

2806617

Registered provider: Northumberland County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is operated and managed by a local authority. It provides care for up to four children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

There were three children living in the home at the time of the inspection.

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 January 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: not previously inspected

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The home opened in September 2024 and this is its first inspection.

Staff help children to prepare to move into the home. There are detailed plans to ensure that children are well supported. Staff take the children on activities and begin building relationships with them before they move in. This helps children to feel more familiar with their new surroundings.

Staff work closely with education professionals to encourage children to attend school and prepare them for learning. When children are having a difficult time, staff offer extra reassurance to help children engage in school. There are regular meetings with an education psychologist to discuss the needs and progress of children. This collaborative working contributes to children making progress from their starting points.

Staff support the children to attend their routine health appointments and children are registered with services. Where children need specialist support, staff ensure that they have access to professionals such as therapists. Children's health needs are met and staff ensure that they receive the help and support they need.

Children are encouraged to try a wide variety of activities. These include football, swimming, baking and movie nights. These are tailored to the children's likes and interests. Staff support the children to attend planned sessions and will also participate where appropriate. This helps the children to build relationships with staff and their peers while also helping them to explore their interests and talents.

The children's bedrooms require repairs and redecoration. There is damage to walls and wardrobes have broken doors. Furthermore, there has been damage to the chairs in the home's dining room. This impacts on the how homely the environment is for children. Action was taken during the inspection to make some repairs, with plans to replace the broken furniture.

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

Children's risk assessments clearly outline the individual risks to children and how staff can mitigate those risks. The assessments are colour-coded to demonstrate the likelihood and severity of harm so that staff can quickly understand what poses the most risk. This also gives a clear indication of progress when the risks to children reduce. Staff are familiar with what poses a risk of harm to each child and follow the plans that are in place to reduce that risk. Children say they have staff they can trust and that they feel safe.

Children sometimes go missing from the home. When this happens, staff follow the children's plans and search known locations and the local area. The police are informed if

the risks to children mean that their support is needed to find them. The actions of staff have been effective in helping children to return safely to the home.

Staff support children to better understand their own risks and behaviours through targeted key-work sessions. These sessions help children to explore subjects such as safe relationships and vaping as well as their feelings and actions. Staff use a range of resources to support children to learn about and reflect on their emotions and behaviours. This helps children to make better choices and develop their ability to keep themselves safer.

Staff only use physical intervention when it is necessary to safeguard children. The manager has oversight of all restraints to ensure that their use is proportionate and effective in supporting children. Staff are not always provided with the opportunity to have discussions about incidents involving children being held. This is a missed opportunity to reflect on practice and learn lessons for improvement.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is managed by a suitably experienced and qualified registered manager. The manager leads by example and shows high aspirations for children. There is a strong team spirit among staff. The staff team is stable and they are motivated to do what is in children's best interests.

Staff participate in monthly supervision with their line manager. This gives staff the time and space to discuss each child. However, the recording does not consistently include reflective discussions about practice. This could mean that valuable opportunities to review individual practice are missed.

Team meetings take place regularly and are well attended. In addition, there are fortnightly case management meetings with a psychologist. This provides staff with the chance for group reflection on their practice and the impact for children. This also allows staff to develop their understanding of the children's needs and experiences.

Staff have developed good working relationships with partner agencies. The manager and staff work proactively with professionals to ensure children's needs are met. Professionals speak positively about the manager and staff team. There is good communication and a strong focus on building effective working relationships.

Staff complete core training and are either suitably qualified or working towards this. Staff follow an induction programme of training. However, an error on the training matrix means some staff have not completed the correct safeguarding training.

The manager's monitoring system has not been successful in identifying some shortfalls in practice. For example, the staff's use of consequences to help manage children's

behaviours was not effective in supporting them to learn appropriate ways of expressing themselves. This hinders the progress that children are making.

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 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— use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(h))	28 February 2025

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that records of restraint are kept, and should enable the registered person and staff to review the use of control, discipline and restraint to identify effective practice and respond promptly where any issues or trends of concern emerge. The review should provide the opportunity for amending practice to ensure it meets the needs of each child. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.59)
- The registered person should have systems in place so that all staff, including the manager, receive supervision of their practice from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional, which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2)

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: 2806617

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Northumberland County Council

Registered provider address: County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 2EF

Responsible individual: Adam Hall

Registered manager: Eileen Gray

Inspector

Lisa Gordon, Social Care Inspector

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