

SC034686

Registered provider: Durham County Council

Monitoring visit

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 provides care for up to five children who may have social and/or emotional difficulties and/or learning disabilities.

There is an acting manager in post who is not yet registered.

There were four children living in the home at the time of this visit.

The full inspection took place on 24 and 25 May 2022. A judgement of inadequate was given due to the widespread failings in the leadership and management of the home, and due to the poor care planning arrangements for children. In response to these failings, Ofsted issued the provider with two compliance notices under Regulations 13 and 14. Additionally, Ofsted issued seven requirements to address other shortfalls.

Inspection date: 4 July 2022

This monitoring visit

This visit was carried out to monitor the provider's progress in meeting the compliance notices. The provider has taken sufficient action to meet all of the steps in the compliance notices, and all of the requirements that were raised at the last inspection.

Children are now supported by staff who work at the home. A regular casual worker is employed to ensure that the staffing levels meet the needs of the children. Therefore, there is no longer a reliance on the use of agency staff. All new staff now receive a thorough induction before they start to work with the children. In addition, the manager now ensures that the staff receive regular supervision of their practice

as outlined in the home's statement of purpose. This helps to raise the standard of care that the children receive.

The acting manager has improved the support that the staff receive as he now provides the staff with regular supervision. The introduction of an audit system enables him to record that supervision has taken place and if not, the explanation for this is recorded. The record of supervision is now signed by the member of staff and the supervisor.

The acting manager, with the support of the quality assurance manager, have improved the monitoring and audit systems. The monthly monitoring tool completed by the manager effectively covers the health and safety arrangements of the home, the standard of care practice and the maintenance of accurate and up-to-date children's care records. Any shortfalls that are identified are recorded, with a timeline for the action to be taken.

Feedback is sought and used to help improve the quality of care that the children receive. The new feedback questionnaires have been shared with a range of professionals and the children to support the ongoing development of the home. Additionally, the acting manager has developed a positive relationship with the external independent person. These processes ensure that areas for improvements are identified and addressed quickly.

The manager has now updated the home's statement of purpose and completed the quality-of-care review. Both documents have now been sent to Ofsted, which enables Ofsted to review the quality of care provided to children.

The acting manager ensures that any significant events that relate to the welfare and protection of children are forwarded to Ofsted and other relevant persons. This enables the regulator to evaluate safe care practices to ensure children are protected from harm.

Children now have access to all areas of their home as the staff no longer lock the doors to manage the children's behaviour. The kitchen door can no longer be locked as the acting manager has had the locks removed. The staff have been informed during the team meetings, and during individual supervision sessions, that this practice should not be used to manage the children's behaviour.

Children are now cared for by staff who are trained to meet their needs. All staff have now attended the provider's preferred choice of physical intervention training. This training includes strategies to deflect, distract and de-escalate any behaviours that may lead to the potential harm of a child or towards a member of staff. This training ensures that children receive an appropriate response from a skilled staff team.

Staff attend the children's personal education meetings so that they are aware of the children's goals. The staff have now made improvements to ensure that the children are supported to take part in their education. The staff now follow an agreed educational timetable for the children, which include steps to ensure that children are up and ready for school in the morning. This helps the children to make steps to engage in their education.

The provider has improved the care planning process for children. The residential managers in the local authority meet as a group to discuss any children who need a home. These discussions take place with senior managers, and all relevant professionals, which ensures that informed decisions are made. The manager now conducts a thorough risk assessment before a child moves into the home, so that all the known areas of risk are evaluated and assessed. This assessment now considers the level of risk for the child moving in, and for those who already live in the home. This ensures that all of the children's needs can be met safely.

Children are welcomed into the home prior to them moving in. They meet with the staff and the other children who live in the home. The children are supported well to choose the colour schemes, and items for their bedroom so that they have everything that they need to move in positively. Children take part in open discussions with staff on relationships and safeguarding matters. This supports the children to understand each other and respect one another.

The acting manager has improved the quality of the children's records. However, he has recognised that there are still some improvements to be made with the quality of the records for children who go missing from the home. He has also identified that the independent return home meetings for children who do go missing from the home are not completed consistently. Senior managers have introduced a system to address this shortfall.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/05/2022	Full	Inadequate
16/11/2021	Full	Good
05/06/2019	Full	Good
25/09/2018	Full	Good

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that when a child returns home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, that the responsible local authority provides an opportunity for the child to have an independent return-home interview. This should be undertaken in a timely manner and for each occurrence. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)
- The registered person should ensure that all records are kept and that they detail all the individual incidents when children go missing from the home, (Regulation 36: schedule 3(14), and are completed in full. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.31)

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: SC034686

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Durham County Council

Registered provider address: County Hall, Durham DH1 5UJ

Responsible individual: Laura Caunce

Registered manager: Vacant

Inspector

Michael Dack, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022