

SC035181

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 who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection date: 3 October 2017

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected requires improvement to be 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: 8 August 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection:

Four compliance notices were issued following the previous inspection. The completion date for these was 29 September 2017.

A restriction of admissions notice was issued on 14 August 2017 following the previous inspection for 12 weeks to 5 November 2017.

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- The provider has now made significant changes to the management of the home in order to address the inappropriate admissions. They have changed and clarified the admissions criteria and processes. These changes are clearly written in the revised statement of purpose and this will have a positive impact on the children and young people placed at the home
- The provider appointed a skilled and experienced manager in June 2017. The manager has now addressed the issues raised in the previous inspection.
- The safeguarding of the young people has been significantly improved to the point where there are now very few concerns.
- The young people living at the home at the time of the inspection are making significantly better progress in all areas of their lives than they were previously.

The children's home's areas for development:

- The registered person has revised the statement of purpose, but has not sent a copy of this to HMCI within the required timescales.
- The provider has changed the role of the home from emergency and respite care to longer-term care. The staff team need formal training and development to learn and understand about this change of role.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
08/08/2017	Full	Inadequate
31/01/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
28/06/2016	Full	Requires improvement
16/02/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

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 registered person must notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16(3)(b)) In particular, this relates to the statement of purpose.	30/11/2017
The registered person must ensure that all employees undertake appropriate professional development. (Regulation 33(4)(a))	30/11/2017

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

There have been a number of substantial changes since the previous inspection and the young people currently in the home are now making good progress in most areas of their lives.

The issues of poor management, both in the home and in the wider local authority, have been resolved. This has been a significant and positive piece of work and included the local authority Director of Children's Services, the responsible individual and the staff team in the home.

No admissions have been made at the home since the last inspection because of a restriction notice that was issued by HMCI on 14 August 2017. However, there is now a clear commitment from the collective management team to ensure that all future admissions are in line with the statement of purpose.

One young person, who had previously been placed at the home in an emergency, has been discharged to a more suitable home. This placement had drifted for too long as managers had been unable to find an appropriate alternative placement. The young person was very unsettled at the home and there were considerable concerns around their safety. This impacted negatively on the other young people in the home. Since the planned discharge, the other young people have become much more settled.

The staff spoken to by the inspector said that 'we've turned a corner' and commented that the home 'is very settled now'. Staff morale has clearly improved considerably. The staff team is resilient and staff's skills and experience are being used positively again

now that the home has settled.

The young people living at the home are positively engaged with the staff, and good relationships between them and the staff have resumed. Both the young people are now attending school after a period of poor or non-attendance. Not only this, but they are clearly positive about their education again.

Both the young people are now making good progress with their family relationships and contact. Future planning is looking at a possible return home for one young person.

The staff ensure that the home is calm and that the young people are relaxed and comfortable. The staff have led a concerted effort to redecorate and refurbish the home. This has happened quickly and the young people have been part of this process. Much of the furniture has been replaced, a good deal of decoration has taken place, and the home is now awaiting the final touches of décor and personalisation.

The health needs of the young people are being managed well. One young person, who had previously refused to take important medication, is now taking this correctly and is calmer and healthier because of this.

One young person has now engaged with a drugs counsellor and instances of drug taking are greatly reduced.

The staff have reviewed and revised all the recording systems and practices. All the correct documentation is now in place and is up to date and accurate. Care planning is clear, risk assessments are accurate and other records are complete and in place.

Of particular note is the increased individual work. Key-working sessions are regular and they address the relevant issues. It is clear from the recording that the young people are engaged in this work and are making progress because of it. One young person has engaged with staff during key work to talk about taking drugs, and this has led directly to them engaging with the drugs counsellor following a referral.

Key-work sessions have also looked at issues of 'bullying' and of 'keeping yourself safe'. Again, these sessions have led directly to young people being more respectful towards each other and of going missing less.

The new manager has introduced a comprehensive recording system for supporting the young people to learn independence skills. Although these are early days, the system is working and young people are being prepared for independent living.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

The young people at the home are now being effectively safeguarded, but there have been some concerns in the period since the previous inspection.

The staff have reviewed and revised all the risk assessments and these are now up to date and accurate. They contain good measures to control and minimise risks and staff are putting these into practice effectively.

The young person who has now left the home did continue to put themselves at risk by

going missing. Staff were unable to affect change in this behaviour. Levels of going missing with the other young people have substantially reduced and one young person has stopped this behaviour altogether.

There have been no other safeguarding concerns about the two young people who continue to reside in the home. The staff have provided these young people with a good range of individualised key work around keeping safe and this has been successful.

The staff have been able to put appropriate boundaries and expectations in place with these two young people and their behaviour has settled considerably because of this.

One young person spoken to by the inspector indicated that they were happy and content. By their demeanour and interaction with the staff, it was clear to see that the young person felt safe and secure in the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager at the home has applied to be the registered manager. He is appropriately skilled with considerable experience of managing other children's homes within the provider's local authority. He is also appropriately qualified. The appointment of this manager was just prior to the previous inspection. He has made a significant, positive difference in a relatively short space of time

The previous shortfalls at the home were caused by poor management. Previous managers of the home and senior managers within the local authority did not control the numbers or the appropriateness of admissions to the home. This has now been rectified. The new manager has ensured that all the requirements made at the previous inspection have been met.

The responsible individual has, in conjunction with the most senior managers in the local authority, taken steps to ensure that future admissions will all be appropriate and in line with the revised statement of purpose. The statement of purpose now says that, in the future, emergency admissions will be 'rare' and the stated admissions criteria and processes are clear.

The responsible individual has ensured that all the relevant senior managers in the local authority are aware of the past difficulties and are aware of the new agreed admissions criteria and procedures at this home.

The manager and the responsible individual have worked closely together to make a number of significant changes. They have ensured that the staff team is at full strength by employing two more experienced senior workers who have a background in longer-term care. The manager and the responsible individual have also filled the care worker posts. This additional senior expertise will complement the already experienced staff team and is allowing the manager to move his developments forward quickly. They have also found a much more appropriate placement for one young person, who had been at the home for some time and who has now moved on.

The manager has, with the full support of the responsible individual, created a comprehensive development plan and has been working through this, making excellent progress. This clearly demonstrates that the manager has gained a good understanding

of the strengths and the weaknesses of his new staff team and of care practices in the home.

The staff clearly appreciate the new manager, with one staff member saying he was 'like a breath of fresh air'. The manager has put a training matrix in place and has taken time to review all the staff development and training needs. Supervisions are now carried out regularly with all staff and these are good-quality, in-depth discussions.

The manager has demonstrated that he prioritises the needs of the children and young people and has a clear understanding both of what they need and of the progress they are making.

The manager previously managed another children's home belonging to the same local authority provider, so he already has a comprehensive network of agencies and external professionals. He is willing to contact and challenge others as is required and he is effective in doing this.

At the previous inspection, there were eight requirements made and four of these were subject to compliance notices. There was also a 12-week restriction of admissions notice put in place. All the compliance notices and all the requirements have been met.

The young people have been safeguarded from bullying and work has been done with the young people to keep them safer, which has been effective. Staff supervision is now happening regularly. Risk assessments are in place and are accurate, and placement plans detail what work is needed to ensure the young people are kept safe.

Two requirements have been made at this inspection.

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: SC035181

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: County Hall, Durham DH1 5UL

Responsible individual: Karen Robb

Registered manager: Post Vacant

Inspector:

Colin Imrie, social care inspector

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