

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. The home provides care for up to three children with social and emotional difficulties.

There is an acting manager in post who is not yet registered with Ofsted.

At the time of the inspection, there was one child living in the home.

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 July 2022

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: 12 April 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/04/2022	Full	Inadequate
11/05/2021	Full	Good
05/11/2019	Full	Good
16/10/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Since the last full inspection, and following a review of one child's care plan, that child has now been supported to move on from the home in a planned way. As a result, the home has settled. The child who remains in the home is making good progress because they are in a stable and safe environment.

Staff have been effective in helping the child to re-engage in education. The child now has a personalised educational timetable that the staff implement consistently. This timetable involves routines, such as going to bed at an appropriate time and getting up first thing in morning. Staff are supported by a range of appropriate education professionals to ensure the child has a pathway back into formal education. As a result, the child has been supported to visit a school provision, and is happy to attend at the beginning of the Autumn term.

The child has developed trusting relationships with the manager and staff. They are relaxed in the staff's company and they can share their thoughts and feelings openly. The child also receives regular support from a local authority therapeutic worker. This consistent relationship supports the child's emotional well-being, and enables the child to have a better understanding of their own behaviour.

The staff support the child to see members of their family regularly and good, open communication between professionals and families supports this process. However, this support is not extended to supporting the child to spend time with their friends in the community and in the home. This limits the child's ability to develop socially with their peers.

The child feels well cared for and presented as happy throughout the visit, engaging positively with the staff. The child is supported to take part in a range of activities, especially swimming, art and cookery, and the child also attends gymnastics regularly. This supports the child's ability to learn the importance of a healthy lifestyle and activities that help maintain their positive well-being.

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

The manager and her staff understand the risks posed to the child. This comes through open communication and sharing of knowledge with all relevant professionals and families. The in-depth knowledge of the child's history and current presenting behaviours, as well as good, open discussions with the child, supports the identification of strategies to manage risk better.

A social worker said, 'There are very few incidents now, where previously they happened daily. I have seen massive progress.' Staff and external professionals all

commented positively on the new management team, and on the structure and boundaries that are now in place. This has led to a settled and safe environment.

The consistency provided by the staff in maintaining and implementing boundaries and structure to the child's daily life is enabling the child to feel safe and make progress. The child said, 'I feel I am more trusting of the staff team now, and they are of me.'

There has been a significant reduction in children who have been reported missing from the home. Staff understand their role in following the missing-from-care protocols and they ensure that the information and their response are individualised to each child. This helps in the reduction in time that the children are away from the home. Children are welcomed on their return, and the required return home interviews are undertaken.

The children's written risk assessments are comprehensive. However, these assessments include all of the child's previous behaviours and risks. This overly complicates the assessment process, and does not enable the reader to clearly see what the child's current risks are. This oversight hinders the staff from being clear on what action they must take now to reduce any potential harm to the child. The manager is aware of this and she has a plan in place to address this.

Children's movement in and out of their bedrooms, and in and out of the home, is monitored via alarm sensors. While this supports the safeguarding of children, the staff do not follow the written policy that states the bedroom door alarms should be disconnected at 07:00. This unnecessary monitoring process does not promote a homely environment. The alarm was deactivated on the inspector's observation and request.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager is experienced and suitably qualified for the role. She has been in the role a short time and she has yet to submit her application to register with Ofsted. However, she has made a strong start, which is evident in the trust and respect she has gained from the child in the home, and from the staff team. Staff numbers have improved through effective safer recruitment, which has also seen appointments in a new deputy manager and in senior positions. This has brought about a positive change in staff morale.

The provider has taken time to ensure that positive changes are made in the home. No children have moved into the home since the last full inspection. This has supported the manager and staff to complete the repairs to the home, and to address all of the requirements raised at the last inspection. Staff now receive regular supervision and team meetings have enabled the manager to make it clear to staff their roles and individual accountability. As a result, staff now have a unified approach to providing care for children.

The manager has made several changes in a brief period. She understands the home's strengths and weaknesses. The manager is determined to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided for children in her care. This supports the continued progression for the child in the home.

The manager welcomes the monthly visits from the independent visitor, who monitors the home. This is one of many professional relationships that are value, and which support the development of the care provided to children.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that any bedroom door alarms that are used in the home to support the safeguarding of children are switched off as soon as possible as recorded in the homes written monitoring equipment policy. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 16, paragraph 3.16)
- The registered person should ensure that children are supported to understand how to build friendships with other children. They should be supported to spend time in the community with their friends and in the home, in line with the child's plans, age and understanding. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 38, paragraph 8.7)
- The registered person should ensure that risk assessments are kept up to date and detail relevant current information that presents live risks and specific strategies to support the reduction of potential harm to children. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)

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: Durham County Council

Registered provider address: County Hall, Durham DH1 5UJ

Responsible individual: Laura Caunce

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Michael Dack, Social Care Inspector

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