

2623962

Registered provider: Durham County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and managed by a local authority. It is registered to provide care for up to three children who may experience social and/or emotional difficulties.

The manager and the service registered with Ofsted in March 2021.

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 March 2023

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

Date of last inspection: 12 July 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/07/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

There are positive relationships between the children and the staff. These stable relationships with trusted adults help children to develop a positive view of themselves.

The main model of care in the home is playfulness, acceptance, curiosity and empathy. This, combined with therapeutic parenting, is the main ethos in the home. The care provided aims to help children to overcome past trauma and neglect.

Progress is clear for the current children and their behaviours that involved risks have reduced. Previously, those with more complex needs did not have the same positive outcomes. Since that time, external training has increased staff's knowledge and improved the care provided. This ensures that the children have the therapeutic support they deserve.

Children have been able to return to education after lengthy periods of absence. Most children are engaged in alternative provisions that focus on their aspirations. For example, there are options to learn about mechanics or other vocations. This helps to prepare the children for independence and their next steps in life. Where children are not in education, staff make efforts to find the right arrangement for them. In the meantime, staff provide opportunities in the home to help with continued learning.

Health is supported with access to medical professionals, such as doctors. Specialist help is available as and when needed. A sleep clinic is being sourced to help children with sleep hygiene. Support for substance misuse from an external partner agency has helped children to stop misusing substances. This has improved their health and well-being. Issues such as vaping and cannabis misuse continue but have reduced. Staff have one-to-one sessions with children that are aimed at addressing ongoing worries and encouraging children to make better choices for themselves.

Children's views are regularly obtained. Children's meetings and one-to-one work are the forums to share views. Some children struggle to talk about their feelings. As an alternative, they can write about their thoughts instead. This flexible approach ensures that all children have an opportunity to say how they feel. This gives them a voice. What children think is important and valued by staff.

The home is relaxed and welcoming. The children treat it like a family home. There are plans for the large garden to include a sensory area and vegetable patch. There is a file with photos of shared activities in the office. This means that it is not freely accessible to children. It is important as children develop into adults that they can look back and remember their life.

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

The children say that they feel safe in the home. Individual risk management plans show the ongoing worries for the children. There are action plans for staff to follow to help minimise the risks to children. These are well understood by the staff, who support the children at times of crisis. The plans help to reduce and manage risks should they arise.

Children are supported to manage their behaviour and feelings in a safe way. Staff promote positive behaviour through de-escalation techniques, such as redirection. Physical intervention techniques are rarely used and are only used in the child's best interests. Staff have conversations with children after each incident, which helps the children to understand why the actions were necessary and to rebuild relationships.

The manager and staff follow child protection procedures. Records show a joined-up multi-agency response, which involves families when necessary. This includes the missing-from-home procedure, which all staff follow. Steps are taken to find children before reporting them missing to the police. Return home interviews are carried out with children and follow-up key-work sessions take place. Staff help children to understand why it is important to stay safe. There has been a substantial reduction in missing-from-care episodes since the last inspection.

Children know how to make complaints and with whom to speak. Complaints are logged and taken seriously. This helps children know that their views matter.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The manager and deputy aspire for the children and staff. Several projects developed by staff have been successful. There are plans to share these across the whole of the provider's service and with external partners. For example, there is a new sleep journal for children. This helps them to understand their own sleep behaviour and identify any help required. It also creates a visual aid for staff to understand attachment trauma for the children they work with.

There is a positive culture in the home and staff feel well supported. The manager has gone above and beyond to help staff. She ensures that they have what they need to fulfil their roles and provide the stable care that children need. There is encouragement for staff to learn and adapt. Supervision sessions, team meetings and appraisals regularly take place. Reflective discussions form an important part of the daily culture. This allows practice to evolve as children's needs change.

The manager has a clear idea about the strengths and weaknesses of the home. She looks for opportunities to improve the experiences for children. Children are at the centre of any changes made to the home, which ensures that they have what they deserve.

The home is visited monthly by an independent visitor, who produces a report which gives a holistic picture of the care children receive in-between inspections. However,

comments from parents, families and professionals are limited. External and internal views are important when considering areas for development.

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, the 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 an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month. When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the independent person— if they consent, to interview in private such of the children, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as the independent person requires. (Regulation 44 (1) (2)(a)) In particular, the manager and staff must help the independent visitor to obtain the views of parents, relatives and professionals during the monthly visits. The attempts made should be clearly reflected in the monthly report.	7 April 2023

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that all children have their own book or file which includes photos from shared activities and their time in the home as part of their life story. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 31, paragraph 6.7)

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: 2623962

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Durham County Council

Registered provider address: County Hall, Durham DH1 5UL

Responsible individual: Laura Caunce

Registered manager: Sharon Powch

Inspector

Miriam Dolman, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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