

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.

Inspection dates: 31 October to 1 November 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **outstanding**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 25 January 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is outstanding because:

- The leadership is excellent. The registered manager is skilled and experienced, and he leads the team very well. The senior staff team support the registered manager and are an integral and important part of the management of the home. They take responsibility for many of the management tasks and help to create the distinctive culture within the home.
- The staff team members are all experienced and skilled, and they show a great deal of commitment and enthusiasm in their work. They provide a nurturing and caring environment. Communication between staff members is strong, and the attention to detail is excellent. This provides good consistency of care practice.
- The young people have excellent relationships with the staff. Their experience of living in the home is very good. The staff offer clear boundaries and expectations, and the young people understand these. The culture in the home is characterised by respect, openness, cooperation and trust.
- Many of the young people have made excellent progress from low starting points. They have engaged well with in-depth, personalised work provided by the staff and by specialist external workers, and this has helped them significantly in dealing with their difficulties.

The children's home's areas for development:

- The registered manager needs to ensure that sufficient staff members have up-to-date first aid training.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25/01/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
07/06/2016	Full	Outstanding
17/02/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
08/12/2015	Full	Outstanding

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, the 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 registered person must ensure that at all times, at least one person on duty has a suitable first aid qualification. (Regulation 31(2)(a))	31/12/2017

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The young people living at this home benefit substantially from the efforts and commitment of the staff. The staff team has remained almost unchanged over the past year. The leadership and management are strong and experienced, and the staff are skilled and positive. This has allowed the registered manager to be able to build a staff team that is exceptionally effective. All the young people are making good or exceptional progress, and the experience of living in the home is also excellent.

The staff have created an exceptional culture in the home. It is based on staff wanting to meet the needs of the young people as fully as possible. They take time to understand the young people and to discuss how best to support them. This is demonstrated when staff finishing a shift hand over to staff starting a shift. This daily handover is not only very detailed but staff reflect, in depth, on issues and discuss how best to move forward. The culture is one of openness and of taking responsibility. Staff provide clear boundaries and expectations which are fair and predictable and tackle issues in a straightforward way. This allows the young people to approach staff easily to talk and share openly and to discuss difficult issues. It also allows a relaxed environment that is full of good humour, fun and positive activities.

Two of the young people have spent short periods away from the home in secure accommodation. There was never any doubt that they would return to the home after these periods. Staff kept in close touch and planned throughout for their return. This genuine commitment epitomises the attitude of the staff team towards the young people. Both young people have returned, and good progress has been resumed.

One young person struggles to deal with their past traumas. Staff have completely redesigned and rebuilt their bedroom to contain a safe den complete with sensory equipment and resources. This was planned and carried out with the young person, who

now has a safe place of their own making which helps them considerably. The staff have carried out much intensive personalised work with this young person, and the young person is now benefiting from external specialist therapeutic interventions as well. This holistic approach is supporting this young person to make excellent progress from a very low starting point.

One young person has made considerable progress in dealing with relationships with peers. The staff have offered intensive support, and this young person now uses social media and the internet in safer ways and has safer relationships with peers and friends.

Another young person has been supported to stop taking drugs and to quickly resume good progress at school.

All the young people are making progress at school or college, and some are making exceptional progress. One young person is pursuing a career in travel and tourism and is doing very well at college. Another is planning to start a career in motor mechanics and already has a planned college place to do this. A staff member organised a much appreciated and exciting trip to a Formula One grand prix as a reward for this young person.

All of the young people have difficult relationships with their families. There is a tremendous amount of work put in by staff and by the young people to improve these relationships, and this greatly benefits the young people. A number of the young people now have significantly better relationships with their families thanks to this hard work. One young person has been able to take a successful holiday with their parent because of the improvement in their relationship.

The staff take a very practical view of preparing young people for independence. They encourage young people to practise skills and to do things for themselves with support. One young person spoken with by the inspector was looking forward to having a budget for their independence work within the home. They were later happily cooking the evening meal for all the staff and young people, with minimal help and supervision.

The feeling of cooperation and respect is very much part of the culture of the home and is maintained through the ups and downs of day-to-day life. There are high levels of trust that have been built in the home. Young people trust the staff, and staff trust the young people. This factor contributes significantly to the culture of the home.

The staff take considerable time to organise activities and trips with the young people. The home is full of photographs of young people mountain biking, rock climbing, camping and doing a wide variety of other outdoor activities. The young people are currently practising to undertake a second long distance bike ride to raise money for charity. Trips out to places of interest are also frequent and valuable.

