

SC007608

Registered provider: Pear Tree Projects Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and managed by a private provider. It provides care for up to three children.

The inspector spoke with the one child who currently lives in the home during the inspection.

The manager registered with Ofsted in March 2020.

Inspection dates: 31 October and 1 November 2022

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

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

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

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

Date of last inspection: 1 March 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
01/03/2022	Full	Good
17/12/2019	Full	Good
16/10/2018	Full	Outstanding
09/01/2018	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The child living in the home continues to make progress. The child enjoys trusting relationships with the staff, who know the child well. One child who has recently moved on to independent living continues to enjoy contact with the staff and the child living in the home. The commitment by staff to this ongoing arrangement means that both children can maintain their relationship and provides them with a sense of belonging.

Key-work sessions take place on a regular basis. These occur after an incident if a specific piece of work is identified. They also happen in a planned way as part of the care planning process for the child. Key-work sessions cover a broad range of subjects specific to the individual needs of the child. This provides the child with an opportunity to increase their knowledge about situations that they may find themselves in, thereby supporting them to be increasingly safe.

The child who lives in the home has excellent school attendance and is making progress. The child attends the provider's on-site educational provision. There are established systems in place to ensure that there is effective communication and joined-up working between the home and the school. The school is kept up to date about all aspects of the child's care and, therefore, can respond appropriately to any issues that may arise.

The child's health needs are met. The registered manager makes appropriate referrals when specialist support is needed. The manager is proactive in seeking alternative provisions if lengthy waiting lists prohibit the child from accessing the support they need in a timely way.

Children's meetings take place on a regular basis. However, they do not provide the child with the opportunity to either contribute towards the agenda or express their views about the running of the home or their care. This does not give the child the message that their views and opinions are important.

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

Staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and respond to any immediate risks. The home has experienced a turbulent time recently due to difficult behaviours displayed by one child. The home's staff felt they could no longer meet the child's needs due to escalating concerns and the impact of this on the other children living in the home. This child has now moved from this home.

There has been a significant increase in the number of times children have been reported missing from the home. However, when children go missing, the staff follow the home's missing-from-home procedures. Staff act appropriately and take steps to locate missing children. This includes trying to contact their friends and

family as well as searching the local area to find them. Once children are found, return home interviews are completed with them.

The previously issued requirement with regards to the quality of the impact risk assessments could not be considered as part of this inspection as no children have moved into the home. This will therefore be restated.

Children's risk assessments are updated regularly when new risks emerge. However, not all identified risks have strategies in place to mitigate these risks. This means that the staff do not have all the necessary information to support them in their care of the child.

The recording of consequences is not completed as required. There is no debrief with the member of staff giving the consequence, and steps taken to avoid using the measure are not always recorded. Consequences also remain punitive in nature. Staff continued on one occasion to implement a consequence past the agreed date without any review in place or agreed steps that the child needed to complete. The lack of oversight from the manager means that it cannot be established whether the measures are fair and proportionate.

Staff physically prevented one child from leaving the home on three occasions. While this was done to prevent the child from going missing, the provider accepts that this should not have happened. A debrief with all staff members has been undertaken where the expectations of the staff with regards to managing children's behaviour have been reviewed.

The quality of the recording of physical intervention records is poor. On one occasion, the manager evaluated the hold despite being the person who performed the hold. A further example was identified where the effectiveness of the measure was not considered. There is also no evidence that the children have been offered independent advocacy to support them to express their feelings following being held. This means it is not evident whether the hold is safe, proportionate and effective.

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

The home is managed by a permanent, suitably experienced and qualified registered manager. She is supported by a stable and experienced staff team. Positive feedback has been received from the staff with regards to the support that the manager provides them.

Previously identified shortfalls with regards to a lack of reflective supervision, mandatory training not being undertaken by all staff and children's documents containing language that is not child-friendly remain. As such, these recommendations have been restated.

The children's guide is not up to date and does not include information on how the children or their parents can contact the Office of the Children's Commissioner. This

shortfall means that the children and their families do not have all the necessary information about the external agencies that can be used to support them while living in the home.

A shortfall identified at the last inspection of the independent visitor not consistently seeking the views of the children, family, professionals and the staff remains. Some visits are undertaken when the children are at school, which means that they do not have the opportunity to speak with the independent visitor about their care. This shortfall means that the registered manager cannot be satisfied that the children's views are reflected in the independent visitor's report.

Some records, including the child's personal education plan and education, health and care plan, are not up to date. The staff have not followed this up with the placing local authority. In addition, the child's care plan contains conflicting information about their care. This means that the staff do not have all the correct information while providing care for the child.

The manager has reviewed her internal monitoring and auditing systems. However, these are not embedded into practice as they have failed to highlight the shortfalls identified during the inspection. This means that there continues to be no effective system in place to monitor the quality of care provided to the children and the performance of the staff.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered persons 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 persons 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. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)) This specifically relates to impact risk assessments and children's risk assessments.	1 January 2023
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(h))	1 January 2023
Restraint in relation to a child is only permitted for the purpose of preventing— injury to any person (including the child); serious damage to the property of any person (including the child); or	1 December 2022

a child who is accommodated in a secure children's home from absconding from the home. Restraint in relation to a child must be necessary and proportionate. (Regulation 20 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2))	
The registered person must prepare and implement a policy ("the behaviour management policy") which sets out— how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the children's home; and the measures of control, discipline and restraint which may be used in relation to children in the home. The registered person must ensure that— within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes— details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure; the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate. (Regulation 35 (1)(a)(b) (3)(a)(v)(vii)(b)(i)(ii)) This specifically relates to consequence records.	1 January 2023
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which— include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child; are kept up to date; and are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c))	1 January 2023

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))	1 January 2023
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Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children are consulted regularly on their views about the home's care, to inform and support continued improvement in the quality of care provided. Children should be able to see the results of their views being listened to and acted on. This relates to children and young people's meetings. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 22, paragraph 4.11)
- The registered person should ensure that the children's guide helps children to understand how to contact the Office of the Children's Commissioner. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 24, paragraph 4.22)
- The registered person should ensure that records of restraint are kept in order to review the use of the control, discipline and restraint to identify effective practice and respond promptly where any issues or trends of concern emerge. The review should provide the opportunity for amending practice to ensure it meets the needs of each child. Children should be offered the opportunity to access an advocacy support to help them to express their feelings about their experience of the restraint. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 49, paragraph 9.59)
- The registered person should ensure that training records are kept up to date and staff complete all mandatory training. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 53, paragraph 10.8)
- The registered person should ensure that systems are in place so that all the staff, including the manager, receive regular supervision so that they can reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 61, paragraph 13.2)
- 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. Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way, and 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: 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

Paula Shepherd, Social Care Inspector

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