

SC035181

Durham County Council

Monitoring visit

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 experience social and emotional difficulties.

The manager registered with Ofsted in February 2023.

At the time of the visit, three children were living in the home. The inspectors spoke with two children during the visit.

Inspection date: 20 July 2023

This monitoring visit

The purpose of this visit was to investigate potential breaches of regulations due to an increase in safeguarding notifications. These relate to serious child protection allegations against staff. Inspectors were aware of a police investigation into some of these matters. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate allegations of this kind, actions taken by the home in response to the allegations were considered, where appropriate, alongside the other evidence available at the time of the visit to inform the inspectors' judgements.

During the visit, the inspectors spoke to the responsible individual, the registered manager, four members of staff and two of the children. The inspectors sampled documents in relation to the safeguarding concerns.

Children's experiences vary significantly. Two children are in education and are progressing well. One child spoke about positive relationships with the staff, describing them as being 'like family'. This child is currently moving on to their adult home. The child said they wish that they could stay longer at the home.

Another child frequently goes missing. Staff have been unable to prevent her from engaging in risk-taking behaviours when she is away from the home and this means her risk of exploitation has increased. This child sometimes struggles to manage

their emotions at the home, which includes them being awake all night. This has an impact on the other children who are kept awake.

Staff remain calm, consistent and try to de-escalate the child's behaviour and emotions. However, this often has little effect. The manager attends multi-agency meetings, although he recognises that the staff are unable to keep this child safe so a more suitable home is being found.

The staff team has gone through a period of change and instability. The current team consists of staff with various levels of experience. There are also staff shortages as several members of the team have left or are currently not working at the home. This means that the remaining staff are working long hours to make sure that the children receive continuity of care.

The children have an individualised risk assessment with steps for the staff to follow, but the staff are not always consistent in their approach. This means that the children do not receive a clear message from all the staff.

The registered manager addresses shortfalls with staff and is changing the culture in the home. Supervision sessions support staff to improve their practice. Staff said that there have been improvements in the leadership and management of the home, which includes the managers being visible. Staff said that they receive good support.

The inspectors concluded from the visit there are serious and widespread concerns. Leaders and managers do not minimise the seriousness of the issues. They are taking steps to address the shortfalls, with plans for all the children to move out of the home in a planned way.

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

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 with 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— 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; help each child to understand how to keep safe; manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other; that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iv)(b))	18 August 2023
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 have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(d))	31 August 2023

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this visit was to monitor the action taken and the progress made by the children's home since its last Ofsted inspection.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC035181

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Durham County Council

Registered provider address: Durham County Council, County Hall, Durham DH1 5UL

Responsible individual: Paul Rudd

Registered manager: Iain Scott

Inspectors

Jacqueline Tate, Social Care Inspector
Miriam Dolman, Social Care Inspector

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