

2738398

Registered provider: Northridge Care Group Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is operated by a private provider. It provides care for up to three children with social and emotional difficulties and/or learning disabilities.

The home registered with Ofsted in September 2023. The registered manager left the organisation in February 2024. The new manager commenced his employment on 15 April 2024. He has submitted an application to register with Ofsted.

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

Inspection dates: 20 and 21 June and 18 July 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	inadequate
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	inadequate
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	inadequate
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There are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded and/or the care and experiences of children and young people are poor and they are not making progress.

Date of last inspection: 13 February 2024

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
13/02/2024	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

Shortfalls in safeguarding practice and the leadership and management of the home have had an adverse impact on children's safety, progress and experiences.

Managers and staff have not developed effective structures and routines for children. This has hindered children's progress, experiences and school attendance. There are instances when the children are awake and unsettled during the night, leading to tiredness the following day. Children have then experienced difficulties in attending school on time or at all. Additionally, no planned educational activities are in place for one child who is not attending full-time education. This has impacted on their learning and development.

Staff's approach and support for children engaging in activities is inconsistent. Some staff do not support or encourage children to participate in activities outside the home, compromising their social and emotional well-being. However, the new manager has plans in place to address this.

When children move into the home, they are welcomed with sensitivity and care. However, the child already living in the home felt unprepared for the arrival of new children. The child said, 'They should have waited a bit. It was way too soon after [name of child] left and I was not ready.'

Children have varied experiences of living in the home. Two of the children, who are new to living in the home, have trusting relationships with the manager and staff. One child is struggling to adapt to the recent change in management and said that the new boundaries are 'too harsh'.

There are clear health plans in place for children, with guidance for staff. Staff support the children to attend routine and specialist health appointments as required.

Staff support and encourage the children to spend time with their families. Staff recognise and understand the importance of the children maintaining family links and spending quality time with their family and friends. This supports children's identity.

When damage is caused to the home during incidents, repairs are not completed in a timely manner. Repairs are required in children's bedrooms. Additionally, staff do not support children to keep their bedrooms clean and tidy. Requests made by children to decorate their bedrooms have not been actioned.

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

Safeguarding practice is poor. Leaders, managers and staff do not respond appropriately when there is a risk of harm to children.

An incident involving all three children in the home was poorly managed by staff. Staff did not intervene when tensions between the children increased. This incident escalated and a child suffered harm. Staff's later attempts to de-escalate the situation were ineffective, and one child said that they found the incident frightening.

Staff are slow in identifying and responding to incidents of bullying. Although staff have held some individual sessions with the children to discuss bullying, these have not prevented bullying incidents occurring.

Children have gone missing from the home. When this happens, staff are not always proactive in their responses to locate the children and return them home safely. Staff do not always follow children's individual safety plans. They lack professional curiosity, sometimes making assumptions or taking information at face value. For example, staff did not carry out welfare checks or seek medical attention for one child who appeared to be under the influence of alcohol when they returned home after an incident of going missing.

Door alarms on external doors and staff supervision of children are ineffective. On one occasion, staff were unaware that one child was missing after they had left the home during the night. Additionally, on at least one occasion, the property was left unlocked when the staff and children were sleeping. This poses a significant risk and compromises children's safety.

Children's individual risk assessments do not include details of all known risks and vulnerabilities and are not regularly reviewed and updated following incidents. This does not ensure that staff have relevant and important information to help them to minimise risks.

The consequences given by staff are not always fair and proportionate. In one example, staff made the decision to cancel a child's birthday barbecue. This excessive and punitive action negatively impacted on the child's emotional well-being.

The systems for storing children's medication are ineffective. One child self-administers their medication and staff have not provided safe storage for the medication. Although this shortfall has not impacted on children, it poses a risk, as medication is not kept securely.

Staff discuss with the children how to make a complaint. Complaint forms and envelopes are readily accessible in the home. There is a QR code for children to use to provide feedback or make a complaint. However, when children make a complaint, they are not informed of the outcome or any agreed actions.

Staff recruitment procedures are effective. All staff are checked and vetted before starting work at the home. These checks ensure that only suitable adults are employed to work with children in the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The leadership and management of the home are poor. This compromises safeguarding practices and the quality of care provided to children.

The monitoring and review systems are ineffective. Leaders and managers have failed to identify shortfalls in the quality of records. This means that staff do not have the most up-to-date information when providing care for the children. Additionally, records are not readily accessible, which makes it difficult for leaders, managers and staff to find up-to-date information.

