

SC033642

Registered provider: Newcastle City Council

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home provides care for up to six children with social and emotional difficulties and learning difficulties and with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

There were two children living in the home at the time of the inspection. They were both spoken to by the inspector.

The home has been without a registered manager since June 2023.

Inspection date: 11 April 2024

Dates of last inspection: 11 and 12 July 2023

Judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Information about this inspection

At this inspection, the inspector evaluated:

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

Inspectors have 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

No serious or widespread concerns were identified in relation to the care or protection of children during this assurance inspection.

This inspection took place due to concerns raised about a lack of care planning for the children.

Children have clear plans in which will help to secure their futures. Although there has been some delay in progressing these plans, the care team, including the home's staff, has advocated strongly on behalf of the children. One child has recently moved into nearby independent accommodation, and another child is due to move imminently into their own accommodation. A third child is awaiting the completion of assessments to determine what support they require when they move out of the home.

Children say that they feel well supported by the staff. When children contact the staff to ask for help, staff respond quickly. This helps to keep children safer and helps them to feel that the staff care about them. Staff spend quality time with the children both inside and outside of the home. However, when children use bad language excessively, staff do not help the children to understand how this can be socially unacceptable. This limits children's ability to learn acceptable social boundaries.

Children are cared for by a consistent staff team. Core staff members accept additional shifts to help to support this. The provider also uses a core group of sessional workers to help maintain this continuity of care for children. This also helps to ensure that children are cared for by adults who know them well.

Children attend education and access part-time employment. One child is a volunteer at a local gym. This helps to give children a sense of purpose and achievement.

Children say that they are unhappy with the poor condition of the home. One child's bedroom drawers are significantly damaged. Another child said that they would spend more time in the home if it was nicely decorated and furnished. One child has volunteered to redecorate if the necessary equipment can be purchased. This demonstrates children are invested in their home and want to create a homely environment.

Several health and safety risks were identified during this inspection. For example, a toaster was six months' overdue for safety testing. The registered person therefore cannot be assured that the staff are taking all the necessary steps to help to keep children safe in the home.

Children's risk assessments are not up-to-date and do not contain accurate information. They do not support the staff to understand how to manage children's risks and how to help to improve children's safety. This results in an inconsistent approach by staff who are not consistently following procedures and processes.

Staff do not always check that children are safe and well when incidents happen in the community. This limits the staff's ability to understand the contextual safeguarding risks that children face. For example, staff did not recognise that an adult had committed a crime against a child. This meant that staff did not follow the necessary processes to help to keep children safe, such as supporting the child to contact the police. Therefore, staff cannot help children to understand about what acceptable behaviour towards them is. This also prevents children from making a complaint when incidents happen.

Staff complete room searches only when necessary. These help to improve children's safety. However, children are not supported to understand the reason for these searches. This prevents children from being helped to understand that the process is because the staff care about them.

Consequences are also only issued when necessary, but they are not restorative in nature. This limits children from learning about the impact that their behaviour has on others. This also results in consequences being ineffective.

Staff rarely need to use physical interventions to help to keep children and others safe. There has been one incident of a child being guided and held since the previous inspection. This is because the staff understand the emotional needs of the children well.

Children who return after being reported as missing from home do not always have the opportunity to speak to someone independently about their experience. This is because the registered person does not escalate this request to the child's local authority social worker. This means opportunities are missed to obtain valuable information which may help to improve a child's safety.

CCTV remains in place on the outside of the property. There is also an alarm which is in use constantly on one of the main front doors. There has been no review of the need for these surveillance devices since it was raised at the previous inspection. This means that children may be exposed to unnecessary monitoring. The registered person does not have signed consent from the children's placing authority to agree for staff to monitor the children in this way.

Ofsted is not assured that the registered person has notified the regulator of all notifiable events. Ofsted was subsequently informed, although there was a significant delay. The notification also lacked crucial information about the incident, such as the child having been assaulted. This prevents Ofsted from being satisfied that the staff are taking the necessary steps to help to keep children safe.

Several records, such as consequences logs, room search logs, and the physical intervention record have no management oversight. Staff have also not had supervision in line with the provider's policy. This prevents the registered person from being assured that staff are well supported and are following the necessary procedures to help to keep children safe.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/0/2023	Full	Good
25/05/2022	Full	Good
28/09/2021	Full	Good
06/07/2021	Full	Inadequate
16/10/2019	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; 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; 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; and 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)(v)(vi)(vii)(b)(d)(e))	22 May 2024

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 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— research and developments in relation to the ways in which the needs of children are best met; and 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. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(c)(f)(g)(i)(ii)(h))	22 May 2024
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation; an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious; there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there;	22 May 2024

a child protection enquiry involving a child — is instigated; or concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry); or 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; and any actions taken by the registered person as a result of the matter; and must be made or confirmed in writing. (Regulation 40 (4)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e) (5)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(b))	
The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children’s home’s overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children’s needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff— provide to children living in the home the physical necessities they need in order to live there comfortably; provide to children personal items that are appropriate for their age and understanding; ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child.	22 May 2024

(Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b)(2)(b)(vii)(viii)(c)(i)) This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	
The registered person may only use devices for the monitoring or surveillance of children if— the monitoring or surveillance is for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child concerned, or other children; the child’s placing authority consents in writing to the monitoring or surveillance; so far as reasonably practicable in the light of the child’s age and understanding, the child is informed in advance of the intention to do the monitoring or surveillance; and the monitoring or surveillance is no more intrusive than necessary, having regard to the child’s need for privacy. (Regulation 24 (1)(a)(b)(c)(d))	22 May 2024

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that positive behaviour and relationships are reinforced, praised and encouraged; poor behaviour (including the use of bad language) should be challenged and discussed. ('Guide to the Children's Home Regulations, including the quality standards', page 39, paragraph 8.11)
- The registered provider should ensure that a child's bedroom should not generally be entered without their permission. Usually, rooms should only be searched if the child has been informed or asked for their permission. Immediate searching may be necessary where there are reasonable grounds for believing that there is a risk to the child's or another person's safety or well-being. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards', page 16, paragraph 3.20). This recommendation was raised at the last inspection and is restated.
- The registered person should ensure that when a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority must provide an opportunity for the child to have an independent return home interview. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30). This recommendation was raised at the last inspection and is restated.
- 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 and the wider community. ('Guide to the Children's Home Regulations, including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.38)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC033642

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Newcastle City Council

Registered provider address: Newcastle Civic Centre, Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne, Tyne and Wear NE1 8QH

Responsible individual: Liz Spaven

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Julia Hagan, Social Care Inspector

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