

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

The manager registered with Ofsted in February 2023.

At the time of the inspection, there was one child living in the home.

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 March 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 8 August 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
08/08/2022	Full	Good
11/01/2022	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
28/09/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good
21/05/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

When new children move into the home, they have a planned introduction and are welcomed by the manager and staff. This helps to reduce anxiety for children. Some of the children live in the home for a long time, and this provides them with stability. However, some children do not have a positive experience, and their physical and emotional health have been affected. This limits their trust in staff caring for them. Staff help the children move on from the home, and some children remain in contact with them.

The children's attendance at school and college is mixed. Staff understand the importance of children attending an educational provision and seek to identify an appropriate resource in line with the children's needs. Some children regularly access education. However, the staff struggle to consistently encourage attendance for all children. This prevents some children from reaching their full potential.

Staff have discussions with the children about worries that they have. The manager encourages staff to adopt a therapeutic parenting approach. Staff sensitively discuss issues affecting children and offer them advice. This means that for some children, risks such as going missing from home have been reduced.

Staff decorate the home themselves. Some areas of the house have benefited from these improvements. This includes the child currently living in the home having a personalised bedroom in line with their interests. Some rooms require refurbishment and repair. This prevents access to all areas of the home and does not provide a homely environment for children.

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

Some staff have not always kept children safe. This includes significant shortfalls in staff's safeguarding practice. Children's needs have not always been met, and risks continue to rise. Senior leaders take allegations made by children seriously and investigate shortfalls in staff practice. This helps to ensure that children are cared for by safe adults.

There are staff vacancies at the home, which means there has been a high use of agency staff who do not understand the children's needs. This has resulted in incidents escalating and the police becoming involved when children are in crisis. This means children risk being criminalised. There is now a more stable staff team in place to offer consistent care for children.

The manager and staff do not receive documents from other agencies in a timely way. This prevents staff from having relevant, up-to-date information about the children.

Children have individualised risk assessments, which are regularly reviewed. The documents contain known worries about the children and give staff guidance on how to manage and reduce these risks and vulnerabilities. Child-friendly versions are available to help explain to children the concerns that staff have and how they aim to support them.

Staff seek to understand children's needs and use de-escalation techniques to help keep children calmer. As a result, staff have not had to physically intervene to keep children safe for over 10 months. One family member said, 'They get [name of child] and their personality.'

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager is aware of the home's shortfalls and staffing issues. Leaders and managers continue to recruit staff to ensure that they can support more children. The manager has a clear vision, including to improve the outcomes for children. This is fully supported by senior leaders and the staff team. One staff member said, 'There has been lots of change since I started work here. It has all been for the greater good, and we are trying to raise the bar all the time.'

The manager and deputy manager seek to create a more positive working environment. Staff say that they now enjoy working in the home and that the managers are approachable. This means that children receive care from staff who feel supported.

The staff receive regular training and can identify when they need specific training. This enables adults caring for the children to have the knowledge and skills to meet their needs.

The manager ensures that staff receive regular supervision sessions and appraisals. He recognises that staff would benefit from these being more reflective and has a plan to address this.

The managers have robust auditing systems to ensure the effective day-to-day running of the home. However, some documents are not up to date, for example the locality risk assessment.

Although the registration of the home is to provide care for up to five children, at present only one child resides in the home due to staff shortages. However, leaders and managers continue to recruit staff to ensure the home can support more children.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person 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 must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; and that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(v)(d))	1 May 2024
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate; ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child; and understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each	1 May 2024

child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(d)(e)(f))	
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Recommendation

- The registered provider should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. The registered person should ensure that records are accurate and contain current information. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

Information about this 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 City, Durham DH1 5UJ

Responsible individual: Paul Rudd

Registered manager: Iain Scott

Inspectors

Jess Elliott, Social Care Inspector

Tina Ruffles, Regulatory Inspector Manager

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