

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC034686
Inspector	Bill Drumm
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Durham County Council
Registered person address	County Hall DURHAM DH1 5UL

Responsible individual	Karen Monica Robb
Registered manager	Mark James Proffitt
Date of last inspection	06/03/2014

Inspection date	05/01/2015
------------------------	------------

Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	good
Outcomes for children and young people	good
Quality of care	good
Keeping children and young people safe	outstanding
Leadership and management	outstanding

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
-------------------	-------------

Overall, the home provides good levels of care and support to young people who have complex needs. Staff work hard to develop good positive relationships with all young people and, in the main, they are successful. Staff want all young people in their care to be safe and stay safe. They have had some success in this area with young people keeping themselves safer and significantly reducing the number of times they go missing. Written records relating to incidents of young people being missing clearly detail the actions staff have taken to locate their whereabouts. This means that the locations where young people go to are recorded and any patterns or trends in behaviour can be analysed.

The atmosphere within the home is relaxed and very supportive. Enthusiastic staff try to encourage and motivate young people who have left full-time, formal education to continue learning, to attend college or training and to learn activities for daily living. In general they are successful in their endeavours. The work of the staff team in teaching young people daily living skills supports their transition into adulthood.

The home is managed to an excellent standard. Two recommendations have been raised as a result of this inspection. One relates to the quality of pathway planning documentation and the other relates to the recording of key-worker sessions. Both

shortfalls do not directly impact on the welfare of young people.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home provides care and accommodation for up to 5 young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is provided by a local authority.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/03/2014	Interim	good progress
29/10/2013	Full	good
15/01/2013	Interim	good progress
23/07/2012	Full	good

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

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure each child's placement plan is monitored by a key-worker within the home who ensures that the requirements of the plan are implemented in the day-to-day care of that child. (NMS 25.2)
- contributes toward the development plan of each child's care plan, including the pathway plan for 'eligible' care leavers and works collaboratively with the young person's social worker or personal adviser in implementing the plan (NMS 12.2)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Young people receive daily support and encouragement from staff to be healthy and to stay healthy. They have access to a range of health services to promote both their physical and emotional well-being. Staff also provide on-going support and encouragement to young people about healthy eating and smoking. Some young people choose not to take their full advice and continue to put their health at risk by, for example, smoking. However, young people are assisted to engage with smoking cessation advisors and, as a result, the frequency at which they do smoke has reduced since they came to live here.

Young people who are in full-time education are supported and encouraged to attend regularly and staff actively challenge barriers to their attendance. For instance, some young people who attend pupil referral units are excluded for short periods of time for what the staff considers to be minor indiscretions. This has been raised with senior managers within the authority. Formal meetings are taking place between the relevant headteacher and senior managers to address the issues. Some young people have finished their formal education and have enrolled onto college courses or taken up training opportunities. They are also encouraged to become involved in raising money for charity by, for example, completing the coast to coast cycle ride. This helps to build their self-esteem and confidence. Additionally, charitable work helps young people to appreciate the world around them and the needs of those less fortunate than themselves. The improvements in young people's educational attainment, self-confidence and self-esteem encourages them to have aspirations for their future, to attend college or to seek employment.

Where appropriate, the relationship between young people and their birth family has developed since moving into the home. Where necessary, staff support and closely supervise contact. This helps to ensure that young people receive the support they need to manage their emotions in a positive manner and that contact is a good experience for all involved.

Young people learn activities for daily living. They are encouraged to develop new skills and build on existing ones. This helps to prepare them for a smooth transition into adulthood and independent living.

Quality of care **good**

The home's manager and staff fully support young people to have a say in how the home should be run. They are actively encouraged to be involved in the development of their own care plans and to develop strategies for their future care. This helps

young people to feel valued and included. Informal discussions also take place around the lunch table at mealtimes, in the evening whilst watching television or during activities. Additionally, young people have regular one-to-one meetings with their key-worker. This helps to ensure their views are obtained and that they feel fully involved in their own care. However, although key-workers regularly have discussions with young people the written records of these discussions are not always kept up-to-date. The impact of this is minimised by the open and honest dialogue that exists both within the staff team and between staff and young people. Young people feel comfortable talking with staff and are confident that they are listened to.

Relationships between young people and staff are very positive, warm and friendly. Young people generally behave well and they are encouraged to develop interests outside of the home and in the local community. For instance, they participate in football matches, go to the cinema or meet friends in the local community. Young people also become involved in raising money for charity with several having recently completed the coast to coast cycle ride. This is something for which the young people should be commended. One young person said, 'It was a very hard ride and to make matters worse the weather was terrible. We did it though and I'm pleased we did.' Having interests outside of the home helps young people develop positive behaviour and new friendships. Becoming involved in charitable work helps young people to empathise with others and to have a better understanding of the world around them.

