

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 run by a local authority and is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to three children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties and/or learning difficulties.

The registered manager has been registered since 2013.

Inspection dates: 16 to 17 October 2018

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **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: 24 October 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/10/2017	Full	Outstanding
28/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
21/12/2016	Full	Outstanding
15/12/2015	Full	Outstanding

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 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; 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) and (b)) This particularly refers to ensuring that adequate staffing ratios are in place on assessed activities to reduce the likelihood of any harm to children.	08/11/2018

Recommendations

- Ensure that the home provides a domestic and homely environment, ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9) In particular, ensure that children are not routinely required to sign key-worker session recordings.
- Ensure that staff receive good-quality supervision which allows them sufficient time to reflect on their practice and discuss matters relating to safeguarding and to the children specifically assigned to their care, and encourage them to bring agenda items, relevant to practice, to discuss. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2)
- Keep children's records up to date and stored securely. Specifically, ensure that children's case files and other records are well organised and legible. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)
- Under regulation 46, the registered person should review the appropriateness

and suitability of the location and premises of the home at least once per year. The review should include the identification of any risks and opportunities presented by the home's location and strategies for managing these. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.1)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The progress that children make is supported by the skilled implementation of the therapeutic model of practice by a highly devoted staff team. The children thrive in a positive environment that ensures that everything is explained to them to aid their understanding of actions and decisions made. The written records are individualised and personalised to each child. The children are helped individually to understand each other and the effect of behaviours each other. As a result, children's thoughts are reflected in written records and children are helped to develop empathy for peers and staff, through positive interactions.

The relationships observed during the inspection were very positive and natural. Staff are committed to providing a positive daily environment in which children flourish and express themselves. Children develop tolerance of each other and positive attachments with staff. In the evenings, children have the chance to have one-to-one time with a member of staff of their choosing for about 15 minutes. This time is set aside specifically for them, free from the noise of others, and this helps to develop their relationships. The staff happily provide cuddles and hugs in an appropriate way, as observed during the inspection, and the children reacted with smiles and giggles.

The statement of purpose is adhered to and describes accurately the therapeutic approach that is successfully applied. The model provides a parenting approach which is based on concepts of playfulness, acceptance, curiosity and empathy.

There are many good examples of purposeful key-worker sessions carried out with children, enabling trusting relationships to develop. Staff take time to discuss children's plans and to listen to any concerns they may have. Many records discussed with children have an expectation for them to sign. This practice is unnecessary. It detracts from the home's otherwise successful creation of an experience for children which is as far removed from institutional as possible.

The children are fully supported to attend school by staff having ensured that they are ready to attend, physically and emotionally. There are good recordings in files of thorough and regular communication between staff and teachers which give staff insight into the emotional presentation of children before and after school. This supports both sets of professionals to respond appropriately in meeting children's needs and helps the children cope with challenging emotions. Their well-being and self-esteem is promoted always.

The children are helped to enjoy a range of activities suitable to their age and abilities. These activities, for example trampolining or riding a bicycle, are very much seen as learning opportunities through play and include close supervision to provide guidance and support to play safely.

The home excels in positive communication with all professionals, families and carers. Relationships are often repaired between children and their families. A social worker commented on the excellent work being carried out in promoting contact for a child. This process of rebuilding a relationship with a parent takes place at the pace of the child and is often followed up with a key-worker session to explain any emotions, negative and positive, that can be confusing for a child after such contact. This is a very supportive process that enables a child to understand and feel positive about themselves. These sessions are often full of praise. The social worker also commented that the child's mother was very complimentary about the care being provided to her child.

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

Appropriate levels of supervision in the home are provided in accordance with well-written risk assessments. This enables children to feel safe and secure in their home environment. Risk is assessed individually for each child and is specific to enable staff to prepare and respond to known behaviours. The registered manager, in response to information received prior to admission, increased the height of the back fence. This proactively reduced the potential of harm to children.

There has been one occurrence of a child going missing from care while on a structured activity to the beach. This was a planned all-day activity, which had been risk assessed. The staff team reacted positively and with skill 'to minimise any impact on the children. A higher staffing ratio might have afforded greater security given the age of the children.

The nature of the referrals to the home means that they require a nurturing, therapeutic response, to help and support young children in understanding their feelings and emotions. The staff are prepared and trained in the use of physical intervention. This enables them to help children when they lose control and start to damage property, placing themselves unintentionally at risk of harm. Interventions are short, and staff minimally use restraint necessary to ensure safety. Staff talk to children to help them understand that their behaviour. This approach helps them sensitively overcome any negative feelings, building resilience for the future.

The model of practice used by the staff is based on relationships, and the therapy reflects this. A clinical psychologist supports the staff team and the children, working collaboratively to help children feel secure and stable in their home environment. The home provides good, nurturing parenting that keeps children safe from harm, but is also a learning space in which to grow.

The home's locality risk assessment is not thorough in ensuring that it is based on current data and consultation with local police. Therefore, although children do not go out unsupervised in the local area, it does not demonstrate adequately that risk has

been fully assessed and it leaves children and staff at potential risk of harm.

The members of the staff team are trained in safeguarding and statutory responsibilities. This ensures that they are aware of the steps to take to safeguard children from harm and exploitation.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is very experienced and is appropriately qualified. She is very skilled and knowledgeable in the home's therapeutic model of practice. She leads a team of staff with similar levels of experience. She places significant importance on the admission of children, ensuring that their needs are well assessed and understood. She is dedicated to achieving the best possible outcomes for children in her care, namely an identified place of permanence with a foster family, with appropriate step-by-step planning and implementation of support.

Partnership working with professionals, parents and foster carers involved with the children is a clear strength. The registered manager has a good, close relationship with the local authority therapeutic services. She receives clinical supervision from them and discusses the therapy offered to each child. This approach significantly improves children's outcomes. They receive an individualised package of support and care, which in turn maximises their potential. Equally, her relationship with the fostering service proactively identifies foster carers with a view for permanence for the children in her care. There were positive comments about the service from foster carers and the fostering service.

The staff team feels valued and supported. The registered manager leads by example and is highly visible to her team and the children. She works hard to ensure that she and the staff team maintain their understanding, awareness and practice capabilities in terms of the therapeutic model. She and a team leader have completed 'Theraplay' training to enhance their ability to understand further the children in their care and develop strategies of engagement. This has been shared with the staff team, and practice training sessions are planned with therapeutic lead professionals. This will enable staff to help children to learn to regulate their feelings and their behaviour.

The otherwise efficient organisation of the home is somewhat let down by the quality of the home's records, which are disorganised and difficult to locate. Care has not been taken in ensuring that handwritten recordings are legible. This makes them difficult to read, which reduces their usefulness and accountability. This made case tracking throughout the inspection difficult.

Although staff receive regular supervision overall, there are gaps that do not follow the timescales outlined in the policy. There is a lack of recording of the practice discussion and reflection on safeguarding of children. This limits the learning from this process.

The home has been short staffed, which has caused extra work for staff, including the registered manager, during a difficult summer period. However, recent recruitment

activity has already relieved much of the pressure, and the imminent arrival of two staff members will provide further support.

External monitoring is good. The independent visitor attends monthly and their reports are highly complementary about the service. They provide an account of progress for children and identify any shortfalls in the home. The manager and her team leaders act to address any concerns raised.

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: SC035220

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: County Hall, Durham DH1 5UL

Responsible individual: Karen Robb

Registered manager: Joan Inns

Inspector

Michael Dack, social care inspector

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