

SC030967

Registered provider: Hartlepool Borough 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. It provides short breaks and long-term residential placements for children with learning disabilities.

At the time of this inspection, two children were living at the home on a long-term basis, and four children were having short breaks.

The manager registered with Ofsted in December 2025.

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 January 2026

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: 18 February 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/02/2025	Full	Outstanding
12/03/2024	Full	Good
22/11/2022	Full	Outstanding
08/06/2021	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children are making progress in all areas of their lives and are supported by staff who meet their individual needs. Some children have made good progress developing their own ways of communicating. Another child has made progress managing their own personal care and now carries out some tasks independently. This helps children to develop a sense of dignified autonomy.

Children are encouraged to develop positive and meaningful relationships with staff, peers and loved ones. When children enjoy spending time with their peers, staff take them on activities together to further develop friendships. Children are confident in expressing their wishes and feelings with staff. Staff prioritise listening to children and keep them at the centre of their practice.

Children are well supported to attend education. In some cases, this has led to attendance improving. When children have difficulties in attending school, staff are patient and sensitive to each child's needs. One professional said that a child has made good progress in their learning because of the consistent support they receive from staff at the home.

When changes occur in children's lives, staff work closely with children to help them make sense and understand. Staff use resources suited to the needs of each child, including signing, social stories, images and verbal communication. This helps to prepare children and lessen any negative impact on their wellbeing. One child's parent required a hospital stay, and the child needed to stay with extended family. Staff supported the child and family to ensure that they were prepared for this change, and the child was appropriately cared for. For another child, staff arranged an increase in family time over the holiday period, which enabled the child to spend quality time with their family at an important time.

Staff support children with any cultural and identity needs. This includes celebrating important events and enabling children to learn about their culture through their first language and preferred form of communication. This helps children to develop their identity and sense of individuality.

Children are encouraged to attend various activities inside and outside the home. This enables them to develop new skills, socialise and have fun. Examples include days out to the beach, bowling and trips to the park.

The manager reports any upkeep issues in the home through the provider's maintenance team. However, repair work is not carried out in a timely manner. The children's shower room has been out of use for several months. Furthermore, some areas of the home are unclean, including windows and doors. Plaster and paintwork are coming away from

some walls, and unused screws have been left in children's walls. This affects the homeliness of the environment and children's sense of belonging.

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

When risks increase in the home, difficult decisions are sometimes made to promote children's safety. While this has resulted in some children being unable to access the service temporarily, alternative support was offered to children to maintain consistency and safety in their care.

Sometimes, children become distressed. Staff use various strategies to calm children and de-escalate potentially difficult situations. On occasions, children need to be held to keep everyone safe. Staff are mindful of children's dignity and manage this sensitively. Holds are used proportionately and recorded accurately.

When children make allegations, they are not investigated effectively by leaders and managers. While information is shared with partner agencies, there is no follow up to the concerns raised. As a result, there is no reflection or outcome of the allegation. This means that allegations are not fully evaluated and potential risks remain unknown.

Not all children's files contain up-to-date information from partner agencies. Personalised risk assessments and care plans are in place, which are reviewed regularly. However, records do not detail how staff are to achieve positive outcomes for children. In addition, some information is unnecessarily duplicated in children's plans.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The recent change in the home's leadership has been well managed with minimal effect. Staff feel well supported and say that the new manager has an open-door policy. Senior leaders visit the home regularly, offering further support to the staff and managers. One staff member commented that they 'love' working at the home and said, 'It doesn't at all feel like coming to work.'

The manager drives a committed and motivated culture in the home and has a strong presence. The manager knows the children well and understands their individual needs. The manager communicates effectively with all children, using their preferred method of communication. This helps to ensure that children's voices are heard and understood. The manager ensures that children's meetings take place regularly to further ensure that children's wishes are captured and responded to.

The children benefit from a core staff team, with some working at the home for many years. When there are vacancies, the manager is active in ensuring that these are filled promptly. On occasions, agency staff have been used. This occurred during an isolated period to support a particular child with complex needs.

Professionals said that communication with the home is positive and the staff and managers are proactive in sharing information. This has led to effective partnerships with

other professionals, meaning that children benefit from a well-coordinated multi-agency approach.

Leaders and managers know the home's strengths and areas for development. There is an openness to learn and reflect on the quality of care provided to children. The manager is keen to ensure that staff have the necessary skills to meet children's needs, and a full week of training is provided to all staff. This also provides an opportunity for the team of staff to build rapport and develop relationships with one another.

Not all children's records contain information that reflects their experiences and time spent at the home. This means the home does not always hold accurate information. This could be problematic if a child asked to access their records either now or in the future. The manager has not identified this as part of their monitoring and has therefore not addressed this with staff.

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, 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
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))	4 March 2026
The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— provide to children living in the home the physical necessities they need in order to live there comfortably; ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child; and enable each child to participate in the daily life of the home. (Regulation 6 (2)(b)(vii)(c)(i)(ii))	4 March 2026

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. Children's plans should include details of the steps the home will take to manage any assessed risks on a day-to-day basis. ('Guide to the Children's Home Regulations, including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)
- 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. Children's information should be recorded in a way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. Information about the child must

always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the Children's Home 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: SC030967

Provision sub-type: Children's home

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

Responsible individual: Laura Gough

Registered manager: Samantha Gustavson

Inspectors

Kerry Chater, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Laura Roberts, Social Care Inspector

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