

SC391993

Registered provider: St. Cuthbert's Care

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and managed by a private provider which has significant experience in providing services to children.

The home is registered to care for up to six children with emotional and/or social needs, and/or learning disabilities. Since the last inspection the home has not cared for any more than four children at one time. This is a conscious decision by the provider to prioritise the children's needs above achieving full home occupancy.

The experienced and suitably qualified manager has led the home for over four years and has been registered with Ofsted since 2020.

The inspector saw all four children during the inspection and received feedback from three.

Inspection dates: 26 and 27 February 2024

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

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

Date of last inspection: 6 September 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/09/2022	Full	Outstanding
22/07/2021	Full	Good
01/08/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good
24/07/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children are making progress because of the stability and nurturing care that they receive. Children live in the home for significant periods, some for a least three years and one for as long as seven years. This provides children with a strong sense of permanence and belonging.

Children develop meaningful and lasting relationships with staff. This is because the staff show that they are committed to the children and keep them at the centre of their practice. The staff are compassionate and determined to support the children to succeed. Children know they can trust and depend on the staff, particularly during difficult times.

Children's views are well-represented and respected. Staff gather children's opinions and encourage them to give feedback on their care, with less focus on formality and process and more on helping children to say what life is like in a way that best suits them. The staff use the feedback to shape the child's care. This helps children to feel empowered to influence their lives.

Children enjoy living with their pets who they love very much. When children want their own pet, the staff help the children achieve this goal. Staff support the child to prepare and then care for their animal when it arrives. Through these experiences, children develop a sense of ownership, responsibility, and ways to positively express emotions.

Children receive help to make progress in their education. The staff encourage children to value learning and enjoy school life. When children experience barriers to education, the staff and manager respond effectively, taking a sensitive and proactive approach. As a result, some children have returned after a long period of absence and others have achieved qualifications. This helps to improve children's outcomes.

Children are encouraged and supported to improve their health. The staff provide children with advice on living a healthy lifestyle and good self-care. The staff provide children with emotional and practical support to attend health appointments and follow medical advice. Where children need additional help, the staff are persistent and try different ways to assure the child that it is in their best interests. For some children, this has meant that they have attended medical appointments which have previously been avoided. This helps children's health needs to be identified and addressed.

Children are supported to develop family relationships and enjoy family time. The staff focus on family time being successful, so they provide extra support to children when they need it. Children are well prepared for sessions so that significant events, such as Christmas Day are a positive experience. The manager and staff help

children to repair some of their relationships and reconnect with people who they haven't seen for some time. This helps children to feel connected to the important people in their lives and maintain a significant aspect of their identity.

When making decisions about children's moves into the home, the manager gathers relevant information. The manager carries out an analysis of the child's needs to provide assurances that the home is suitable for the child to live in and that the staff can meet the child's needs well. When there are concerns about suitability, the manager confidently explains the reasons to help the child move to the right place. The manager is well supported by senior leaders in the decision-making process.

When children are preparing to move into the home, information sharing, and introductions are thorough. Children visit the home before their move and receive a warm welcome from the children already living there. Staff are well prepared for the child's arrival and attend relevant meetings with the child's network of professionals, and where appropriate family. This helps children settle well and have a positive beginning.

When children leave the home, the staff are considerate of the children's emotional needs and provide the necessary support. While the staff acknowledge when children feel a sense of sadness about moving on, the staff promote positive endings and happy goodbyes so that the child celebrates and looks forward to what is next. Children leave with memory books that display photos of significant events during their time living in the home. The books show children's growth and capture successes. They also sensitively reflect on difficult times in the child's life to remind the child how far they have come.

Children's care plans are brief and not aspirational. They are not detailed and do not provide a clear sense of the actions staff should take to meet the child's needs or how progress will be measured. In two examples, the child's placing authority plan was not on file and did not align with the home's care plan. This affects the quality of planning for children and may undermine opportunities to enhance children's progress.

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

The home has an excellent safeguarding culture which helps to protect children and increase their safety.

Risks to children have significantly reduced due to the high-quality support and intervention that they receive. The staff and manager confidently manage risk outside of the home, including when this is highly complex and challenging. They are proactive, and determined and work collaboratively with other agencies to assist in targeting individuals who pose a significant risk to children. One professional described the staff as 'instrumental' in significantly reducing the risks to a child and others in the community. This excellent practice has been recognised locally and shared with other agencies outside of the area to help improve services to children.