Staff support and encourage young people to be fit and healthy. Their health needs are recorded clearly in individual residential placement plans which means staff know what they have to do to help improve each young person's health. Staff also provide useful health-related information for young people, as well as advice and encouragement to lead a healthy lifestyle. The on-going encouragement and support of staff has helped some young people reduce the amount of cigarettes they smoke.

The home's manager and staff are effective in helping young people to attend education regularly or to learn new skills and competencies. Staff actively challenge the barriers young people face in attending education and, as a result, regular attendance at school, college or training is achieved. This helps young people to have aspirations for their future and improves their life-chances.

The home is very well-maintained, appropriately designed, clean and comfortable. Young people like their bedrooms and gain a sense of identity by being enabled to personalise them with their own choice of colours, posters and pictures.

Young people are encouraged to learn activities for daily living and to build on the independence skills they already have. However, not all young people who are old enough have a comprehensive pathway plan in place written by their placing authority. Staff are aware that the content of the pathway plans are not sufficient to ensure a smooth transition of a young person from the home into adulthood and independent living. They advocate strongly on behalf of the young people concerned

in order to rectify this. Staff also make sure that young people are aware of what help and support they can expect as they get older in order to make a successful transition into independence and adulthood.

Keeping children and young people safe **outstanding**

Young people feel safe here. They know that staff have their welfare at heart and do all they can to protect them inside and outside the home. Expectations and boundaries are made clear to young people from the time they are admitted to the home. Observation showed staff are proactive and calm in their responses to young people who display negative behaviour and who may put themselves at risk. This means that overall the atmosphere in the home remains calm and that the needs of other children and young people are not overlooked.

The home has an excellent relationship with local community police who visit the home occasionally to talk to young people about the dangers of being out without staff knowing where they are. Additionally, staff do direct work with young people, both individually and as a group, helping them to understand the risks of going missing. This kind of activity has been instrumental in reducing the number of missing episodes significantly.

Staff use their excellent understanding and knowledge of the young people to work proactively with them and to prevent or reduce negative behaviour. One member of staff said, 'We try to fully understand each young person. We discuss them at staff meetings and we have comprehensive handovers at the end of each shift.' A young person said, 'The staff don't restrain us, they're great.' The positive relationship that exists between young people and staff helps to improve young people's behaviour. Care provision in the home is individualised. A member of staff said, 'All young people are treated differently because they are all different.' Staffing levels allow for one-to-one work with young people where this is required. This helps them to understand and manage their own feelings and behaviour. Incentives and praise are frequently used to reinforce positive behaviour.

No new staff have been appointed at the home since the last inspection. The process of recruiting new staff is both thorough and extremely robust. The Registered Manager keeps a record of their vetting checks within the home. This provides assurance that no employees can pose a threat to young people and that they remain safe from abuse or exploitation. Additionally, the home is maintained in a safe condition. All necessary checks on equipment are carried out at prescribed intervals. This attention to detail keeps everyone living, working or visiting the home very safe.

Leadership and management **outstanding**

The Registered Manager has been registered since March 2007. He has the appropriate qualifications to be the Registered Manager of a children's home. At the last interim inspection in March 2014 the home was judged to be making good progress. At that inspection no requirements or recommendations were raised.

Management of the home is highly effective. The Registered Manager and his senior staff lead the staff team decisively and ensure that the focus of work is always on the needs of young people. Staff are effectively timetabled within the home to make sure that there are enough adults on duty to meet the needs of young people at all times. All staff are dedicated to improving the life chances of young people. They are passionate about their work, highly motivated and have access to a comprehensive range of training which further enhances their ability to provide the very best service to young people. All staff are qualified. Comments made by staff members include, 'My work is appreciated and I'm encouraged to bring new ideas to team meetings about how we can resolve issues.' and 'My manager fully supports me and the rest of the team. We all appreciate this and we're fully motivated to keep improving.'

The Registered Manager is thorough and systematic in monitoring the quality of the service provided by the home and the outcomes it achieves. This, coupled with the home's development plan, enables the home to improve any shortfalls in practice and build on existing strengths in a clear and systematic manner. Regular monitoring of work practice and staff performance by the Registered Manager and senior staff is instrumental in improving the educational outcomes of young people and in reducing the number of times they may go missing.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.