Life in the home is busy, and these shared activities not only help relationships build but they engender confidence and resilience. One young person who has an interest in climbing has been supported to join a free-running club, which staff hope will encourage a safer and more responsible approach to this activity.

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

The staff understand risk, and they make good assessments of the risks to the young people. They also take appropriate action to minimise these risks. One young person is assessed as being at particularly high levels of risk in a variety of areas across their life. Staff have spent a great deal of time assessing these risks thoroughly and have produced an exceptional range of services and taken appropriate action to reduce these risks wherever possible. This is an impressive piece of work, to not only contain and care for this young person, but also to ensure that they make excellent progress.

Two young people have spent short periods of time away from the home in secure accommodation after risks to them became unacceptably high. One young person was going missing from the home frequently and had become involved in drug taking. This young person is now back living in the home and has made very positive changes to their behaviour. There has been a substantial reduction in the number of times that this young person has been missing from the home and concerns around drug taking are considerably lessened. Another young person also spent some time in secure accommodation because they had become a danger to themselves and others. Again, this young person has been able to make positive changes to their behaviour since returning to live at the home. This is a result of excellent care planning and tremendous commitment from the staff.

The staff work hard to establish and maintain an environment where expectations and boundaries are clear and consistent. They do, on occasions, use physical interventions where necessary. However, these are accompanied by individual work and as a result of which the number and duration of these interventions are reducing. The staff try hard not to use sanctions, preferring to use restorative measures. This practice is deeply embedded in the culture of the home.

Some of the young people have gone missing from the home at times. The staff understand what is happening to these young people and take appropriate action to address the issues. Earlier in the year, two young people started to mix with a group of local youngsters and were going missing from the home more often. The staff worked with the local police to disperse this group, and the number of missing from home incidents immediately reduced. Staff make very good efforts to locate and return any young person who goes missing and to ensure that a return home interview takes place.

Another young person has developed a liking for climbing onto the roofs of local buildings. The staff quickly contacted the owners and worked with them to look at security and access, and this has started to address this issue.

One young person has a safety plan in place. The staff have worked with this young person to agree a set of things that they can do when they feel unsafe because of their traumatic past. This works well, and staff can prompt this young person to use the plan at times when they are feeling unsure or unsafe. This work was carried out in conjunction with external psychologists and therapists and complements the ongoing

therapy that they receive.

There have been only a few safeguarding issues over the last year. On each occasion, staff dealt with these well. They were reported correctly and resolved positively. Overall, the staff create a safe place for the young people, and the young people clearly feel safe and secure living here.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager has considerable experience and he is appropriately qualified. He ensures that the home achieves the aims and objectives that are set out in the statement of purpose. The staff team has been very stable for a number of years, with minimal changes, and this has allowed the registered manager to know his staff well and any areas of strength or difficulty. He is then able to address issues or delegate responsibility as he requires.

The registered manager provides regular supervision and training to the staff team, and this is well received by the staff. The registered manager also has strong links with Durham University Social Work Department and has a constant supply of post-graduate students carrying out their long placements at the home. This provides an opportunity for the students to communicate current thinking and research information to the staff team and also contributes to the wider social work profession.

The registered manager certainly prioritises the needs of the young people in his care. He provides exceptional leadership to a team of dedicated staff who are committed to providing excellent care. The registered manager and the whole staff team have shown this commitment in many ways. Two of the young people have returned to the home after short stays in secure accommodation and are now making excellent progress again. The registered manager is very clear that he will stick with these young people where possible. The two young people said that they wanted to return to the home as they had made significant relationships with staff and because they clearly felt cared for.

Standards of individual work carried out with the young people are high. The registered manager ensures that the staff are doing this work regularly and with sufficient depth and that the relevant issues are being addressed. He also ensures that external specialist staff are engaged to do work where necessary. These include mental health workers, psychologists, therapists, sexual health workers, drug and alcohol counsellors, youth offending workers and specialist educational support workers. This combined effort ensures that the young people have high quality support, and this enables them to make excellent progress. The registered manager will challenge anyone when the standard of service offered is not of a sufficiently high standard. He has recently negotiated an appropriate school placement for a hard-to-place young person and challenged another education provider when the support for one young person was not good enough.

One requirement was made at the previous inspection. This was to ensure that all physical interventions were properly recorded. This requirement has been met. One requirement was made at this inspection, which is to ensure that sufficient staff

members are appropriately trained in first aid.

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: Mark Proffitt

Inspector:

Colin Imrie, social care inspector

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