

SC035235

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 may have social and emotional difficulties, and who may have learning disabilities.

The manager registered with Ofsted in November 2023.

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

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 February 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 27 September 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
27/09/2022	Full	Good
22/11/2021	Full	Good
26/11/2019	Full	Good
24/07/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

A number of children have moved out of the home since the last inspection. There is currently one child living in the home.

The condition of the home environment is poor, with damage throughout. Repairs are not completed in a timely way. There is a lack of personal items around the home, such as photos, artwork and soft furnishings. This prevents children from living in a homely environment in which they can flourish.

Children do not receive consistent care, as there is a shortage of permanent staff due to difficulties in the recruitment and retention of staff. Staff and managers seek to develop positive and trusting relationships with children. However, this is hindered by the high turnover of staff.

When some children lived together, they experienced difficult relationships with each other. Managers seek to understand the causes for changes in behaviour, and staff offer reassurance to children. Staff challenge children's worrying behaviour but fail to educate them about the impact of their behaviours on others. One child said that they did not feel safe living in the home.

There is a robust assessment completed before a new child moves into the home. Children have personalised transition plans to support them moving in. Staff welcome children into the home. This supports children to feel less anxious. Managers remain in touch with those children who have left the home, enabling them to continue to be supported.

One child is accessing full-time education and is making good academic progress. Managers have strongly advocated for one child when they felt their education plan was not ambitious enough. This supports children in meeting their educational potential.

Children have individualised care plans in place. This includes a child-friendly pictorial version, which helps children to be included in their care planning. Staff engage children in meaningful discussions about their feelings. This allows children to feel comfortable expressing their views.

Staff and managers speak in high regard and with compassion about the children, even in challenging situations. One professional said, 'Managers outline the best of [name of child], even when times are difficult.' This helps children to feel valued by those caring for them.

Children access activities of interest, such as Scouts. Staff advocate on behalf of the children to ensure that they can access community activities even when difficulties arise.

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

Children's health needs are not consistently met. One child did not have glasses, despite this being recorded in their health assessment. When children do not take the correct prescribed medication staff do not seek medical advice. Staff are therefore not aware of whether there is any impact on the children's health.

When children go missing from home, staff actively look for them and follow the children's safety plans. However, children do not always have a discussion with an independent person when they return to the home. Staff do not challenge partner agencies when they fail to provide this interview. This limits the opportunity for children to share any worries. Additionally, vital information to inform safety planning can be lost.

The children have personalised risk assessments, which managers regularly review. However, these do not contain all the known risks for one child. This means that staff do not have full information about one child's vulnerabilities and the guidance on what action they need to take to protect them. Furthermore, the home has a locality risk assessment, but this does not include all the risks, particularly for younger children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders and managers are ambitious and have a clear vision for the home. They recognise the areas for development and have an action plan in place. The responsible individual ensures the children are at the forefront of planning. This means that there is a drive to ensure better outcomes for children.

The manager is inspirational and values her staff. She is committed to ensuring that the staff develop their confidence and skills. Staff express that there have been positive changes made by the manager and deputy manager. Staff say that they feel supported by the managers. This creates a positive working environment where children are cared for by skilled and valued adults.

When children make allegations about staff's conduct, they are thoroughly investigated. Leaders and managers take effective disciplinary action to address practice shortfalls. This promotes children feeling that their concerns have been addressed and that they are cared for by safe carers.

The manager receives support from therapeutic professionals linked to the home. This is received through a range of means, such as one-to-one support for staff, team meeting discussions and direct work with children. The clinical therapist said, 'Staff are receptive and want to understand behaviours.' Additionally, the manager

ensures staff access training in line with the presenting needs of the children. This means children are supported by a staff team that understands and meets their needs well.

Staff have not always accessed consistent supervision, although this is improving. Supervision focuses on staff well-being and daily practice. However, supervision sessions lack reflective discussions.

Children feel that staff listen to them. The home received an Investing in Children Award linked to listening to children's views. This means children feel supported and listened to.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person 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 must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; and use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff— provide to children living in the home the physical necessities they need in order to live there comfortably; ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(vii)(c)(i))	1 April 2024
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; and	1 April 2024

ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(d)(e))	
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; manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other; that the premises used for the purposes of the home are located so that children are effectively safeguarded; that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health; (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iv)(c)(d))	1 April 2024
The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— mutual respect and trust; an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— help each child to develop socially aware behaviour;	1 April 2024

encourage each child to take responsibility for the child's behaviour, in accordance with the child's age and understanding; help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone; communicate to each child expectations about the child's behaviour and ensure that the child understands those expectations in accordance with the child's age and understanding; have the skills to recognise incidents or indications of bullying and how to deal with them; and that each child is encouraged to build and maintain positive relationships with others. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(xiii)(b))	
The health and well-being standard is that— the health and well-being needs of children are met. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff help each child to; and achieve the health and well-being outcomes that are recorded in the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 10 (1)(a) (2)(a)(i))	1 April 2024

Information about this inspection

The inspector has 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: SC035235

Provision sub-type: Children's home

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

Responsible individual: Paul Rudd

Registered manager: Amy Philbin-Robinson

Inspector

Jess Elliott, Social Care Inspector

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