The manager and staff have an excellent understanding of the children's early life experiences and how these increase children's vulnerability and perception of danger. Children are supported to share how they are feeling and develop emotional resilience. The staff encourage children to talk about their wellbeing, such as mental health. Using children's insights, the staff develop strategies to support children and meet their individual needs. In one example, a child developed a mental health plan, setting out how being unwell might present and the unique ways that staff can respond.

The staff promote children's positive behaviour. The staff know the children well and use de-escalation to calm challenging situations. This means that children are not held by staff and there are no occasions that police are called to manage children's behaviour. Rewards and consequences are created individually for each child, and reviewed to ensure that they are effective.

The home is inviting and centred around the children. It has a relaxed atmosphere and gives a strong sense of a family home. The property is maintained to a very high standard with some beautiful features. There is plenty of space for the children to have fun, study and have meals together. Children benefit from the large outdoor space, particularly in the warmer weather and children's bedrooms are personalised to their liking. Throughout, the home is child-friendly and comfortable for everyone.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager is committed and focused on achieving good outcomes for all the children that they care for. The manager is very experienced and provides the home with stability and continuity. They lead the staff team well and in accordance with the company ethos and statement of purpose. This helps maintain good leadership in the home.

The manager is committed to the home's continuous development. The manager reviews the quality of children's care in a bi-monthly report, tracking the home's improvement and setting new actions. The manager has responded appropriately to the recommendations made at the previous inspection and those made by the regulation 44 independent visitor. This helps the quality of care for children to improve.

Senior leaders have a clear understanding of the way that the home operates, its strengths and areas of development. They regularly visit the home to see the children and staff to understand their experiences. Senior leaders use evaluations from their audits and observations to steer the home's development.

The stable staff team has not changed for two years. The staff are enthusiastic and motivated to provide the children with high standards of care. They are knowledgeable about the children's needs and have supported the children well through different stages of their development and life events. This has promoted the sense of children's stability.

The staff and manager receive regular and effective supervision that is focused on the children's needs and experiences. Supervision is recorded more effectively because of the new form which better captures information. The manager's supervision is carried out by the director of the company and is of good quality. Overall, supervision enables the manager and staff to reflect and informs practice with the children.

The manager makes child-centred decisions and advocates for the children to receive the services that they need from their placing local authority and other agencies. However, in three examples, although the manager raised issues, escalation to senior leaders did not happen quickly enough or not at all. This meant that children experienced some delays in receiving the services they needed.

Staff speak positively about the mixture of training opportunities, including workshops and team discussions, and how this benefits their practice. The manager ensures that staff receive additional training in accordance with children's needs. Although the staff team have completed a range of training, two staff have exceeded the time to complete the required qualification set out in the regulations. The manager has not tracked the progress of their studies thoroughly enough; therefore, a recommendation has been made to address this.

The quality of management oversight and scrutiny of children's records is not thorough. Some records were illegible, others lacked detail and there were two examples of the child's placing authority plan being out of date. The gaps identified were brought to the manager's attention during the inspection and immediate action was taken.

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

Recommendations

- Where the placing authority or another relevant person does not provide the input and services needed to meet a child's needs during their time in the home or in preparation for leaving the home, the home must challenge them to meet the child's needs (see regulations 5(c)). ('Guide to the Children's Home Regulations, including the quality standards', page 12, paragraph 2.8)
- The registered person should ensure that the children's plans are up to date, and detailed and form the basis of their care. The provider should ensure that the child's plan aligns with other plans such as the child's Education health Care Plan and the placing authority care plan. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 10, paragraph 2.1)
- The registered person must ensure that all staff in a care role, including external agency or bank staff, must have the qualification in regulation 32(4) within the relevant timescale listed in regulation 32(5). ('Guide to the Children's Home Regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.12)
- The registered person should be skilled in reviewing incidents. They are responsible for proactively implementing lessons learned and sustaining good practice. The registered person must ensure that all documents and records of children's daily experiences are scrutinised, and that action is taken if shortfalls are identified. ('Guide to the Children's Home Regulations including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)

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: SC391993

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: St. Cuthbert's Care

Registered provider address: St. Cuthbert's House, West Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE15 7PY

Responsible individual: Amanda Head

Registered manager: Amy Ward

Inspector

Catherine Heron, His Majesty's Inspector

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