

2785671

Registered provider: City of York Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is operated by a local authority. The service operates across two settings. It provides care for up to 6 children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

At the time of the inspection, 4 children were living across both settings. Three children were spoken with.

There are temporary management arrangements in place, but currently the home has no registered manager.

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 April 2026

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account

requires improvement to be good

How well children and young people are helped and protected

requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

requires improvement to be good

The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 4 June 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
04/06/2025	Full	Good
14/01/2025	Full	Inadequate

Summary of findings

The home offers strong relationships between staff and children, clinical input and effective multi-agency working. However, weaknesses in daily routines, safeguarding oversight and leadership mean children do not receive consistently safe or stable care. Staffing shortages and reliance on agency workers disrupt continuity and undermine the relationship-based model. A serious safeguarding incident, inconsistent incident reporting and gaps in monitoring highlight ineffective oversight. Although the interim manager provides supportive and positive leadership, these strengths have not addressed the shortfalls. Overall, the home requires improvements to be good.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Children do not experience a consistent daily structure. This is particularly evident during education hours, when children's routines are unclear and expectations are not firmly established. As a result, children do not always receive the support that they need to engage in learning or to develop healthy daily routines. The inconsistency in daily planning limits the progress children could otherwise make.

Some children report that some incidents in the home draw staff attention away from them. When this occurs, staff time and resources are disproportionately focused on managing incidents rather than meeting the day-to-day needs of all children. This has had a negative impact on the quality of care and the overall experience for some children, who feel overlooked at times.

Despite these shortfalls, relationships between staff and children are a clear strength of the home and form the foundation of the support provided. Children benefit from trusting relationships that enable staff to manage risk effectively and respond to their complex needs in a planned and considered way. Children consistently report that they enjoy living in the home, and there is evidence of continuity in their care.

The home benefits from strong in-house clinical expertise. The clinical psychologist provides direct therapeutic support to children and offers regular guidance to staff, including specialist input relating to substance use and associated behaviours. As a result, staff have an enhanced understanding of children's needs and are better equipped to provide informed and therapeutic responses.

Multi-agency working is a further strength. Information sharing between professionals is effective, particularly in relation to risks of exploitation. The presence of an in-house police officer supports timely decision-making and coordinated safeguarding responses. These partnerships contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of children's risks and needs.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

A significant safeguarding incident occurred involving two children, which has had a considerable and lasting impact on their lives. Although the incident was unpredictable, it was avoidable. Weaknesses in staff supervision and oversight of children meant that opportunities to prevent the incident were missed. This shortfall demonstrates that safeguarding arrangements are not consistently effective.

Incident reporting lacks consistency and does not always provide a clear or comprehensive account of events. Some reports do not contain sufficient detail to support a full understanding of what occurred or how staff responded. In addition, there are delays between incidents taking place and follow up conversations with staff being completed. These gaps reduce transparency and hinder the home's ability to learn from incidents or fully understand children's experiences. As a result, important aspects of children's care journeys are not always captured.

Despite these shortfalls, staff have a good understanding of children's individual risks and respond appropriately when concerns arise. Staff follow safety plans for high-risk issues, including child sexual exploitation and criminal exploitation, and they implement missing-from-care protocols when required. Although children often decline to engage in return-home interviews with external professionals, these are consistently offered in line with statutory guidance.

Staff use their relationships with children to hold meaningful, personalised conversations about risks and safety. These interactions are warm, genuine and demonstrate staff's concern for children's wellbeing. While levels of risk remain high for some children, staff are persistent in their efforts to educate, guide and reduce harm. Their commitment to maintaining dialogue, even when progress is slow, is a strength.

Allegations and complaints are taken seriously and acted upon promptly. The manager seeks advice from relevant safeguarding professionals and ensures that records are detailed and accurate. Children are updated on outcomes in a timely manner, helping to reduce anxiety and prevent unnecessary distress.

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

Staffing levels in the home are not sufficient to meet the high-risk needs of the children. Gaps in staffing have resulted in a reliance on agency workers, which undermines the relationship-based practice that is central to the home's model of care. This reliance disrupts continuity for children and weakens the stability of the professional network around them. Both staff and children report that frequent changes in agency staff and the limitations to what agency staff are permitted to do make it difficult to build and sustain meaningful relationships. As a result, some children do not experience the consistent professional support they need to make sustained progress.

There are significant gaps in the home's records and paperwork. Missing safeguarding reports and the absence of managerial evaluation on incidents highlight that monitoring and auditing systems are ineffective. These weaknesses limit the ability of leaders and managers to identify patterns, address concerns promptly and drive improvement in practice.

Although the organisation and the home have a training plan in place, staff have identified gaps in their training that directly affect their ability to fully understand and respond to children's needs. One child's complex and high-risk drug use, and another child's communication needs, have been highlighted as areas where staff require further training and guidance. These gaps reduce staff confidence and limit their capacity to provide consistently informed care.

The interim manager has provided clear and steady leadership during a challenging and extended period of instability. Professionals speak highly of them and describe them as 'excellent'. The interim manager has developed positive working relationships with external agencies, advocates strongly for children's needs and challenges other professionals when necessary. Staff feel supported by the interim manager and value their presence. The interim manager has a clear understanding of the home's strengths and weaknesses. However, due to the short timescales of their interim role, they have not had the time and space to prevent the shortfalls identified or implement the changes required to improve practice.

Supervision sessions for staff and team meetings are a strength of the home. Staff benefit from open, reflective discussions that capture their concerns honestly and receive supportive, child-focused responses from supervisors. Team meetings are similarly child-centred and effective. The clinical psychologist plays an important role in both forums, offering specialist insight and supporting staff to understand and respond to children's needs. External professionals are also routinely involved to enhance staff knowledge and practice.

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; 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; 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)(iii)(iv)(v)(b))	23 July 2026
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—	23 July 2026

ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(d)(h))	
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home. (Regulation 14 (1)(a))	23 July 2026

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that staff gain skills that enable them to actively support each child. In particular, ensure that staff receive training relevant to the individual needs of each children. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 52, paragraph 10.5)

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: 2785671

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: City Of York Council

Registered provider address: West Offices, Station Rise, York YO1 6GA

Responsible individual: Michael Cavan

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Deirdre Silkstone, Social Care Inspector (lead)
Shaun Martin, Social Care Inspector

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