

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	08/12/2015
Unique reference number	SC034686
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 Robb
Registered manager	Mark Proffitt
Inspector	Colin Imrie

Inspection date	08/12/2015
Previous inspection judgement	improved effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Outstanding
The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceeds the standards of good. The actions of the home contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help, protection and care.	
how well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding

SC034686

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is outstanding because:

- The manager is very experienced and a strong leader who is skilled and motivated. He is constantly looking for new way to develop practice in the home and is committed to providing excellent care for the children and young people. The manager has created a culture of high aspiration and positivity, and he has high expectations of his staff team. The staff team are also strong and experienced. Senior workers in particular assist and support the manager well. The staff team are also motivated and committed to providing a very good service to the children and young people
- The manager and staff team provide highly individualised care for children and young people. They are flexible, creative and innovative in how they work with the children and young people. Children and young people have made significant progress from often very low starting points. The children and young people who live in the home are from very diverse backgrounds and have diverse needs and staff are able to meet these needs in a very individualised way
- The staff team have excellent links with families and the local community and they are able to work with these people to keep the children and young people safe when they are away from the home. There are also excellent links with other professionals who provide a range of services to the children and young people
- The children and young people are well supported to maintain and improve relationships with their families. These relationships are often difficult and complex but the staff have carried out this work with persistence and sensitivity. Families speak highly of the home and the staff and feel fully involved with the care of their children and young people
- The children and young people are well supported to achieve good results in their education and to have better attendance. They are also well supported when building independence skills and with their journey towards work and adult life

Full report

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 with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. (EBD)

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25/03/2015	CH - Interim	improved effectiveness
05/01/2015	CH - Full	Good
06/03/2014	CH - Interim	Good Progress
29/10/2013	CH - Full	Good
15/01/2013	CH - Interim	Good Progress
23/07/2012	CH - Full	Good
31/01/2012	CH - Interim	Good Progress
26/10/2011	CH - Full	Good
07/01/2011	CH - Interim	Satisfactory
03/09/2010	CH - Full	Satisfactory
09/03/2010	CH - Interim	Satisfactory
20/10/2009	CH - Full	Satisfactory
27/10/2008	CH - Full	Satisfactory
11/06/2008	CH - Interim	Good
16/11/2007	CH - Full	Good
01/08/2007	CH - Interim	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	outstanding
The manager has built a staff team who are able to offer highly individualised care to children and young people. Their ability, to work with a wide range of children and young people and meet their needs well, stands out as a significant feature of this home. The manager has a great deal of experience and the staff team are also very well experienced and this allows them to offer excellent care to the children and young people that is both creative and innovative. This means that the children and young people experience the home as a caring place where they are respected for who they are. All the children and young people have made significant progress since arriving at the home. Some of the young people arrived at the home with very low starting points and although they are not completely settled they have made significant progress to date. The quality of relationships between the children and young people and the staff is very good. Staff are open and honest and put in clear boundaries and expectations and this allows young people to feel safe and to know what is expected of them. Several young people with very poor school attendance prior to arriving at the home now have significantly improved attendance. Some of the young people have full attendance. One young person is described in his school report as 'an exceptional student' and is clearly one of the most improved students in the school. One young person attends college full time. This is particularly significant because this young person has a long day, travelling a significant distance to attend the college of his choice. One young person is successfully completing a traineeship in mechanics and is looking forward to starting an apprenticeship in this area of employment, having done very well so far. Another young person works part-time and is considering applying for a training scheme. Several of the young people spend time talking to outside professionals for counselling and guidance around specific issues. This work, together with the comprehensive work undertaken at the home, means that young people continue to make good progress. One young person has overcome significant confidence issues and is now moving towards adult life with a clear plan and a greatly increased chance of success. Several young people have been supported to deal with significant family issues over the past year and while these difficulties continue to impact on them they have maintained progress towards their goals. One young person who arrived at the home with significant risky behaviour and with a very poor experience of family	

life has been helped to settle and significantly reduce his risky behaviours. This has to be seen as a major achievement, even though this young person is not yet completely settled.

One of the most impressive aspects of this home is the way the manager and staff work with families, other professionals and particularly with the local community. Staff have been able to monitor young people when they are away from the home by talking to and working with others in the community. Staff keep informal contact with other young people and other families outside of the home, they understand the locality and they take an interest in what goes on around the home and the community. Because the staff team are longstanding they have built these relationships up over time and they use them to support the community and to help and protect children and young people who live in the home. This networking and collaborative approach is entirely professional and adds an extra dimension to their work of helping children and young people grow up and develop. Staff have close links with local police officers and with other services in the community.

Most of the young people currently in the home are nearing independence. There is clear evidence that young people are encouraged to practice the skills required in both formal and informal ways. Young people are helped to complete comprehensive independence skills workbooks and are also encouraged to help complete chores and jobs around the house. During this inspection, one young person was helping to prepare the cooked evening meal for all the young people and staff. Young people had plans in place to move to independence and these were being actively pursued, updated and amended as appropriate.

