

SC398253

Registered provider: North Lakes Children's Service Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is part of a private organisation. The home provides care for up to five boys who experience social and emotional difficulties due to early childhood trauma or periods of disrupted care.

The home was registered with Ofsted in August 2009 and the manager registered in May 2019.

Four children were living at the home at the time of the inspection.

The inspector only inspected the social care provision at this site.

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 December 2024

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: 14 March 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/03/2024	Full	Good
07/02/2023	Full	Good
12/05/2021	Full	Good
09/05/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Most children have lived at the home for a considerable amount of time. A stable and experienced staff team provides consistent, child-centred and nurturing care which supports children to make progress at their own pace.

Most children are making good progress with their education and health. There is effective planning carried out by the team to consider how children's future moves can be best supported. Staff are building effective relationships with family members and professionals to help prepare children for their next steps.

One child's progress has been impacted by changes in their mental health. The child is provided with consistent care from staff who show patience and understanding. Staff advocate for the child to ensure that they get the assessments needed in a timely way. The manager is working with professionals to ensure that there is sufficient support in place for the child and to limit the impact on the other children living in the home.

Children attend one of the provider's two off-site schools. There is regular communication between the school and the home's staff to provide consistency for the children and to address any concerns as early as possible. The school provides additional emotional support to the children through sensory breaks, dog therapy and outdoor activities.

Children's health needs are well met. This is supported by the input of knowledgeable professionals, including the provider's nurse and therapist who know the children well. There have been significant improvements to children's health outcomes as a result. Timely referrals are made for additional help and support and appropriate challenge is made to ensure that delay is limited.

Children are supported to develop their interests with different activities and individualised holidays. Children's bedrooms are personalised and tailored to meet their individual needs, including items to support their health, sensory and learning needs.

The staff support for children's relationships with their family continues to be seen as a strength. Both family members and social workers recognise the efforts of the staff in supporting the development of these important connections.

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

Risk assessments provide clear, up-to-date information and strategies which reflect the changing concerns for children. The manager produces risk assessments to consider any individual activities for children. Staff have a good understanding of the impact of children's past experiences on their behaviours. Staff are vigilant when new risks are emerging to ensure that all children and staff remain safe in the home.

Risks for most children are reducing because of the ongoing work done by staff to help them to understand their behaviours. This work is creative and interactive to ensure that children understand the impact of their behaviours on themselves and others. One child explained how they have been able to recognise the changes in their own behaviours with the help of staff.

Children do not go missing from the home, which reflects the nurturing care provided. Physical intervention is rare. It is used proportionately to support children. Children's feedback and views are central to the follow-up process after an intervention is used. Staff manage situations well and keep clear records and chronologies so that patterns can be identified.

Allegations made by children are taken seriously. A recent allegation was handled well and there was effective partnership working with other agencies such as the police, the placing authority and local authority designated officer. Subsequent allegations made by the child have not been fully investigated in line with the company's policy but have been shared with the appropriate professionals. It is important that that all allegations are addressed to ensure that practices in the home remain safe.

Bedroom door alarms continue to be used in the home. This is risk-assessed and regularly reviewed. However, the reason for the door alarms is not always for the purposes of safeguarding children. The use of alarms is not clearly explained to children, which means that their views and rights are not fully considered and children have become used to alarms unnecessarily.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager is passionate about her role and is knowledgeable about the children in her care. She is a strong advocate for improving outcomes for children. The manager and her team have built positive working relationships with professionals and families.

A social worker for one child explained how the manager proactively challenges and escalates any concerns for children whose needs are first and foremost. She said, 'To say that the team is resilient and committed is an understatement.'

There is a stable team of staff in place who respond in a consistent way to the complex needs of the children in their care. Staff say they are well supported in their roles and feel part of a team. Feedback from staff shows how their input into children's care is valued and central to the progress being made.

Training for staff is tailored to meet the needs of the children in their care but is not all up to date. Refresher training on the provider's model of physical intervention is overdue for some staff. The training matrix used by the manager to track training is not effective.

Staff supervision and team meetings provide opportunities for staff to reflect with their supervisors and with each other. Monthly meetings involve the input of both clinical and health staff, meaning that staff have consistent professional involvement to support their practice and to increase their knowledge and understanding.

Staff recruitment practices are robust, ensuring that staff are safe to care for the children.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that any monitoring and surveillance used in the home is suitably risk assessed, including bedroom door alarms, and that arrangements are regularly reviewed to ensure that they are used for safeguarding purposes only. Children should understand the reasons for their use and be involved in the review. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 16, paragraph 3.16)
- The registered person should ensure that all staff are adequately trained in the principles of restraint and any restraint techniques appropriate to the needs of the children the home is set up to care for as defined in the home's statement of purpose. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.57)
- The registered person should ensure that children are listened to and enabled to report any allegations at the earliest opportunity. Staff should report any allegation of abuse immediately to a senior manager within the home. Any allegation of harm or abuse must be addressed in line with the home's child protection policy. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 44, paragraph 9.17)

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: SC398253

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: North Lakes Children's Service Limited

Registered provider address: Malvern View, Hanbury Road, Stoke Prior, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire B60 4AD

Responsible individual: Stacy Cooper

Registered manager: Jeanette Wilson

Inspector

Andrea Foreman, Social Care Inspector

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