

SC441553

Registered provider: North East Lincolnshire Council

Assurance inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

A local authority owns and manages this home. It provides care for up to five children who experience social and/or emotional difficulties and/or learning disabilities.

The manager was registered with Ofsted in October 2023.

Inspection date: 5 January 2023

Date of last inspection: 14 September 2022

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Information about this inspection

At these inspections, 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

We identified the following serious concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance inspection:

- A regulation set at the last inspection around the protection of children has not been met. The risks to children are not always identified and well managed.
- Children are not effectively supported by staff to manage their relationships to prevent them from harming each other.
- Staff do not always follow approved techniques when using physical intervention. Unapproved techniques risk causing harm to children and staff.
- On one occasion, safeguarding concerns were not reported immediately. This leaves children at risk of harm.
- The independent visitor's reports do not get to Ofsted on time. The reports do not meet regulation. This hinders Ofsted's oversight of the safety and well-being of children.
- The manager's six-monthly review of the quality of care does not provide for the feedback and opinions of the children about the home, its facilities and the quality of care that children receive.
- Some children are not accessing education. Others are not attending consistently.

The care of children

The children continue to have mixed experiences of living in this home. Some children have good relationships with staff. They do not like it when other children shout at staff or attempt to harm them. Living in this unsettled environment is not providing children with a consistently positive experience of care.

At times, the staff struggle to help children to manage their emotions positively. This results in children's behaviour impacting harmfully on other children. Some children encounter verbal, physical and racial abuse from other children. This negative experience affects children's physical and emotional well-being. Senior managers are taking steps to address children's placements and improve the dynamics of the home. This action is not happening quickly enough to prevent harm to the children.

Some children are doing well in education, and they have jobs as well. Other children are struggling to attend school. Ongoing efforts from staff to encourage educational attendance are not yet effective. When children are not in school, this affects their daily routine and some stay in their rooms for long periods of time. The lack of education and routine is not preparing children well for later life.

Work is ongoing to help the children to stop smoking. Support from specialist agencies is on offer. Smoking around the home is now being managed. Risks of smoking on the grounds and in the house have stopped.

A requirement around the poor condition of one child's bedroom has not been assessed at this inspection. The child remained in their room and access was not available. This requirement is repeated.

The safety of children

On one occasion, immediate action was not taken to assess the wider risks to children after a serious allegation was made. This lack of risk assessment leaves children vulnerable to harm. The lack of information leaves staff without clear direction to keep the children safe.

In relation to other incidents, some work has been done to improve risk assessments. Some children's individual risk assessments are updated after incidents. Nevertheless, staff are not always effectively following risk assessments to reduce the risk of harm to the children. This has resulted in a requirement from the last inspection being repeated.

The use of physical intervention is rare. A recent increase in staffing is helping to support the children in crisis. On the one occasion physical intervention was used, staff did not follow recognised behaviour management techniques. Using unrecognised physical holds places children and staff at risk of harm.

On one occasion, there was a delay in staff reporting a safety concern and following safeguarding procedures. Once it was reported to the registered manager, they took appropriate action.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

The manager registered with Ofsted in October 2022. She knows the areas of strength and areas that she needs to develop. The manager knows that children are not well matched. She understands that staff struggle to manage all children's complex needs. She escalates her concerns to senior managers, but actions to create positive change for the children are too slow.

The manager has taken steps to meet some of the requirements set at the last inspection. Requirements around efforts to improve children's health, fire safety and staff appraisals are met. Shortfalls at this inspection around risks have not all been identified or addressed through internal or external monitoring systems.

The independent visitor's reports are not sent to Ofsted on time. Late reports hinder the regulator's oversight of this service. Some of these reports do not provide clear opinion as to whether children's safety and well-being are promoted. This lack of information affects Ofsted's ability to monitor the care that children receive. It also

hinders the manager from being able to identify shortfalls and make improvements to the care of the children.

The manager completes six-monthly reviews of the care provided by the service. The report does not cover the feedback and opinions of children about their home, the facilities or their care. This is a missed opportunity to listen to children's views and make improvements.

The staff feel supported by the registered manager. A requirement set at the last inspection around staff receiving appraisals is met. Staff continue to have training to help them in their role. The management systems in place to monitor staff training have improved.

The manager continues to work well with other professionals. She is working alongside schools, social workers and specialist mental health services to help make sure that children receive the support that they need. The manager has good relationships with children's parents. She makes sure they feel welcome in the home and that they are included in their child's care planning.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/09/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
12/10/2021	Full	Good
12/02/2020	Full	Good
28/02/2019	Full	Outstanding

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 education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— help each child to achieve the child's education and training targets, as recorded in the child's relevant plans; and promote opportunities for each child to learn informally. (Regulation 8 (1)(2)(a)(i)(v))	26 February 2023
* 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; and manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iv))	26 February 2023
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—	26 February 2023

understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; 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. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(v)(d))	
Restraint in relation to a child must be necessary and proportionate. (Regulation 20 (2))	26 February 2023
The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month. The independent person must produce a report about a visit ("the independent person's report") which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether— children are effectively safeguarded; and the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being. The independent person must provide a copy of the independent person's report to— HMCI. (Regulation 44 (1) (4)(a)(b)(7)(a))	26 February 2023
In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating— the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. 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) (5))	26 February 2023

*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC441553

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: North East Lincolnshire Council

Registered provider address: Civic Offices, Knoll Street, Cleethorpes, Lincolnshire DN35 8LN

Responsible individual: John Branchflower

Registered manager: Kerry Graham

Inspector

Jamie Richardson, Social Care Inspector

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