies; that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(b))	13 April 2025

Specifically, leaders and managers must ensure that staff take effective preventative action to reduce the risk of any incidents reoccurring which may cause significant harm to children. Leaders and managers must ensure that the appropriate agencies are notified in a timely way following safeguarding incidents. Leaders and managers must ensure that placements are reviewed with the placing authority where there are concerns that children may be at risk of harm from each other. Leaders and managers must ensure that all children impacted by safeguarding incidents are provided with support.	
*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 work as a team where appropriate; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; ensure that the home’s workforce provides continuity of care to each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)) Specifically, leaders and managers must ensure that issues of poor practice which impact on children’s safety and well-being are addressed with staff and done so in a timely way.	13 April 2025

Leaders and managers must ensure that staff have the necessary training to be able to carry out their safeguarding role and that they support their colleagues effectively.	
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*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the review of care considers the quality of the care provided by the home, the experiences of children living there and the impact the care is having on outcomes and improvements for the children. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.2)
- The registered person should ensure that they keep clear records of occasions when prescribed medication is offered to children along with reasons when it is refused. This should include staff making every effort to ensure that children take medications prescribed to them, including waking them if they are asleep. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.15)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2730932

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Westmorland and Furness Council

Registered provider address: Town Hall, Duke Street, Barrow-in-Furness,
Cumbria LA14 2LD

Responsible individual: Elizabeth Curtis

Registered manager: Cheryl Athersmith

Inspector

Andrea Foreman, Social Care Inspector

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