

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC035181
Inspector	Nicola McEvinney
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	Stephen Robinson
Date of last inspection	11/03/2014

Inspection date	02/12/2014
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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	adequate
Leadership and management	good

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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This home's primary function is to provide short breaks to children and young people where there is a risk of them entering the care system. This is an essential service to families in the area. Parents and Grandparents speak highly of the support that they and their respective children receive. 'In the short time he has been going he realises that he has been getting it wrong, mixing with other people who are not good for him.' These children and young people do not present any challenging behaviours; they come to the home to help them to improve their relationship with their families. Parents of children using the short breaks service say that their children like to come and they have seen some improvement in their behaviours and relationships have improved.

The secondary function of the home is to admit young people in an emergency situation. These young people are generally in crisis and may present some challenging behaviours. They reside at the home for a very short period, moving quickly onto an alternative placement or return to their home. The home provides a safe, stable environment during this time of crisis.

The children and young people who use the short breaks service make good progress from when they started. The effective individual support they and their families receive enables the majority of them to stay together and helps to resolve

the difficulties within their family.

Staff are proactive in ensuring the safety of children and young people in the home. However, some young people put themselves at risk by continuing to go missing and staff, therefore, take all reasonable steps to locate and work with other agencies to secure their safe return. Children and young people say that they feel safe.

Leadership and management arrangements are strong. The Registered Manager has a good awareness of the strengths of the home. These are having a skilled staff team with the ability to work with children, young people and their parents or carers on a range of complex issues. The development plan identifies areas for improvement to enhance the service and experience for children and young people.

Shortfalls identified during this inspection relate to the recording of restraints, the Statement of Purpose not being forwarded to Ofsted and consultation with parents as part of the regulation 33 visit.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home provides care and accommodation for six young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. It is operated by a local authority. The particular remit of the home is to provide time-limited short break care with the objective of returning young people to their families on a permanent basis.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/03/2014	Interim	good progress
14/11/2013	Full	good
24/01/2013	Interim	good progress
14/08/2012	Full	good

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

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
17A (2001)	ensure a description of the measure used is recorded when a young person is restrained (Regulation 17B (3)(c))	31/01/2015
4 (2001)	provide a copy of the statement of purpose to HMCI. (Regulation 4 (2))	31/01/2015
33 (2001)	ensure the regulation 33 visitor interviews parents as part of their visit (Regulation 33 (8)(a))	31/01/2015

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Children and young people who attend the home for a short break usually come when relationships between their parents or carers are at risk of breaking down. The intervention of the service supports families to stay together. Parents speak positively about the support they receive from the home and are kept informed of the progress of their children. The work the home undertakes with children, young people and their families impacts positively on the well-being of all.

Parents oversee the health needs for those children and young people who attend the home for a short break. Staff are proactive in addressing the health needs of those young people who are admitted in an emergency. For example, where there are health concerns, staff will quickly refer to the looked after children's nurse for a health needs assessment in order for appropriate referrals to be made. If young people require any medical intervention, for example in the case of diabetes or the use of an EpiPen, the looked after nurse undertakes training with staff to ensure that they are competent and are able to care for these children and young people safely.

Children, young people and their parents work with the staff to identify where input is needed. This ensures everybody's views are heard. Within the home children and young people's views are sought on what they wish to eat, what bedroom they wish to stay in and activities they wish to participate in.

Children and young people who currently access the short breaks service do not indulge in substance misuse while on a short break. However, this is a feature of some young people's behaviours and the drug and alcohol services work with them to support and address this behaviour.

Children and young people who access the short breaks service all attend their education provision and are doing well. When young people are excluded or admitted in an emergency and are not attending their education provision, they are expected to comply with the home's daily routine. This entails them undertaking educational work during the school day. This consists of, either work sent from school or as the home is registered with an accredited educational programme they commence an appropriate course. This ensures that children and young people benefit from the daily routine of a school day and their learning is enhanced.

Children and young people benefit from the home having an allotment in the community. Not only does it teach them new skills in horticulture but they reap the benefit from the produce they grow. This project also builds community relationships with other allotment holders.

Children and young people are encouraged to practice age-appropriate independence skills. For example, they keep their rooms in order, help with decorating, do their own

laundry, help with shopping and meal preparation. This helps them to prepare for adulthood.

Quality of care

good

All the children and young people who access the short breaks service quickly engage with staff. They build trusting relationships and friendships with other children and young people using the service. This creates an environment where they are ready to work with staff to address the issues that create conflict within their family. Parents say that their children enjoy coming and speak positively about the staff. Carers of more reluctant children and young people, say, 'He says he hates it but he is always ready with his clothes. I know he really enjoys going.'

