

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 run by a local authority. It provides care for up to three children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

At the time of the inspection, one child was living in the home, and they were spoken with.

The registered manager post has been vacant since July 2025. There is an interim manager overseeing the home.

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 October 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 11 March 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/03/2025	Full	Good
20/02/2024	Full	Good
08/03/2023	Full	Good
12/07/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Children's experiences of living in this home are mixed. Some children lived in the home for long periods, providing them with stability in this area of their lives. However, a large proportion of the staff, including the previous registered manager, have left and no longer work at the home. For the child currently living in the home, this has hindered their ability to build trust with the staff. In recent months, the lack of consistent staffing has impacted on the child's overall experience and ability to make progress.

Educational progress for the child is sporadic. Staff encourage the child's engagement in their education. This has resulted in some progress in the child's attendance. One child who has now left the home said that the staff provided support to access work experience and to write a CV.

Children said they are well supported when they move on from the home. Staff encourage the children to develop their independence skills. One child who has left the home said, 'The staff bought me things for my new place and got all the things that I needed. I don't think I have ever had as much support.'

There are no immediate safety concerns with the home environment. However, some areas of the home appear tired and in need of repair. Repairs do not occur in a timely manner when items break.

Staff do not consistently update the child's memory book or write daily records that accurately reflect the child's day. This prevents the child from having an accurate account of their time living in the home. Daily records do not highlight what action staff take to ensure that children are safe when they are away from the home.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

When children go missing from the home, staff are not always proactive in their response. Staff do not always actively search for a missing child. While there is management oversight of these incidents, the oversight does not identify any shortfalls in staff practice. The child has not come to any immediate harm, but is at risk as long as they are missing.

Children are rarely physically held to keep everyone safe. However, on one occasion when a child was held, no discussion took place with the child to seek their views after the incident. This prevents the child from reflecting on the incident and having the opportunity to share their views or any concerns.

Staff do not routinely record and review any consequences that are given to children in response to unwanted behaviours. Consequences are financially driven when relating to damage to property. However, damage to property continues, so consequences are not effective. There is no management oversight of consequences to explore alternative solutions. This prevents the child learning to manage their behaviour appropriately.

Staff provide no challenge or professional curiosity when the child leaves the home to obtain vapes. Staff do not regularly engage the child in discussions about the risks of vaping. This prevents the child's general health needs being met.

Staff take appropriate action when children experience emotional health difficulties. The interim manager ensures that specialist emotional health support is sought quickly. Staff receive training in line with the child's presenting needs to assist their responses when crisis occurs.

Key workers ensure that children have up-to-date risk assessments. This includes all known current risks and gives guidance on what support staff should offer. Staff who are not familiar with the home, or the child currently living in the home, take the time to read this to ensure that they understand what they should do if any concerns arise.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The registered manager post has been vacant since July 2025. While there is an interim manager overseeing the home, they do not intend to become registered with Ofsted. Senior leaders recognise the impact this is having and are persistent in their efforts to recruit a permanent and registered manager.

Senior leaders accept the current shortfalls and have plans to ensure stability and improve the quality of care provided to the child currently living in the home. However, these plans are not yet embedded, so their effectiveness cannot be assessed.

Children's care plans are not seen as live documents and read as a chronology. Children's care plans do not accurately reflect the child's current needs or give guidance on how to support the child. Plans do not incorporate actions from other statutory assessments such as the child's health assessment.

When incidents occur, there is some evidence of management oversight. However, this does not provide analysis of the incident. This prevents any reflective practice happening to identify if there are any lessons that could be learned or actions that need to happen.

Staff say that they feel supported by the interim manager. Staff receive regular supervision sessions and team meetings. This enables discussions to occur about the child's needs with the aim of providing consistent staff practice.

Partner agencies and other professionals say that communication with the interim home manager and staff is good. This supports staff to understand the child's needs and provide personalised care.

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 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; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(v)(vi)(vii))	27 November 2025

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the children's home is a nurturing and supportive environment that meets the needs of their children. The home will, in most cases, be a homely, domestic environment. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that, in line with their individual health plans and the home's statement of purpose, children are offered advice, support and guidance on their health and well-being. Staff should have the relevant skills and knowledge to be able to help children understand, and where necessary work to change negative behaviours in, important areas of health and well-being such as

vaping. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.18)

- The registered person should ensure that any consequences used to address unwanted behaviour should be restorative in nature. This is to help children recognise the impact of their behaviour. In some cases, it will be important for children to make reparation in some form to anyone hurt by their behaviour and the staff in the home should be skilled to support the child to understand this and carry it out. In particular, the registered person should review the effectiveness of any consequences given. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.38)
- The registered person should ensure that any child who has been held should be given the opportunity to express their feelings about their experience of the hold as soon as is practicable. Ideally, this should be within 24 hours of the restraint incident, taking the age of the child and the circumstances of the restraint into account. In some cases, children may need longer to work through their feelings, so a record that the child has talked about their feelings should be made no longer than five days after the incident. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 50, paragraph 9.60)
- The registered person should encourage staff and children to see the home's records as 'living documents', supporting them to view and contribute to the record. In particular, ensure that children's care plans contain relevant and current information. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 58, paragraph 11.19)
- The registered person should ensure that staff encourage and support children to keep appropriate memorabilia of the time spent living at the home and help them record significant life events. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.5)
- The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

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: Fostering & Adoption Team, Spectrum 8, Spectrum Business Park, Seaham SR7 7TT

Responsible individual: Paul Rudd

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Jess Elliott, Social Care Inspector (lead)
Amy Groom, Social Care Inspector

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