Most staff say they are supported by leaders and the new manager. Senior leaders have plans in place to provide additional support to the new manager.

Before children move into the home, the manager completes an individualised assessment of staff's experience and ability to meet the children's needs. However, the manager does not seek the views of key professionals, such as the children's social workers, when considering the potential risks of children living with each other. This means the potential impact of children living together is not thoroughly assessed.

There have been several changes to the staff team as leaders and managers address the poor culture in the home. There is now a relatively new staff team in place.

There is a range of training available to staff. However, not all staff have received specific training relevant to the children's individual needs. As a result, not all staff have the necessary knowledge and skills to promote the children's safety and welfare.

Team meetings are held regularly and are well attended. However, the quality of the records of these meetings is poor. There is no evidence that staff have an opportunity to discuss children during these meetings or to identify any learning or development opportunities.

Staff receive regular supervision. The new manager carries out single-subject supervisions with staff when shortfalls in practice are identified. These provide an opportunity for staff to reflect on incidents and identify areas for development. Staff say they benefit from supervision.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person 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 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; that the premises used for the purposes of the home are located so that children are effectively safeguarded;	15 September 2024

that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health; and

that the effectiveness of the home's child protection policies is monitored regularly.

(Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(b)(c)(d)(e))

In particular, the registered person must ensure that all staff have the knowledge, skills and experience to identify and act on signs that a child is at risk of harm.

The registered person must ensure that all staff understand their roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children.

*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;

understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home;

demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on—

feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received; and

use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.

15 September 2024

(Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(c)(f)(g)(ii)(h))	
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 develop and maintain effective professional relationships with such persons, bodies or organisations as the registered person considers appropriate having regard to the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the children’s home is to provide care and accommodation. (Regulation 5 (a)(d))	18 August 2024
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. A notification made under this regulation— must include details of— the matter; the other persons, bodies or organisations (if any) who or which have been notified; any actions taken by the registered person as a result of the matter and; must be made or confirmed in writing. (Regulation 40 (4)(e) (5)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(b)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that Ofsted is notified of all serious incidents without delay.	18 August 2024
Subject to paragraph (6), the registered person must establish a procedure for considering complaints made by or on behalf of children. The registered person must ensure that a record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of any investigation. (Regulation 39 (1) (3) (5))	18 August 2024

The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— understand the barriers to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child to overcome any such barriers; promote opportunities for each child to learn informally; maintain regular contact with each child’s education and training provider, including engaging with the provider and the placing authority to support the child’s education and training and to maximise the child’s achievement; help a child who is excluded from school, or who is of compulsory school age but not attending school, to access educational and training support throughout the period of exclusion or non-attendance and to return to school as soon as possible. (Regulation 8 (1) (2)(iii)(v)(vi)(viii)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that there are structured boundaries and routines in place to enable children to fully engage in education. Additionally, when children are not in full-time education, they should be supported and encouraged to engage in educational activities.	18 August 2024
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*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children are provided with a nurturing environment that is welcoming and supportive and meets their basic day-to-day needs, including personalising their bedrooms and keeping them clean and tidy. In particular, damage to the property should be repaired in a timely manner. ('Guide to the Children’s Home Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that staff help children to prepare for any moves to or from the home. This includes supporting children to develop emotional and mental resilience to cope with new children moving into the home. ('Guide to the

Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 17, paragraph 3.27).

- The registered person should ensure that children are offered a wide range of activities both inside and outside the home and are encouraged to participate in those activities. Staff should support children to take part in leisure activities. ('Guide to the Children's Home Regulations, including the quality standards', page 31, paragraph 6.5)
- The registered person should ensure that they make suitable arrangement to manage, administer and dispose of any medication. When children self-administer prescribed medication, the registered person should ensure the suitable storage of this medication, to protect other children living in the home. ('Guide to the Children's Home Regulations, including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.15)
- The registered person should ensure that any consequences used to address poor behaviour should be restorative in nature, to help children recognise the impact of their behaviour on themselves, other children, the staff caring for them or the wider community. ('Guide to the Children's Home Regulations, including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.38)

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: 2738398

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Northridge Care Group Limited

Registered provider address: Richard House, 9 Winckley Square, Preston, Lancashire PR1 3HP

Responsible individual: Michelle Donaghey

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Leanne Carr, Social Care Inspector
Lisa Mulcahy, Regulatory Inspection Manager

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