

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	15/12/2015
Unique reference number	SC035220
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Durham County Council
Registered person address	County Hall, DURHAM, DH1 5UL

Responsible individual	Karen Robb
Registered manager	Joan Inns
Inspector	Debbie White

Inspection date	15/12/2015
Previous inspection judgement	improved effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Outstanding
The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceeds the standards of good. The actions of the home contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help, protection and care.	
how well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding

SC035220

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is outstanding because:

- Children experience exceptional relationships with staff that are pivotal to their progress and development. Staff are very nurturing and skilled in earning children's trust. They have consistently high aspirations for each child, which significantly increases each child's self-esteem and wellbeing.
- All children have significantly progressed as a direct result of living at the children's home. Day to day care is excellent and highly innovative. Staff are very skilled and confident in communicating with younger children, which aids very rapid progress.
- An excellent admission process fully explores each child's needs and ensures children are appropriately placed to give them the best possible outcomes. Transitions are meticulously planned have successfully prepared children to move into permanent placements.
- Care planning is outstanding and children are fully included in each stage of their development. This increases their understanding of why they are living in a children's home. Joint working, particularly with the local authority therapeutic team, significantly enhances the superb care and support delivered to each child.
- Staff are meticulous in keeping children safe whilst encouraging them to experience normal childhood activities. Children are fully involved in their local community, which promotes inclusion and acceptance. This stops children feeling different because they are in care and helps them to make new friends.
- Behaviour management is a strength with staff using a wide range of therapeutic techniques to gently nurture and guide children through past trauma. This bespoke support helps children make positive changes and they learn they can trust caring adults. This approach unreservedly strengthens children's resilience.
- The management of the home is outstanding. Highly skilled leaders and managers and the staff team consistently strive to deliver creative and innovative services to children. The registered manager has an exceptional oversight of each child and the home's operation, which is exemplary practice.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This home is registered to offer care and accommodation for three children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is operated by a local authority.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
04/08/2015	CH - Interim	improved effectiveness
16/03/2015	CH - Interim	improved effectiveness
09/01/2015	CH - Full	Good
23/01/2014	CH - Interim	Good Progress

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	outstanding
This children's home specialises in looking after younger children who have experienced multiple, unsuccessful foster care placements. The focus of the home is to provide intensive therapy based support that prepares children to move into permanence. The home was specifically set up for this purpose and children are fully supported by the local authority therapeutic team, which consists of a range of significant professionals that include a senior psychologist; a fostering officer; an occupational health professional; therapeutic social workers and a children and adolescent disability health nurse. This provides holistic care from early referral through to transition. The home uses a range of research based therapeutic interventions that have resulted in exceptional outcomes for children. The specific model used is called 'PACE' that stands for play, acceptance, curiosity and empathy. The manager of the therapeutic team, who is the senior psychologist, specialises in this model of care. She said about the home, 'It's all going really well and I am very pleased with the progress of the children, especially the children who have moved on. I think the home are doing a great job.' Children make excellent progress and their outcomes exceed expectations. Dynamic individualised care and support is pivotal to each child's development and their consistently high quality outcomes are most certainly a direct result of living at this children's home. A social worker said, 'My child is in an excellent placement. I almost instantly saw an improvement and this is down to the staff. This home has got to be the way forward.' Part of the PACE therapeutic model used is built on 'wondering' where everyday practice involves listening to children and letting them talk about what they think and feel. This stimulates children's curiosity and develops their empathy skills. Children have a key worker session each evening where they have quiet, reflective time with a staff member. Specialist story books are used to help children to successfully articulate their thoughts and emotions, which allows for meaningful discussions. The quality of relationships between staff and children are of the utmost importance. Skilled staff build exceptional relationships that help children trust them. Over time children form positive bonds that increases their confidence and	

emotional security. Children continue to learn about meaningful relationships throughout their time at the home, which significantly aids them to form trusting bonds with their future foster carers. A therapist said, 'The staff are very welcoming and my child trusts them, this is a massive step for her. She is doing really well.'

Care planning by both the placing authority and the home is exceptional. Children's needs are clear and agreed care strategies fully support children's emotional growth and development. Children are consulted with and involved in what is happening to them at each stage of their care plan. This consultation and information sharing is done at a level children understand and gives them a clear message that living at the home is not forever and that staff and social workers are looking for the very best carers for each child. This message shifts feelings of shame and blame children often feel when they have experienced multiple, unsuccessful placements.

Much of the home's documentation is presented in a child-friendly format that is attractive to younger children. This adds value to consulting with children and fully engages them in important events in their lives. Every child receives a large memory box, of their chosen design, so they can keep mementos, photographs, achievement awards and other important memories to take with them when they move to their new long-term homes. This important exercise enables children to see moving to a new home as an exciting and happy process and staying at the children's home was a good experience.

Admissions are meticulously planned and supported by a range of childcare professionals. Early intervention ensures children receive the services and support they need to thrive and flourish. For example, social workers can refer children who they know are struggling in foster care placements and this prompts a multi-disciplinary team approach that begins the process of an extensive assessment. This ensures children are appropriately placed and are able achieve their full potential. A therapist said, 'I have been involved with my child from the planning stage and have worked with the manager and staff. All staff attended planning meetings, which was great. I know all the staff and they are very good.'

Transitions from the home are highly successful. Since the home became operational three children have moved to successful long-term placements. The success of these placements is underpinned by the exceptional level of care, support and therapeutic input provided at the home. The registered manager and staff fully supported each child through their transition planning and introduction to their new carers.

This intensive work and collaboration has clearly impacted on the success of each child's transition. A foster carer of one of the children said, 'This is our first planned placement and it went really well and we had lots of support. We spent three months planning the move with the manager and staff and lots of support

afterwards. Staff have kept in touch and see my child on his terms. He sees staying at the home as a good memory. He's doing great and is a great little boy who has fit into our family.'