There are no behavioural issues with the young people on a short break. Young people admitted in an emergency may present some behavioural challenges as these children and young people are generally in crisis. Sometimes their behaviours require additional staffing which may include waking night staff. This ensures all young people are appropriately supervised. Behaviour management plans are put in place which aim to identify triggers to unwanted behaviours with strategies in place to manage them. This ensures a consistent approach is maintained.

Children and young people's views are taken into account in how the home is run. These improvements include having satellite television and comfy chairs in the lounge. However, not all requests are granted, for example children and young people requested that they have Wi-Fi but this was refused for safeguarding reasons which was accepted by the children and young people.

The home is prompt in addressing all complaints. The few complaints received have come from the local community and have all been addressed. This helps to maintain good community relationships. The home has received numerous compliments and thank you cards from children, young people and their parents thanking them for their support enabling their family to stay together.

Children and young people's needs are clearly set out in their care plan alongside their daily routine to ensure that there is a consistent approach maintained for their care. These are colourful, child friendly documents, clearly setting out how young people are to be cared for on a day to day basis. For those young people on a short break there is a clear plan for work that is required to address the issues that have caused the crisis within the family home. These plans are under constant review to ensure that they are current and effective. Parents receive a telephone call prior to any short stay to enable the home to address any issues arising and receive a report following their stay. This enables parents to see the progress their child has made.

Children and young people and their families benefit from the support of a range of services to meet their needs. This includes community support services, psychological and sexual health resources and drug and alcohol agencies.

Children and young people benefit from the proactive approach of the staff team in promoting their education. If not attending school, children and young people are expected to undertake educational activities during the school day. The Registered Manager will challenge decisions to exclude young people, particularly when the incident happened a few days prior to the young person being excluded. Meetings with education providers are arranged in order to seek resolution.

Children and young people all have complex issues and all are treated as individuals to ensure their specific needs are addressed.

Keeping children and young people safe adequate

Children and young people using the short breaks service are safe. There is good matching which ensures children and young people who are placed together do not pose any risk to one another. There are no bullying behaviours exhibited.

Children and young people are safeguarded by effective risk assessments identifying potential dangers with strategies in place to minimise the risk.

None of the children or young people using the short breaks service go missing. However, some young people who are admitted in an emergency and new to the care system have a propensity for going missing. These individuals do not go missing from the home because staff follow them to persuade them to return to the home, occasionally with police assistance. This action ensures their safety. However, these young people go missing from school. The home is proactive in trying to locate these young people and there are close links with the missing person's police co-ordinator and social work teams. Strategy meetings are held regularly to ensure that these young people's high profile is maintained.

Young people are made welcome when they return from going missing. Staff have discussions with them to try and determine why they go. The police undertake welfare return visits to try to establish their whereabouts when missing to enable them to assess the risk.

Children and young people who are using the short breaks service present no behaviour problems during their stay. However, those young people who are admitted as an emergency are generally in crisis and may present some challenging behaviours. The use of restraint is not often used, just five since the last inspection held in March 2014. However, the restraint records do not clearly describe the hold used. This lack of clarity in the recordings does not ensure that there is transparency.

Children and young people benefit from the stability of the staff team and there have been no new people recruited.

Young people are protected by all health and safety checks being carried out regularly. All young people are made aware of the fire evacuation procedure to ensure that they know what action to take in the event of a fire.

Leadership and management

good

The Registered Manager is enthusiastic, competent and well qualified. He has attained a Diploma in Social Work and NVQ level 5 in management. He has been in post since March 2013 and has worked in children's residential care for a number of years. He leads a diverse staff team coming from a variety of disciplines who offer a comprehensive range of care and support packages to children, young people and their families. Staff are well supervised and have good training opportunities ensuring they maintain the necessary skills to care for the complex needs of the children and young people they support.

The Registered Manager keeps up to date in the changes in regulations and this is shared with staff to ensure they are aware of such changes.

The Registered Manager continues to strive to improve the service for children, young people and their families. The team plan includes developing the restorative approach further; to improve consultation and participation with stakeholders; to develop stronger working relationships with other agencies and to ensure children and young people's care plans are regularly reviewed to maximise their potential.

The Statement of Purpose is a comprehensive document informing interested parties what services the home has to offer. However, Ofsted has not received a copy which prevents the regulator from having a good oversight of how the home operates. The children's guide is a child friendly, colourful document which informs children and young people of what they can expect when they come for a stay.

There are good monitoring systems in place undertaken by the independent visitor, although parents are not always consulted as part of this process. The manager's internal monitoring provides a good overview of the home and outlines how stakeholders are consulted.

This home is an invaluable service to families in the city, enabling them to stay together. The work done with children and their parents impacts positively on their family life and prevents children and young people entering the care system in the majority of cases.

There were no requirements or recommendations raised at the last inspection.

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.