

SC034083

Registered provider: Cumbria County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority owned home is registered for six children who have emotional, behavioural and/or learning difficulties. The statement of purpose details the age range of children as being from 12 to 17 years.

The registered manager has considerable experience and is suitably qualified. The registered manager has been in post since before 2007, when the regulation of the home became the responsibility of Ofsted.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 March 2022

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: 10 October 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/10/2018	Full	Good
20/12/2017	Full	Good
07/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
13/12/2016	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The home has experienced a long period of stability. Several children have in the last year successfully moved on from the home to live independently after several years living at the home.

Currently, staff are caring for a complex group of children, some of whom are dealing with many personal challenges. Due to several of the children being unsettled, this has led to an increase in incidents in recent weeks prior to this inspection.

Staff have been sensitive and supportive of children's emotional well-being and have persevered in providing them with a high quality of care and support. Children are encouraged to participate in their plans and to contribute their views and wishes. Children have a voice in this home.

Several children have come to the home with significant gaps in their education and struggle to engage with mainstream school. However, staff are proactive and work cooperatively with the education coordinator in encouraging and searching out alternative opportunities to re-engage and interest them in their learning.

Staff are ambitious for children and work closely with several schools and alternative education providers to ensure that children can gain formal qualifications that will help them ultimately to move on, such as to college or local apprenticeships.

Children's routine healthcare needs are well understood and catered for. Children are encouraged to follow healthy lifestyles, enjoying a healthy diet and regular exercise. However, some children have engaged in the misuse of alcohol and other harmful substances. Staff have been proactive in seeking other professional agencies to assist them in offering comprehensive guidance and support.

Despite ongoing maintenance to the home, the home is looking rather tired and dated. The home's dining and living area appears very homely, however this homeliness is not reflected throughout the property. The kitchen is said to be locked at night as children go to bed. This is institutional practice and not based on any specific risk assessment aimed at safeguarding the children.

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

Children say they feel safe in this home and understand their personal vulnerabilities when they are out in the community. Staff have fostered positive relationships with community policing and local businesses to promote children's safety. These relationships have been particularly effective in response to incidents that have occurred within the home.

Such incidents involving children have resulted in damage to property and police being called to assist staff due to challenging and antisocial behaviour towards staff which the home has not experienced for many years. These incidents have been fuelled by alcohol and other substances acquired in the local community. The home has responded swiftly in dealing with these incidents and making immediate arrangements to safeguard all children. This has included providing some respite for two children that has enabled staff to effectively work towards re-stabilising relationships within the home.

Children and staff mostly share very positive and productive relationships. Staff provide children with clear and consistent boundaries. This enables children to know what is expected of them and help recognise when their behaviour falls short of this.

Staff are skilled and experienced in de-escalating most situations without the need for police intervention or the use of restraint. There has not been any use of restraint by staff in the home since the last inspection. This lessens the likelihood of children suffering accidental physical harm.

Some children's records indicate that sanctions have been used to address unacceptable behaviour. However, despite being noted in children's records, these have not been routinely recognised or recorded as regulation requires. A requirement is made to deal with this shortfall.

Children do on occasion go missing from this home, but the incidence is low and declines over time. Staff respond quickly when children do go missing and follow procedure and protocol to ensure children safe and early return to the home. Children benefit from the availability of independent advocates to speak to on their return as well as staff.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is led by a well-qualified and experienced registered manager, supported by three assistant managers. This management team is a real strength within this home, providing consistent management and care.

Staff feel well supported and work well together. They share a good understanding of the children living at the home, their needs, progress, and experiences. Staff and managers work in close cooperation with social workers and other relevant professionals to ensure that the home promotes effective working together practice.

The home is performing in accordance with its statement of purpose. Staff are ambitious for children and are committed that they should reach their fullest potential.

Regular supervision enables staff to reflect on their practice and the progress children are making in the home. Staff value their opportunities for personal development, participating regularly in online training and attending training events as government restrictions have allowed.

Arrangements for the home's internal and external scrutiny are good. Regular monitoring and reporting are successful in maintaining good practice and informing the home's development planning.

The home generally shows a good commitment to promoting transparency with Ofsted, ensuring that notifications are made and sent to Ofsted and other relevant parties when serious incidents occur. However, since the last inspection some notifications have been delayed in reaching Ofsted and fell short in meeting the 24-hour timescale.

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
The registered person must ensure that— within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes— the name of the child; details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure; the date, time and location of the use of the measure; a description of the measure and its duration; details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure; the name of the person who used the measure ("the user"), and of any other person present when the measure was used; the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and a description of any injury to the child or any other person, and any medical treatment administered, as a result of the measure; within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and	23 May 2022

within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(viii)(b)(i)(ii)(c)(iv))	
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; 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. (Regulation 40 (4)(a)(b)(c)(d)(i)(ii)(e))	23 May 2022

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the children's home is a homely environment that complies with the relevant health and safety legislation, and as far as possible maintained the domestic rather than institutional impression. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that just as in a family home, children should be able to access all shared areas of their home unless there are specific reasons why this would not meet the child's needs. Any decisions to limit the child's access to any area of the home must only be made where this is intended to safeguard the child's welfare. This should be informed by a rigorous assessment of children's individual needs, be properly recorded, and kept under regular review. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15 paragraph 3.10)

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: SC034083

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Cumbria County Council, Cumbria House, 117
Botchergate, Carlisle CA1 1RD

Responsible individual: Lynn Berryman

Registered manager: Caroline Reid

Inspector

Gillian Walters, Social Care Inspector

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