

SC398253

Registered provider: North Lakes Children's Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to five children who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties, or learning disabilities. The home is part of a private organisation.

Inspection dates: 10 to 11 May 2017

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 8 February 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Declined in effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because

- Children benefit from a good level of care provided by an experienced and committed staffing team.

- Staff are highly proactive in encouraging young people to access positive and structured activities in their free time.
- All young people are engaging in full-time education and have made good progress in both attendance and attainment.
- Healthcare planning is excellent. A dedicated healthcare practitioner ensures that young people make positive progress in their physical health and emotional well-being outcomes.
- Young people are supported to have regular and meaningful contact with their families and people who are important to them, which promotes a strong sense of belonging.
- Risk assessments are robust and clear safeguarding plans underpin them to ensure that young people are becoming increasingly safe.
- Incidents of challenging behaviour have been well managed and staff have sought appropriate assistance from other agencies to minimise risk of harm wherever possible.
- Placing authorities and other partners have provided positive feedback about this service.
- Following a period of instability in the home, leaders have demonstrated transparency and reflective practice. This has resulted in excellent progress in improving the service provided to young people.

The children's home's areas for development

- Although the staff are skilled and experienced, some have not completed their level 3 diploma in residential childcare.
- The manager's review of the quality of care provided for children does not demonstrate that the opinions of stakeholders have been considered.
- Leaders and staff could place more emphasis on celebrating and rewarding the achievements of young people.
- Record-keeping practice could be rationalised to improve accessibility. Some handwritten records lack clarity.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
08/02/2017	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
06/09/2016	Full	Good
16/03/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
12/01/2016	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, 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
32: Fitness of workers (3) The requirements are that- (b) the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform; (4) For the purposes of paragraph (3)(b), an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification if, by the relevant date, the individual has attained- (a) the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England); or (b) a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the Level 3 Diploma. (Regulation 32(3)(b)(4))	13/11/2017
45: Review of quality of care (2) In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating- (a) the quality of care provided for children; (b) the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and (c) any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. (5) The system referred to in paragraph (2) must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff. (Regulation 45(2)(a)(b)(c)(5))	13/11/2017

Recommendations

- Children's home staff should help children looked after to understand the role of an independent advocate and how they can access one. Staff should regularly remind children of their right to access an independent advocate concerning any matter relevant to the child's status as looked after.
(‘Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 23, paragraph 4.17)

- The home should recognise and celebrate the achievements of their children. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 31, paragraph 6.7)
- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The home is a well-maintained and welcoming environment with lots of space for young people to relax and socialise with each other. This promotes the development of positive and healthy relationships. Routines are structured and nurturing, which provides stability and security for young people. Staff are highly proactive in facilitating a wide range of activities outside of the home. Young people enjoy outdoor pursuits, trampoline activities and spend time with peers in the community at local youth groups. The talents and interests of young people are strongly promoted. One young person spends time fishing and another is a regular visitor to a local ice rink.

Two young people have recently left the home. They were both exhibiting high levels of risk taking behaviour. Their transitions to other services were managed appropriately and in line with the plans that were made with their placing authorities. Staff ensured that they were well supported and that other young people adjusted well to the changing dynamic in the home. Young people describe staff as 'sound' and 'top dog'. They enjoy positive and strong relationships with experienced and dedicated carers.

All young people access full-time education. Their attendance levels are excellent and school reports show that they engage well in lessons. One young person was previously attending school sporadically for a few hours. He is now achieving a 95% full-time attendance record, which is excellent progress. School reports demonstrate attainment across core subjects. Staff are working hard to engage young people in homework activities and have incentivised young people to progress further in this area.

Healthcare is a real strength of this service. The organisation employs a dedicated professional who ensures that any physical or emotional health needs are prioritised and met. She liaises with specialist services, ensures that medication arrangements are robustly administrated, and regularly reviews and revises healthcare plans. She also provides training and support to staff in order to promote healthy eating and good physical health. She has been instrumental in ensuring that one young person has had specialist assessments designed to aid his neurological development. This has helped the placing authority to make suitable plans for appropriate care provision in the future. One independent reviewing officer described her as 'brilliant and on the ball'. One young person has made exceptional progress in developing his continence.

