

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	14/10/2015
Unique reference number	SC035181
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Durham County Council
Registered person address	County Hall, DURHAM, DH1 5UL

Responsible individual	Ms Karen Robb
Registered manager	Mr Stephen Robinson
Inspector	Mr Colin Imrie

Inspection date	14/10/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Improved Effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
how well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC035181

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- The manager and staff are very experienced. They are a team that has worked together for a long time and are not only skilled but are enthusiastic, committed and child centred.
- The staff team have a good understanding of the short term nature of the work. They work quickly and efficiently to achieve the changes required. They are good at ensuring arrangements and services are identified and put in place quickly. They are good at planning and working with other professionals.
- Staff are skilled at engaging and working with children and young people and their families. They are able to understand and work to resolve family problems and are skilled at the assessments of these situations.
- Staff use a range of activities to engage children and young people and these work well.
- Children and young people feel comfortable, safe and relaxed at the home and generally understand why they are there and what professionals are trying to achieve.
- Staff work well with other professionals. They have built up excellent networks and relationships with a wide range of services and use these well to achieve progress and good outcomes for children and young people.

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

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 (England) Regulations 2015 and the *Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards*. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
12. In order to meet the protection of children standard, with particular reference to risk assessments, the registered person must ensure that staff: (2)(a)(i) assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child.	16/11/2015
14. In order to meet the care planning standard, with particular reference to ensuring that full and accurate information is obtained by staff before a child is admitted to the home, the registered person must ensure that children: (1)(a) receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home.	16/11/2015

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is run by a local authority and is registered for the care and accommodation of six children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/03/2015	Interim	Improved Effectiveness
02/12/2014	Full	Good
11/03/2014	Interim	Good Progress
14/11/2013	Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	good
The home performs a number of functions for the local authority. They work with children and young people who are admitted for emergency placements. They also work with children and young people for short breaks. These are usually packages of one, two or three days per week over a period of up to four months. This is however flexible and can change according to the needs of the child or young person. The home also engages in some outreach work with other children and young people known to them. Because of the short term nature of the work the home admits and discharges a high number of children and young people and this requires staff to work quickly and efficiently to ensure good outcomes. The children and young people who use this service come from a very wide range of situations and do receive an individualised package of care. The staff are particularly flexible in providing suitable packages of support and care. Because the home only offers short term placements, progress has to be measured against the fact that children and young people often only spend a few days at the home. Children and young people are admitted to the home when an emergency arises or when they are in need of short term intervention to cope with a difficult situation. Therefore the desired outcome is not always clear at the start of the placement as the staff perform an assessment function and then plan with children, young people, their families, carers and other professionals in order to achieve the best outcome. Progress can be seen in that a number of the children and young people have clearly started attending school much better once they started receiving a service from the home. Progress is perhaps most evident when children and young people are able to return home after a crisis or when they move on to a more settled and safe environment. Staff do work thoroughly with children, young people and their families and there is clear evidence of young people returning home after family difficulties and of moving on to more settled and safe long term placements. Children and young people using the service do comment positively about the experience. One young person who said he felt safe at the home said that he particularly liked the staff who were friendly and had fun with him. This young person hoped to return home soon and said staff had spent time with him listening to him and talking to him about his situation.	

Another young person also said that they liked the staff. They said, 'They are easy to talk to, they are fun to be with but they can be serious when they need to be and have helped me a lot.' This young person also said, 'I feel safe here, and there are no problems or bullying.' This young person said she felt more confident as a result of attending the home for respite care. Another young person was also positive and said he understood why he was there and what staff were trying to do with him.

A number of parents commented favourably. One said, 'Staff are amazing. They have really helped me. She went on to say that her grandson, 'really loves it there', and, 'they have offered outreach in addition to the respite days and this is really useful when there is a difficulty'. Another parent said, 'Staff are really nice.' She went on to say her daughter loved it there.

A number of social workers commented about how well the staff worked and what good results they achieved. They commented on good planning, good communication and good work. One social worker said it is an, 'absolutely excellent service'.

