

SC035220

Registered provider: Durham County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and managed by a local authority and is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to three children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties and/or learning difficulties. The manager was registered with Ofsted in 2013. There are currently three children living at this home.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020. The home was last inspected in November 2019. The report is published on our website.

Inspection dates: 11 to 12 May 2021

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: 5 November 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/11/2019	Full	Good
16/10/2018	Full	Good
24/10/2017	Full	Outstanding
28/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children are thriving and making good progress since living at this home. Children are helped and encouraged to make positive changes in their behaviour and receive lots of praise and incentives from staff. Consequences used to manage the children's undesirable behaviours are restorative in nature, resulting in a more consistent approach.

Children have positive experiences of moving in to and out of the home. Effective decision-making around admissions helps to settle children quickly and they are making good progress relative to their starting points.

The manager and staff work well with a multi-disciplinary team of professionals, including a clinical psychologist. This supports the assessment and care planning process and informs children's future care needs. A professional commented, 'Children do so well at this home. Their therapeutic approach is so child centred. They really do make a difference for children.'

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, there are fewer activities available for the children to enjoy in the community. Staff have supported children to engage in alternative activities. Skate parks have been a particular favourite for children to enjoy with staff and each other. Some activities are supported remotely via video links. This provides children with routine and opportunities to have fun.

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

Recordings in children's documents are not always accurate and some are judgemental in parts. For example, dates are recorded incorrectly, which does not provide clear accountability of when action is taken in response to incidents. Some of the language used does not help children to understand how they will be helped and protected.

There has been some bullying behaviour between the children that has not been sufficiently monitored by the manager and staff. For example, there was one incident where a child tried to assault another child. No child suffered any injuries; however, staff have not highlighted the incident as a behaviour that requires monitoring. This does not provide children with reassurance that staff will take bullying and harmful behaviours seriously.

There was one incident where a child made an allegation about a member of staff. On this occasion, staff did not follow safeguarding processes, including notifying the local authority emergency duty team at that time. Furthermore, the member of staff remained on duty following the allegation. The allegation was later unfounded;

however, the manager's scrutiny of staff practice did not identify this shortfall to ensure that children are better protected.

Staff regularly review children's risk assessments and share them with children's social workers for their approval. Staff do respond to incidents as and when they occur. The timely action taken when two children went missing from the home resulted in their safe return.

Staff are very good at explaining to the children through key-work sessions what the risks are when they go missing. This helps children to understand ways of being safe in their community. Additionally, children have opportunities to speak to an independent person on their return.

Children receive support from staff during crisis episodes. When necessary, staff have used physical intervention following approved techniques as part of their preferred therapeutic model of care. Following the use of physical interventions, the manager conducts a debrief with both the child and staff involved. She then reviews the incident to ensure that she is satisfied that staff practice continues to be safe. This means children are better protected.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager is suitably qualified and very experienced for the position held. She is supported in her role by a stable staff team that share her values and commitment to care for the children. Both the manager and her staff speak with positive regard about the children and want to improve their outcomes. Staff said that they feel supported in their role and that they have good relationships with the manager.

The manager ensures that there are sufficient staffing levels in the home to care for the children and give them quality time. However, the manager's monitoring systems are not always effective in ensuring, for example, that there is a member of staff who is first-aid trained on duty. The manager has recognised this shortfall and all staff are now booked to receive first-aid training.

Staff receive regular supervision from a senior member in the team who is suitably qualified and experienced. This provides staff with opportunities to discuss their development as well as children's progress. The manager ensures that there are systems in place to appraise and review staff development in line with the statement of purpose. This means that staff have opportunities to reflect on their practice and identify any learning needs. This has supported children's progress.

The manager has sourced a range of literature and resources that her staff access and use in their practice. She encourages her staff to use evidence-based models in the direct work they deliver to children. This provides staff with improved knowledge about children's behaviours and how to respond in a therapeutic way. Children are better supported as a result.

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, 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 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; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(v)) This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	12 May 2021

Recommendations

- The manager needs to ensure that she develops a system to monitor children's behaviours to track for any themes of behaviour that may lead to bullying. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards' page 39, paragraph 8.16)
- The manager needs to ensure that she develops a system to monitor the effectiveness of consequences linked to children's challenging behaviours. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards' page 46, paragraph 9.38)
- The manager needs to ensure that staff record carefully, objectively, and clearly in children's records. ('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: SC035220

Provision sub-type: Children's home

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

Responsible individual: Claire Morris

Registered manager: Joan Inns

Inspector

Jacqueline Tate, Social Care Inspector

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