

SC034686

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 and is registered for the care and accommodation of up to five children or young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. There has been an acting manager in post since April 2019.

Inspection dates: 5 to 6 June 2019

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 **good**

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

Date of last inspection: 25 September 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection:

A monitoring visit was undertaken in March 2019 due to there being increasing concerns raised about safeguarding practices and poor management decision-making around the appropriateness of placements. The manager has taken swift action to address the shortfalls raised.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25/09/2018	Full	Good
31/10/2017	Full	Outstanding
25/01/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
07/06/2016	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children and young people living in this home receive a good standard of care. Care plans are tailored to each child's and young person's care requirements. They are written in a way that is helpful for children and young people to see how they will be supported on a day-to-day basis. Children and young people contribute to their care planning. This enhances children's and young people's experiences and helps them to make good progress in most areas.

The staff team spends quality time with children and young people helping to develop and strengthen positive relationships. Activities are offered daily and are planned based on the children's and young people's preference. Activities range from camping, swimming, theme parks to bike riding. This enhances children's and young people's experiences as well as helping to disrupt negative behaviours.

There have been some improvements to the admission process. Impact risk assessments are used to consider the risks to all children and young people prior to new admissions. However, within the assessment, the manager does not include an evaluation to assess the appropriateness of proposed placements. This means that there is no clear rationale behind decision-making around new admissions.

At a monitoring visit in March 2019, the home was showing signs of wear and tear and was in need of decorating. At the time of the inspection, the whole of the house was being redecorated and new furniture purchased. The manager has ensured that this has become a priority to help drive improvements forward. The children and young people have been consulted about the home's developments and decoration. This means that children and young people can take a sense of pride and responsibility in their home.

Children and young people are well supported to attend a range of medical appointments. The manager advocates well for children and young people to ensure that appropriate support services are accessed, including specialist services such as child and adolescent mental health services. This means that children and young people receive bespoke care tailored to their individual needs. One young person commented, 'The staff here are fantastic. I had an issue and needed some help. They were amazing. I think they deserve an award.'

School attendance for most children and young people has improved. One young person has ended his formal educational placement as he had completed the course. There are plans in place for him to start college in September. Learning extends beyond formal settings. Regular key-worker sessions help children and young people to receive the right level of support when needed. Furthermore, children and young people are supported to develop and learn independent skills that will help them move on and into adulthood.

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

Risk assessments identify individual risks to children and young people and include clear strategies to manage risks. In the main, risk assessments are followed and are effective at keeping children and young people safe. The inspector found one incident where a strategy in one young person's risk assessment had not been consistently recorded or followed in a way that the risk assessment identifies. This provides children and young people with inconsistent messages. Furthermore, poor monitoring of behaviours and inconsistent approaches to recording negative behaviours means that it is difficult to track developments and help children and young people to recognise where they are making progress.

Missing-from-home episodes are rare. When children and young people have been missing from the home, the appropriate protocols have been followed. Records indicate where return home interviews by an independent visitor have been offered and if a child or young person has engaged in that process. This means that learning from independent visitors can strengthen risk management processes.

Effective behaviour management means that physical interventions have significantly reduced. The last physical intervention recorded was in February 2019. Children and young people develop trusting relationships with the staff team. Key-worker sessions indicate that children and young people can discuss and share a range of worries and concerns with staff members. Appropriate action is then taken to ensure that children and young people feel emotionally safe and physically safe.

The staff team has received some training relevant to the needs of the children and young people in their care. This includes training around trauma and attachment. Further training is booked and planned that is specific to sexually harmful behaviour, bullying and autism. This means that children and young people benefit from the knowledge and skills of the staff team.

Bullying incidents were an issue of concern at the time the monitoring visit took place. The manager has taken steps to proactively address the matter. In addition to sourcing training for the staff team, there has been direct work completed with the children and young people to take a zero-tolerance approach to bullying. Furthermore, the mix of children and young people in the home has significantly reduced negative and disruptive behaviours.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Since the last inspection, a new manager has been appointed. She is familiar with the home's practice and inspection history. The manager was appointed in April 2019. She is in the process of applying to be a registered manager. She is supported in her role by her manager and dedicated staff team.

The manager has taken decisive action to address the shortfalls identified at the

monitoring visit. She has a clear plan in place to drive improvements forward. She has developed her own monitoring and quality assurance processes. The effectiveness of these processes is not known due to their implementation being at an early stage.

The manager recognises the home's strengths as well as areas for development. She values feedback from the inspector as well as her independent visitor. She has improved the agenda for staff team meetings, encouraging reflective discussions to help raise standards of practice. Independent visitor reports and recommendations are shared and discussed in team meetings. Additionally, guest speakers have delivered training to enhance learning. This has included learning around life-story work. The staff team feels motivated and valued as a result.

Members of the staff team speak extremely positively about the support and direction given by the manager. Staff spoken to commented on the manager 'getting things done' and that 'she knows her stuff'. Further comments made by staff include that there has been a boost in team morale since the monitoring visit, as greater significance has been placed on new admissions and group dynamics. Staff also report that they communicate better with each other. This is likely to support consistent care that is provided to the children and young people.

The manager has strengthened the safeguarding culture in the home. Safeguarding is included as a stand-alone agenda item in team meetings and staff supervisions. This means that safeguarding is at the forefront of thinking and daily practice.

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, 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 the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(b)) In particular, that the staff consistently follow and evidence that they are implementing risk assessments.	05/07/2019

Recommendations

- The registered person should only accept placements for children where they are satisfied that the home can respond effectively to the child's assessed needs as recorded in the child's relevant plans and where they have fully considered the impact that the placement will have on the existing group of children. The Statement of Purpose is an important document in the process of care planning as it sets out the needs of children the home is set up and equipped to care for. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 56, paragraph 11.4)

In particular, the manager should evaluate impact risk assessments to ensure that there is a clear rationale to decision-making regarding potential placements.

- To ensure that staff understand and can meet each child's needs, in line with their responsibilities, the registered person themselves will need to have a high level of understanding of the needs of the children in their care. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 52, paragraph 10.5)

In particular, the manager should develop a system to monitor significant behaviours and/or risk factors to monitor progress and track for themes and trends.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: SC034686

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: County Hall, Durham DH1 5UL

Responsible individual: Karen Robb

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Jacqueline Tate, social care inspector

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