Care planning was good throughout the home. Young people were being supported to maintain and improve contact with their families and to develop other interests and hobbies. Some of the young people enjoy biking and they were actively taking part in bike building and maintenance. The manager is about to install a bike workshop in the garden to allow this activity to expand. Another young person enjoys computer work and staff had just successfully helped him apply for a grant to get a better computer which will enhance his leisure interest as well as contribute towards his college work which is an IT course. Other young people play five a side football, play other sports and have gone camping with staff.

The staff and young people have completed two long distance bike rides to raise money for charity. These include the full coast to coast route. These are not only significant achievements but they also allow the young people to raise money to support other people in need of charity.

One young person who has struggled with crowds and busy situations was, at his request, taken on an extended trip to London which was really successful with him being able to meet, talk to and challenge a current controversial celebrity. This experience will have been excellent in terms of confidence building for the young

person.

The young people meet regularly to discuss issues within the home and these forums work well generally. At a recent meeting where there was some disruption, staff took time to work with individuals to ensure they understood the importance of these forums and the need to consider the views of others. This has been successful.

The young people at the home have very diverse backgrounds and needs but the care and support they receive is individualised so that they are able to feel at home and feel a part of the home. This in turn allows them to continue to make what is often exceptional progress from their starting points.

One young person attends a local weightwatchers scheme which is positive.

External professional spoken to were complimentary with one missing from home co-ordinator saying that he felt the home were 'doing remarkably well with a number of difficult young people'. Parents spoken to were also very complimentary. Two parents said the home was 'absolutely brilliant, one said the staff were 'absolutely wonderful' and that they 'bent over backwards to help the young people'.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Staff at the home have a good understanding of risks and risk management. A number of the young people arrived at the home with significant risky behaviour and they have all been able to reduce these behaviours. Care planning and key work addresses areas identified as risky and this work is good. Overall the young people are kept safe. Risky behaviours are clearly reducing significantly but have not disappeared entirely as some young people still engage in some risky behaviour. However the staff go to great efforts to continue to work to improve this area. Most young people at this home do not go missing. Some young people had high numbers of missing episodes prior to admission and these are reducing significantly. Although they do still go missing at times these episodes are very well monitored by staff and work to further reduce these episodes carries on. These missing episodes are mostly around older young people wanting to spend time	

with girlfriends and friends in the community. The two young people who continue to go missing are local young people who have grown up in the area. This situation is monitored and kept safe because of the work staff do with others in the community. Two of the young people also still continue to take recreational drugs but again this risky behaviour is reducing significantly and work to improve the situation is ongoing.

The staff are able to maintain a culture in the home where boundaries and expectations are very clear. When issues arise staff are very straightforward with young people and are open and honest and this helps develop the culture of co-operation and discussion within the home.

Some young people can be challenging at time. However staff have clearly worked hard to address these issues with young people and again the incidents of challenging behaviour are falling. The staff have not needed to use restraints except on one occasion when a minor physical intervention was required for a short period of time. The home do use sanctions at times but also use a restorative approach where possible and asking for apologies is often seen as the best way forward. A rewards system is also in place and is effective.

There is very little bullying in the home. One minor incident was recorded and dealt with immediately.

Observations of the young people would suggest that not only do they have very good relationships with the staff but that they feel comfortable and safe in the home. Any disputes or differences between the young people are addressed and sorted out quickly by staff who are vigilant and sensitive.

The home is free of any health and safety issues, is well maintained and health and safety checks are up to date.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding
The manager has a great deal of experience and is not only appropriately qualified but also has a social work qualification. The manger has built a staff team that is also very well qualified. All workers have at least a level three NVQ, some have level four awards and three are social work qualified. The manager has close links with the university in Durham. The home take social	

work students from the Master's Degree social work course for placements and this adds positively to the staff team mix providing additional academic input. The manager is also organising some ongoing research between the home and the university to look at healthy life styles and resilience.

A social work student is currently completing a one hundred day placement at the home and this arrangement is clearly working out well.

The manager also ensures that staff continue to receive high quality supervision, training and support.

The staff work to the aims and objectives set out in the statement of purpose.

The manager clearly empowers his staff team to prioritise the needs of the young people and provides excellent oversight, monitoring and leadership. This style of management is entirely appropriate with such an experienced and settled staff team and allows the manager to spend some of his time looking at research, development and continued improvement. Consequently the manager has a clear vision about further improvements and a thorough and accurate understanding of where things are at in the home.

Although the home has admitted some very challenging young people with very low starting points and with significant issues in their lives the continued progress is impressive.

The manager is well able to challenge other professionals as required and encourages his staff team to do this as well. A recent example was where the manager has pushed the local police for a better response to enable more effective joint working.

There were no requirements or recommendations from the last inspection and none are made at this inspection.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place, however, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, 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 who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This 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 Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the *Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards*.

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