

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 or young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. There has been an acting manager in post since 15 March 2019. She has been supported in her role by the registered manager.

Inspection dates: 21 to 22 May 2019

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: 9 May 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
09/05/2018	Full	Good
20/02/2018	Interim	Improved effectiveness
03/10/2017	Full	Good
08/08/2017	Full	Inadequate

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children and young people living in the home receive a good standard of care. Bespoke care plans help children and young people to see how they will be supported and cared for by the adults that help look after them. The staff team has good knowledge and insight into each child and young person's care requirements. This means that children and young people receive consistent care on a day-to-day basis. Subsequently, children and young people are making good progress in most areas.

The staff team goes to great lengths to develop positive relationships with children and young people. Staff sensitively welcome children and young people on admission. This helps them to settle quickly.

Activities and outings are regularly offered to children and young people and these are well attended and enjoyed. This allows children and young people to spend quality time with their key worker and other adults that help care for them. This helps strengthen the quality of relationships that children and young people have with the adults that care for them as well as encouraging them to participate, enjoy and achieve.

There have been aesthetic changes to the home and décor. Touches such as fresh flowers are displayed and this creates a warm and welcoming environment when entering the home. Although there are staff to cook and clean around the home, children and young people like to contribute. Additionally, the home has an allotment that the children and young people like to visit with staff and grow fresh produce. Subsequently, there has been a significant reduction to damage in the home.

There is a good ethos in the home to healthy living and healthy eating. Medical appointments are well attended and supported. Memberships to local gyms are encouraged and attended by the children and young people. While children and young people can enjoy treats and convenience foods, this is balanced with healthier choices including homecooked food. One young person commented, '[Name] makes the best curries ever. I love the food here, it's the best. Well, that and the staff is the best. They have even helped me to bake and make my own food.'

School attendance for most children and young people is good. When children and young people are not attending formal educational placements, there are alternative educational activities offered that are well received. This provides learning opportunities as well as structure and routine for children and young people. Furthermore, it helps reintegration back into formal educational settings.

Children and young people are regularly consulted. They help contribute to their care planning. Key-worker sessions are balanced, being both reactive and proactive in nature. This means that children and young people receive the right level of support when needed and they know how the adults will help support them.

The staff team is very child focused and ensures that children and young people have access to an independent visitor or advocate. This means that children and young people

have additional support and advocacy from someone who is independent of the home. Furthermore, it provides children and young people with the message that they are valued and that their views are important.

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

Risk assessments are robust and identify individual risks and strategies to help mitigate the risk of harm. Since the last inspection, there has been an increase in allegations about children's and young people's behaviour in the home. Staff have followed the appropriate protocols and notified the relevant agencies. The inspector found evidence that the staff had not consistently followed risk assessments or always ensured the appropriate supervision of children and young people. The registered manager was able to reflect on the incidents and has a clear plan in place to strengthen practice in the home.

Low-level disruptive behaviour in the home is managed effectively. Since the last inspection, there has been minimal damage in the home, a significant reduction in physical interventions used, and the few sanctions that have been used are restorative in nature. Effective behaviour management in the home is helping children and young people to develop pro-social behaviours.

Missing from home episodes have significantly reduced. There have been two missing episodes involving children and young people currently living in the home. Staff follow the relevant protocols and ensure that children have access to an independent visitor on their return. This means that children and young people can express any concerns or worries with someone independent of the home.

All staff have completed mandatory training including safeguarding training. The registered manager has sourced additional training that will benefit the needs of the children and young people currently living in the home..

Bullying has not been an issue in the home. The staff team takes a proactive approach to ensure that children and young people have awareness to equality and diversity, along with zero tolerance to bullying. This helps children and young people to accept differences in a positive way.

Since the last inspection the home received a complaint. That complaint was not sent directly to the home's manager and was sent via the main headquarters of the organisation. There is no record in the home of how the complaint was dealt with or the outcome. This means that the inspector was unable to ascertain whether the matter had been resolved appropriately or effectively.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Since 15 March 2019 there has been an acting manager. The registered manager has been supporting her while he has taken up a more senior post in the organisation. The acting manager is very experienced and is familiar with the running of the home. There has been a restructure of the staff team with two new members of staff and some residential care workers taking on more senior duties. There has been no disruption

caused to the children following the restructure.

There is evidence that the acting manager identifies where the shortfalls in practice have been around the allegations of children's and young people's behaviour in the home. She has a plan to address the shortfalls, but this has not been effectively disseminated to all staff members. The registered manager was present during the inspection and was able to evidence how practice in the home is currently being addressed to drive improvements forward. This reflects the registered manager's ability to recognise the home's strengths, as well as areas of development to ensure that the home delivers the quality of care as set out in the home's statement of purpose.

The managers and the staff team work well with a care team of other professionals such as health workers and social workers. They are very proactive at supporting children and young people in all areas. One professional commented, 'The staff are very good at keeping me informed of everything. Staff know the children well and there is good communication between them. They are very supportive of [Name's] care plan. They are really good at taking the lead on matters such as speaking directly with the school nurse around dietary needs to improve [Name's] eating. They support contacts with family very well and they contribute in care team meetings. They are open to training and learning to help benefit the young people. They are really trying to make this placement as therapeutic as possible. They very much care for [Name].'

Team meetings and staff supervisions are scheduled to take place regularly. Safeguarding is included as an agenda topic. This supports safeguarding being at the forefront of thinking and practice. The inspector found some discussions taking place around the children's and young people's behaviour as well as their progress. There were inconsistencies in the quality of recording staff supervisions and discussions had, but no breaches of regulation were found.

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 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 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)(b))	20/06/2019

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 promote their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose; 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. (Regulation 13(1)(b)(2)(a)(b)(d)(e))	20/06/2019
Subject to paragraph (6), the registered person must establish a procedure for considering complaints made by or on behalf of children. In particular, the procedure must provide that no person who is the subject of a complaint takes any part in its consideration or investigation, except at the informal resolution stage if the registered person considers it appropriate. The registered person must ensure that a record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of any investigation. The registered person must ensure that no child is subject to any reprisal for making a complaint or representation. The registered person must supply to HMCI, at HMCI's request, a statement containing a summary of any complaints made during the preceding twelve months and the action that was taken in response to each complaint. (Regulation 39 (1)(2)(3)(4) (5))	20/06/2019

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: George Lisgo

Acting Manager: Janette Rock McDonald

Inspector

Jacqueline Tate, social care inspector

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