Relationships between staff and young people are clearly good and at times excellent. Staff were working with young people to complete school work, to attend to jobs on their nearby allotment and to go out on activities. Young people were also attending planning meetings with staff and taking an active part.

While most children and young people who attend the home have a good experience and do make clear progress, some young people have a less settled time. Several young people have been moved on more quickly than planned in order to keep them safe and some others have run away from the home. Staff do make arrangements to deal with these young people quickly. Because the home deals with such high numbers of young people it is inevitable that some young people do not settle well, but clearly most do.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
Children and young people are kept safe at this home. The staff team are experienced and understand risks well. Risk assessments are routinely made but the risk assessment for one young person has not been fully evaluated and it does not have sufficient information around how to control or	

minimise risk. The risks around how the impact of one young person's behaviour might affect another young people also needs to be more detailed. A requirement has been made for staff to do this more thoroughly.

Staff do take time to plan which children and young people should and could stay at the home at the same time but this is not done formally in a risk assessment.

Some children and young people do go missing. On these occasions, staff make good efforts to find and return them and follow all procedures for reporting them. Some independent return from missing interviews have not taken place when children have been reported missing during their short break and then turned up at their family home after the period of respite has ended. Although staff carefully check these situations and document the outcomes so that they are certain the young person is safe and well, it has been difficult to ensure the independent interviews are completed when the young people are not in the care of the staff.

Staff do provide consistent and realistic boundaries for children and young people and these work well. The home has low levels of physical interventions and generally, negative sanctions are not used. Staff do use positive consequences and follow a restorative approach to difficult situations.

Young people report that they felt safe and the home feels relaxed, comfortable and orderly. The home is staffed flexibly so when needed there are more staff on duty. The staff also try hard to cover any internal leave and sickness so that consistency of care is very good.

There have been some instances where staff have been concerned that young people have been at risk of exploitation from people in the community and staff have worked well to resolve the issues in order to keep these young people safe. Staff liaise very well with the local police and the joint work they do is good.

The home is free from any health and safety issues and is well maintained.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
The registered manager has been in post for almost two and a half years and is appropriately qualified. The manager is very child centred and clearly prioritises the needs of young people. He is actively involved in the referral processes and the planning processes, and ensures that his staff attend all planning and decision making forums so that the views of the home are fully taken into account.	

It is clear that children and young people do make progress during their short stays at the home. It would be useful for the manager to more fully evaluate the overall performance of the home but on an individual basis staff, children, young people, their families and other professionals all say that progress is made. Planning is clear and most young people who go to the home either remain at home or are moved on to more settled and safe environment.

The manager and senior staff are well organised. Supervision is carried regularly and the content and recording of this is good quality. Appraisals for staff also happen regularly as required. A number of the staff commented that the manager was very good, one said he was, 'brilliant'.

Staff are well trained. There are regular training days and all staff have completed the core subjects including the mandatory level three diploma. Other training sessions are run by external professionals and by senior staff within the home.

The manager is experienced and is very aware of what the home does well and what needs to be improved. He is undertaking a substantial re-development of recording systems and looking at improving consultation systems with parents and carers as well as with children and young people. The manager is keen to develop the outreach function and this would add substantially to the home's service and work. The home meets its aims and objectives as set out in the statement of purpose.

Staff at the home work quickly and effectively in contacting other professionals as the children and young people using the service constantly change. Staff not only have a good understanding of what services are available but they have a good understanding of how to get services and how to negotiate when these are not forthcoming. During the inspection, staff were being very proactive in sorting out an educational placement for a young person who had arrived the previous evening. Staff knew the law, the rights of the young person and the internal processes and policies well and were able to quickly obtain what they wanted. The manager and staff are confident to challenge others when there are difficulties and happy to pursue these issues until resolved.

One area that does require more work is to ensure that no young person is admitted without sufficient information being obtained. In practice, this means that sufficient pre-placement information, assessments and consents are fully in place prior to the child or young person arriving. Some of the records demonstrate that this has not always happened and a requirement has been made to rectify this situation.

There were no requirements or recommendations from the last inspection.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place, however, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, 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 who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This 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 Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the *Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards*.

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