

SC007608

Pear Tree Projects Limited

Monitoring visit

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and managed by a private company. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to three children who have emotional and/or social difficulties.

The manager has been in post since 18 October 2019 and registered with Ofsted on 24 March 2020.

Inspection date: 23 March 2021

This monitoring visit

Due to the restrictions in place as a result of the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, this visit was carried out off site. The visit was undertaken to investigate potential breaches of regulations, after information was shared with Ofsted. The visit included a review of documents, a virtual tour of the building and discussions with children, staff, a family member and a professional.

There have been changes to the management in the home since the last inspection. The manager is now supported by a new deputy manager. Together, they have shared ideas about what needs to change, and have made improvements that benefit the children. This has increased the quality of management oversight in the home.

The quality of children's risk assessments and care plans has improved. These key documents are personalised, detailing the children's individual needs. The manager ensures that these documents are reviewed and up to date, to show the children's progress. This means that staff have clear plans and strategies to follow which help them to meet the children's needs.

Children say that they 'love' living in the home. Spending more time together has helped the children and staff develop their relationships with each other. The staff

have encouraged the children to find opportunities to take advantage of the outdoors during the pandemic. By being creative, staff have helped the children fill their days with fun activities, for example horse riding, animal care and dancing. Staff have presented the children with awards and have helped them to grow vegetables and bake cakes. When talking about the benefits of these activities, one child felt that their self-confidence has improved. The child said, 'Just cos you're in care, nothing should stop you. You've just got to believe in yourself.'

Children receive support to enjoy regular time with their families. Staff stay with children during their visits to family, to ensure that they are safe and to offer help if needed. When describing the support from a staff member, a parent said, 'She fits in and helps us enjoy our family time.' The COVID-19 restrictions mean that children have video calls with their families. This has resulted in children having greater flexibility around family time, because they are able to have calls at a time which is best for them. This helps children to keep in contact with people who are important to them.

All staff receive regular supervision. They say that they feel supported to carry out their roles and responsibilities. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on the training available to staff. However, the manager has sought advice from other agencies to address this shortfall. Staff have received information and guidance to help them care for the children. The manager tracks staff development and has devised a plan to ensure that staff receive the additional training they need.

The manager has improved the quality of monitoring and reviewing systems in the home. She uses feedback from children, staff, families and professionals to help her evaluate the care that children receive. Independent visits are completed, but the quality of these visits is poor. They are not thorough and do not scrutinise the care provided. This means that there is less independent oversight to assist in identifying where improvements can be made.

Children receive help to participate in appointments with other professionals and services. Staff and the manager share relevant information with other agencies and contribute to meetings. They also use advice from other professionals, for example child and adolescent mental health services, to help the children. If children experience delays in the services being provided, the manager challenges other professionals and escalates matters appropriately.

When children make complaints about staff, an investigation takes place. The manager takes effective action to address practice issues. All children have access to an independent advocate who provides support to ensure that children's views are heard and understood. This helps to keep children increasingly safe.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
17/12/2019	Full	Good
16/10/2018	Full	Outstanding
09/01/2018	Full	Outstanding
03/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should actively seek independent scrutiny of the home and make best use of information from independent and internal monitoring (including under regulations 44 and 45) to ensure continuous improvement. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this visit was to monitor the action taken and the progress made by the children's home since its last Ofsted inspection.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC007608

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Pear Tree Projects Limited

Registered provider address: Peartree House, Bolam, Darlington, County Durham DL2 2UP

Responsible individual: David Bartlett

Registered manager: Lesley Holywell

Inspector

Catherine Heron, Social Care Inspector

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