

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

The manager registered with Ofsted in November 2022.

Three children were living in the home at the time of this inspection.

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 February 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 25 July 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25/07/2022	Full	Good
12/04/2022	Full	Inadequate
11/05/2021	Full	Good
05/11/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children say that they like living in the home and that they can speak to staff if they feel worried. Parents and professionals echo this and say that staff support the children well. Staff have a caring approach towards the children and speak warmly about them. This allows children to feel safe and valued.

Staff and managers are ambitious for the children and want them to achieve and do well. Children make progress, even those who have lived at the home for a short length of time. Children develop confidence and learn new skills.

Staff and managers have a good understanding of the trauma children have experienced and recognise how this can impact on their behaviour. When children struggle to articulate themselves, staff use communication boards. These boards also support children to understand their routines. Staff help children to express their views and to communicate more effectively.

All children attend full-time education. Staff ensure that there is good communication with school professionals. Staff support children with their homework to aid their learning. This helps children to reach their academic potential.

Children access a range of enjoyable activities. Staff ensure that they tailor experiences to the children's likes and needs. Children access activities individually and as a group. This has supported children to socialise with their peers and develop friendships.

Careful planning supports children moving into the home. Additionally, staff help to ease the anxieties of children who already live in the home, such as through discussions and social stories. This helps children to feel prepared for changes that occur.

The house is homely and welcoming. Children live in a safe and comfortable environment. Children personalise their bedrooms to their likes. Photos of the children are displayed in the home. However, the sound of the bedroom door alarms is intrusive and impacts on the homely feel.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Children have individual risk assessments and behaviour support plans. Staff ensure that they contain up-to-date information. Staff know the children well. Risk assessments contain clear strategies for staff to use to keep children safer.

Staff know and understand the things that could cause children to become upset. Staff support children when they struggle to manage their behaviours and emotions.

The staff are successful at using de-escalation techniques, which means that physical intervention is used as a last resort to keep children and others safe.

Managers have oversight of incidents to help staff to understand triggers and any changes needed to their approaches. Furthermore, staff have conversations with children to help them learn how to safely manage their frustrations.

Children do not go missing from the home; however, staff know what steps to take if this happens.

Managers strongly advocate on behalf of the children regarding their health. For one child, this has led to several health referrals. Staff have a good understanding of children's individual health needs and how to seek advice. The team utilises the support from partner agencies, such as the looked after children's nurse, to ensure that children's health needs are met.

Staff support children to share their views and any worries they have through a variety of means, such as a computer application. Children attend their statutory meetings, and they have an advocate who visits regularly. This makes sure that children have someone independent to speak to.

When children make allegations against staff, these are fully investigated. Managers ensure that partner agencies contribute to supporting the children. Children receive feedback about their complaints, even when allegations are unsubstantiated. This allows children to feel listened to.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager values the staff team. She aims to support their personal development. Staff say that managers are approachable. One staff member said, 'Management is approachable and provide ample opportunities for growth and development.' This promotes a positive working environment that supports children's needs.

When there are shortfalls in staff practice, managers act on these quickly. The manager has reflective discussions with staff and carries out fact-finding investigations. This enables staff to look at lessons to be learned and actions identified to improve practice. Staff have accessed extra training when necessary.

Staff are up to date with their training. External professionals attend team meetings to enhance staff's understanding of children's needs. The manager encourages the team to access new identified learning opportunities. This ensures that children receive care from staff who are knowledgeable and skilled.

The manager recognises that instability and uncertainty can impact negatively on the children and strives to create stability for them, for example by ensuring that children are cared for by permanent members of staff. There is no use of agency staff in the home. This ensures consistency of care for the children.

The managers have effective auditing tools in place. They address any shortfalls promptly and delegate tasks to the staff team. Senior leaders oversee these to ensure the smooth running of the home.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the home complies with relevant health and safety legislations, such as alarms and food hygiene. However, in doing so, the home should seek as far as possible to maintain a domestic rather than 'institutional' impression. This relates to ensuring that the noise of bedroom door alarms is not intrusive for the children. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

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: County Hall, Durham City, Durham DH1 5UJ

Responsible individual: Paul Rudd

Registered manager: Paula Murtha

Inspector

Jess Elliott, Social Care Inspector

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