Young people are able to influence their day-to-day care experiences through regular consultation about menu choices, contact arrangements and planned activities. The complaints procedure and children's guide are promoted and accessible. One young person has historically had the support of a formal advocate, but has not recently accessed the service due to their geographical location. Staff should regularly remind young people that they have the right to advocacy services and that these services can be provided locally where necessary. A recommendation is made to address this matter.

Young people are making progress in learning skills to support their independence in adulthood. Staff facilitated a progressive plan to teach a young person to travel independently, which has had a positive effect on his confidence levels and self-esteem. Young people are supported and encouraged to reflect on and learn from difficult or risk-taking behaviour. There is insufficient evidence that positive behaviour is frequently celebrated and rewarded. Therefore, a recommendation is made to address this matter.

Staff promote meaningful and safe contact for all young people, with their families. This is facilitated in line with the placing authorities' plans. Young people are encouraged to develop friendships with peers, which increases their sense of belonging and enhances their emotional well-being.

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

Young people at the home report that they feel safe and well cared for. Risk assessments are individualised, detailed and robust. Comprehensive safeguarding plans, which outline the steps that staff must take to minimise risk, underpin any high-risk behaviour or other safety concerns. There have been incidents of very challenging behaviour which have been well managed. Staff have worked collaboratively with the police and other agencies to ensure that young people are safeguarded effectively. One police officer said, 'They have the balance right, they know when to report to us. They are proactive and ask for advice. They do not call us unnecessarily.' Leaders have worked with placing authorities to put effective, long-term plans in place, to keep young people safe.

Staff always attempt to de-escalate any challenging behaviour. On occasions where these interventions are inappropriate or ineffective, staff are trained to use methods of physical intervention. This method is a last resort. The manager provides sufficient scrutiny of the records to monitor and evaluate practice. He ensures that staff and young people are appropriately debriefed and supported. Incidents of this nature are reducing, which is positive progress.

On occasions where young people have been missing from the home or school, staff have immediately taken steps to locate them and have reported them missing, as outlined in the protocol. Independent return interviews have taken place to establish the reason why a young person has been missing and understand how they can be supported to prevent recurrence of this behaviour. These incidents are also reducing, which is, again, evidence of good progress.

The physical environment in the home is routinely checked for hazards and appropriate action is taken where necessary. All staff are provided with suitable safeguarding training and understand how to report concerns about the safety of a child.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is suitably qualified and has extensive experience of caring for young people. Since the last inspection, he has worked extremely hard to meet all of the requirements and recommendations that were made. He acknowledges fully that the service had a difficult period due to staff absences and the escalating behaviour of two young people. All staff members have now returned to work following unplanned and unavoidable absences. The manager worked effectively with placing authorities to ensure that plans were reviewed, and to secure successful transition plans to other services, for both young people. This has led to a much more stable and happy environment at the home.

Leaders have been effective in seeking the views of the staff team and young people to help inform the home's improvement plan. There is good evidence that robust action has been taken to improve the working environment for staff and the experiences and progress of young people. The service is meeting the aims and objectives outlined in the statement of purpose.

Supervision has taken place for all staff and the registered manager is receiving regular supervision from a senior leader in the organisation. Record-keeping practice has improved significantly and incidents are evaluated and debriefed in a timely manner. Contingency plans are in place to ensure that a designated person can review and debrief events in the absence of the registered manager. Some records are handwritten and lack clarity. In places, there is duplication in recording processes. This has the potential to create further difficulties for leaders in reviewing and monitoring outcomes for young people. A recommendation is made to address this matter.

Staff report that they are happy in their roles and feel that the setting is well managed. They have undertaken a variety of training to assist them in providing individualised care for young people. Some members of staff have worked at the home for over two years and have not yet completed the level 3 diploma in residential childcare. The manager's review of the quality of service is comprehensive; however, it does not sufficiently demonstrate that all stakeholders' views are considered within the process. Requirements have been made to address these matters.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: SC398253

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: North Lakes Children's Services Limited

Registered provider address: Rayrigg Show Rooms, Rayrigg Road, Windermere
LA23 3DN

Responsible individual: Paul Jenkinson

Registered manager: Michael Dodd

Inspector

Nicola Thomas: social care regulatory inspector

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