

SC035181

Registered provider: Durham County Council

Interim inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is operated and managed by a local authority. It provides care for up to five children who may have emotional and/or social difficulties.

Four children receive care from the provider. Three children currently live at this home. One child receives care from the provider at a different address.

The manager registered with Ofsted in September 2019.

Inspection date: 11 January 2022

Date of last inspection: 28 September 2021

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

This inspection

The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection

This home was judged requires improvement to be good at the last full inspection.

At the interim inspection, Ofsted judged that it has sustained effectiveness. One requirement relating to physical interventions under regulation 35 has been reissued. In addition, a further requirement and one recommendation have been issued as a result of this visit.

Children make progress with their learning and development. The manager advocates well on behalf of the children to ensure that the children access the appropriate educational support that they need in line with their plans. Children's care plans detail their educational targets, and are regularly reviewed by the staff to ensure that the children make continued progress.

There have been no new admissions to the home since the full inspection. However, the manager has improved his processes for accepting future admissions to the home. The home's updated locality risk assessment informs children's individual risk assessments and impact risk assessments. Additionally, the manager requests that any potential referral is discussed within the child's care team meetings. This ensures that the manager receives sufficient information to appropriately risk assess the suitability and viability of new admissions to the home.

Children are proud of their bedrooms, which are personalised and suitably furnished. There is now an improved system in place to monitor the conditions in the children's bedrooms. This is effective, as the staff respond quickly to address any issues. This provides the children with positive messages about acceptable standards of care.

Children benefit from regular key-work sessions that help them to discuss a range of topics, including their set targets. Clear and child-friendly recordings in the children's documents help the children to see how they will receive support. It also helps the children to recognise their own achievements.

Children receive support from a nurturing staff team when the children are in crisis. Occasionally, when the children are in crisis, the staff need to hold the children to support them. However, some of the records do not clearly identify when the children have been spoken to regarding the use of the intervention. Therefore, it is unclear if this has taken place within the required timeframe. This means that the manager cannot be assured that they have the accurate information they need to ensure that the use of physical intervention is helpful for the child when they are in crisis.

For some of the children, there has been an increase in critical incidents. This is because some of the children have uncertainty about their plans. There has been a

delay in moving one of the children into a bespoke placement. This child has not received sufficient support to help them to understand their care plan, and there has been a delay in the placing authority moving their plan on. Additionally, the children do not consistently have access to an independent advocate that can represent their views, wishes and feelings.

Most of the children benefit from the support of a consistent and stable staff team. The provider has used agency staff when necessary to ensure that the needs of the children are met. Occasionally, there is a reliance on the agency staff to provide the care throughout the evening for one of the children. This can be unsettling for children.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/09/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good
21/05/2019	Full	Good
09/05/2018	Full	Good
20/02/2018	Interim	Improved 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, and 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 children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who— take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff— ascertain and consider each child's views, wishes and feelings, and balance these against what they judge to be in the child's best interests when making decisions about the child's care and welfare; help each child to understand how the child's views, wishes and feelings have been taken into account and give the child reasons for decisions in relation to the child; ensure that each child— is given appropriate advocacy support; ensure that an explanation is given to each child as soon as reasonably practicable after the child's arrival about— what advocacy support or services are available to the child, how the child may access that support or those services and any entitlement the child may have to independent advocacy provision; and ensure that the views of each relevant person are taken into account, so far as reasonably practicable, before making a decision about the care or welfare of a child. (Regulation 7 (1)(c) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(b)(iii)(d)(iii)(e))	11 February 2022

The registered person must ensure that— within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(b)(i)(ii)(c))	11 February 2022
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Recommendation

- The registered person must ensure that no more than half of the staff on duty at any one time, by day or night, at the home should be from an external agency. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.17)

Information about this inspection

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full 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: SC035181

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Durham County Council

Registered provider address: County Hall, Durham DH1 5UJ

Responsible individual: Claire Morris

Registered manager: Martin Poole

Inspector

Jacqueline Tate, Social Care Inspector

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