

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 owned and managed by a local authority. It provides care for up to five children who may have social and emotional difficulties and learning disabilities.

There was one child living in the home at the time of this visit.

There has been no registered manager since September 2022.

A manager has been in post since November 2022 and has not yet submitted their application to register with Ofsted.

The quality assurance manager has provided leadership and management of the home since the last monitoring visit in October 2022.

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 November 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 30 August 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection:

Six compliance notices were issued following the full inspection on 30 and 31 August 2022. They related to regulation 11 (the positive relationships standard), regulation

12 (the protection of children standard), regulation 13 (the leadership and management standard), regulation 14 (the care planning standard), regulation 20 (restraint and deprivation of liberty) and regulation 21 (privacy and access).

A monitoring visit was carried out on 24 October 2022. This visit confirmed that the provider had taken sufficient action to meet four of the compliance notices. Two compliance notices under regulations 13 and 14 were reissued. These two notices were monitored as part of this inspection.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
30/08/2022	Full	Inadequate
24/05/2022	Full	Inadequate
16/11/2021	Full	Good
05/06/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Since the last full inspection, and following a review of three children's care plans, three children have been supported to move on from the home in a planned way. As a result, the child who remains in the home is now making good progress because they are in a settled and safe environment.

Staff now prioritise children's education. A personalised educational timetable, along with the encouragement and enthusiasm from staff, has enabled the child to re-engage with their education and begin to make progress.

Staff have worked consistently to promote structured routines for the child. The positive evening routine, which involves spending time with the staff, means that the child's sleeping pattern has improved. One professional said, 'The staff have been really creative with [name of child], getting him comfortable so that he can sleep. This has improved his overall well-being and lifted their mood.'

The staff now have a better understanding of the child's emotional well-being and behaviour, as they now receive support from the local authority therapeutic worker. Consequently, the child has developed trusting relationships with the staff so that they can share their thoughts and feelings more openly. One professional said:

'The staff are more attune and have a better understanding of [name of child]. They are now seeing [name of child] as an individual child, rather than the behaviours. The staff have started reflecting and linking behaviours to previous trauma and lived experiences.'

Family relationships for some children have vastly improved as there is good communication between the staff and the child's family members. One family member said, 'The communication is excellent. I know there is always somebody there if I need help.' This helps children to maintain key family relationships, which supports their sense of identity and emotional well-being.

Children are supported to attend their medical appointments. The quality assurance manager advocates well for children to ensure that the appropriate support services are accessed. This includes specialist services, such as child and adolescent mental health services.

The child is supported to take part in a range of activities, such as shopping, visits to the arcades to play snooker and basketball. Staff have started to capture these moments for the child through photos. These shared activities also help the children to develop positive relationships with staff. One family member said:

'I am in no doubt that [name of child] is well cared for. Seeing the smile on [name of child]'s face when they see staff says it all for me. I know [name of child] is absolutely fine.'

The home is now maintained to a good standard. It has been redecorated and new furniture has been purchased. One professional said:

'It feels much better now walking in, it feels warm and homely. It was tired before and did not feel like a home where children would live. I can see a big difference, it's certainly better.'

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

Children's safety plans provide the staff with the guidance that they need to keep children safe. Children's changing needs and emerging risks are discussed during team meetings so that the staff can constantly develop new strategies to help to keep the children safe. Reviews and debriefs with the staff following serious or significant incidents ensure that children receive better care and support.

Children's care plans and safety plans inform key-work sessions. Targeted key-work sessions support the children to learn how to keep themselves safe. As a result, for one child, there has been a reduction in their exposure to risks, such as fire-setting and the use of illegal substance.

There has been a reduction in the duration and intensity of physical holds, which are used appropriately to manage the children's behaviour. Key-work sessions are held promptly to ensure that the child's well-being is maintained and to help the child to identify the potential triggers for their behaviour. The records of this practice are reviewed promptly so that patterns are identified and new strategies, which are less restrictive for the child, are identified quickly.

Staff clearly understand their role when children go missing from the home. Children have a personalised missing-from-home protocol and the staff have developed good links with the local police force. The quality assurance manager advocates for children well and is confident to challenge agencies to improve the coordinated response to children. As a result, the time that the children are away from the home and may be at risk of harm has reduced significantly.

The adults who care for the children are suitably vetted as safe recruitment practice is followed. New staff receive a suitable induction and training programme so that they can meet the individual needs of the child quickly.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The quality assurance manager has taken time to ensure that positive changes are made in the home. No children have moved into the home since the last full inspection. As a result, staff now have a unified approach and there is a renewed enthusiasm for providing the child with the best level of care.

The quality assurance manager has worked hard to ensure that consistent care is provided to the child. She advocates well on their behalf, and she challenges other agencies when children do not receive the support that they require. The quality assurance manager ensures that the children have a voice to express their views. This helps children feel valued and listened to.

The staff have increased confidence and resilience. Bespoke training ensures that the individual needs of the child are well met, and the emphasis that has been placed on changing the staff's language has improved the child's records. As a result, children's records are more personalised, and children benefit from the knowledge and skills of the staff team.

The staff are committed to the child and speak about the child with warmth. One professional said:

'I hear a lot of staff speaking about [name of child] with a lot of love and nurture. It's difficult at times to recognise [name of child]'s trauma when there is aggression, but there is a lot of warmth from the staff, and a lot of playfulness with interactions. The staff are overwhelmingly positive about [name of child] and get frustrated at times as they can't do more. They understand now, small steps are key.'

The quality assurance manager has effective monitoring systems in place to evaluate the quality of care that the children receive. Her monitoring of the service identifies shortfalls quickly so that action can be taken to avoid any negative impact for the children.

An experienced, enthusiastic manager has been appointed. He works closely with the quality assurance manager to ensure continuity of care for the child. The managers have a clear plan in place to drive improvements forward as they use their management monitoring systems well.

Both the compliance notices and all the requirements made at the last inspection have been met. No requirements or recommendations have been made at this inspection.

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: 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: Post vacant

Inspectors

Claire Webster, Social Care Inspector

Michael Dack, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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