Children are healthy, emotionally supported and their psychological needs are met. They attend routine health appointments and have access to specialist health services should they need additional support. They live a very healthy lifestyle that includes lots of outdoor play, exercise and a healthy diet.

Activities are also an important element in children's positive health and well-being. Children experience a wide range of group and individual outings, hobbies, pastimes and attend local sports groups and events. This promotes children's inclusion in the local community and helps them develop their social and socialisation skills. A therapist said, 'My child has come on leaps and bounds, especially socially. She has so much more confidence and has started to make friends, she has never had any friends before, '

All children are in full time education and have 100% attendance. Where possible children remain in their pre-admission school to avoid further disruption. Staff and teachers work together and communicate at least once daily to provide consistency for each child.

Teachers are involved in care meetings and reviews and their input is valued. This joint working promotes very good outcomes for children. A teacher said, 'I have never had a child in my class who lives in a children's home. I was concerned at first but after I visited the home I felt a lot better, they do a fantastic job. We have daily contact and email every day for consistency. My child has massively changed for the better.'

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
Children are safe and live in a safe environment. The registered manager and staff are vigilant regarding children's safety and risk management is thorough and robust. Good staffing levels ensure children are very well observed and supervised, which reduces potential risks from unforeseen hazards. All feedback from professionals consulted during this inspection highlighted children's safety as a strength of the home. Children feel safe and emotionally secure. This is shown by their relaxed behaviour in the home and trusting relationships with staff. There is no bullying and no children have gone missing. There have been no child protection concerns	

reported. A child said, 'I'm happy here, it's a good place to live. I like the staff they are fun. The staff look after us.'

There have been no complaints. Staff are skilled at engaging younger children and there is an openness where children feel comfortable talking about any worries or concerns they may have. Social workers visit regularly to ensure children have a person independent of the home to talk to and there are other trusting adults available, such as school teachers and therapeutic workers. These measures ensure children have access to a range of adults who will respond to any concerns or potential safeguarding issues.

Behaviour management is a clear strength. Children live in a caring, nurturing environment and this ethos features throughout all childcare practice; including helping children through emotional trauma. Staff are extremely skilled in recognising behaviours that occur when children are in crisis. Their calm, consistent approach soothes children and develops trust, which is an essential element of the PACE therapeutic model used in the home. Sanctions or any form of punishment is not used in the home. Children are rewarded and praised, which effectively manages inappropriate behaviours.

Children's behaviours often stem from their inability to vocalise how they feel so staff use a wide range of research based therapeutic strategies that enable children to understand their behaviours. Other resources include specialist story books and toys, puppets and therapeutic games. This play therapy encourages children to feel comfortable participating in potentially difficult discussions. Staff also use crafts and artwork to effectively communicate at a level that is appropriate to the age and understanding of each child. These extensive and specialist interventions increase children's confidence and communication skills and improves behaviours. This significantly enhances their progress.

Children live in a safe home that meets their needs. The home is located in a rural village and is very much part of the local community. Internally, the décor and furnishings are of a high quality and there is a very homely feel. The buildings and gardens are very well maintained and have lots of play equipment for outdoor activities.

Health and safety is taken very seriously to keep children, staff and visitors safe. Utilities are regularly checked and serviced. Environmental and fire safety audits are routinely carried out and the home's generic health and safety risk assessments are of a very high quality. All visitors are checked and vetted and staff safety checks are regularly updated.

	Judgement grade
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The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
The registered manager is an experienced practitioner who has the right qualifications to effectively manage the home. She has been registered to manage this home since March 2014. Her experience is primarily in children's residential care, which has enabled her to develop a wide and diverse range of exceptional skills. The registered manager is a motivated, committed worker who provides unquestionably outstanding services to children. The staff team are highly skilled and consistently deliver inspiring care and support to children. Every staff member was employed from within the local authority children's services and underwent a robust recruitment process. This has created a united, professional team who put children at the heart of their practice. They receive regular bespoke training in the therapeutic model used in the home and are proficient reflective practitioners, which is an essential part of their role. A professional involved with the home said, 'They operate an absolutely fantastic model and the home is excellent. It astounds me how reflective the staff are, they are able to put everything in perspective.' The registered manager maintains a thorough overview of all the children and their progress. She regularly reviews and monitors practice and systematically checks each child's care plan. This ensures staff remain highly motivated and children receive the care and support they need. A professional involved with the home said, 'The registered manager is very good. She values and supports the staff and where necessary she challenges staff in a warm and productive way.' Inter-agency working actively contributes to consistently high quality outcomes for children. The registered manager, staff and keyworkers meet regularly with all professionals involved with each child to ensure children's needs are being met. Additionally, the registered manager gathers a comprehensive history of each child that informs individual care plans. This includes speaking with all previous social workers, carers where appropriate, and reviewing all case notes available from when the children became known to social services. This superior scrutiny enhances each child's pre-admission assessment and often unveils important events that currently impact on children and their behaviours. A professional involved with the home said, 'The manager and staff are very nurturing and they know the history of every child, which is excellent and vital.' There were no requirements or recommendations from the previous inspection and no new ones identified at this visit. The home is achieving its aims and objectives as set out in the Statement of Purpose and development plans show the home continually strives to improve. This clearly demonstrates leaders and managers invest both time and resources for the betterment of children.	

Monitoring is excellent and fully conveys children live in a safe home that is purposeful and successful. Children, parents, social workers and other professionals are regularly consulted to ascertain their views and their opinions are listened to and respected. The independent visitor scrutinises the services provided and seeks to improve practice where applicable. This robust oversight maintains and develops outstanding services to children.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place, however, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, 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 who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service 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*.

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