

SC035235

Registered provider: Durham County Council

Monitoring visit

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and operated 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 2023. The manager was on annual leave at the time of the visit.

Two children were living in the home at the time of inspection.

Inspection date: 8 July 2024

This monitoring visit

This children's home was judged inadequate at the full inspection on 22 and 23 May 2024. During that inspection, Ofsted identified significant shortfalls in relation to the protection of children standard. The provider failed to ensure that children's plans were being consistently followed by staff, which resulted in significant incidents occurring. The provider failed to address staff practice shortfalls and failed to prioritise repairing damages within the home. This made some areas unsafe for children. Ofsted issued one compliance notice under regulation 12. In addition, four requirements were issued.

This monitoring visit was conducted to review the provider's progress in meeting the steps within the compliance notice. The inspector found that the provider has not made any progress in meeting the shortfalls. Additionally, further shortfalls were identified during the visit.

In the absence of the registered manager, the responsible individual and other supporting managers were unable to obtain documents to evidence any progress

being made in respect of the compliance steps. The inspector was unable to view all staff supervision records, team meeting minutes, or actions plans for staff.

Since the last inspection, no children have moved into or out of the home. Many of the staff who were present at the last inspection are now absent from work due to sickness or because of disciplinary action being taken. Due to the absence of permanent staff, the practice shortfalls have not been effectively addressed.

The shortage of permanent staff has led to a heavy reliance on agency staff or the use of staff from other local authority homes. Temporary staff do not always read the children's plans or risk assessments. This prevents them knowing how to effectively care for the children.

Furthermore, children do not wish to spend time with those staff who are unfamiliar to them. Therefore, there is a heavy reliance on those remaining permanent staff to support the children, especially in times of crisis. This is starting to have a direct impact on some staff's personal lives.

The children's emotional needs are not being consistently met, and incidents within the home remain high. Staff do not provide children with consistent boundaries or routine. For example, one child received their mobile phone outside of the agreed times within their plan. This causes confusion for children and leads to incidents occurring, including the need for children to be held.

During times of crisis, staff continue to fail to effectively intervene to prevent the children causing damage in the home. As a result, the home conditions remain a concern. While leaders have identified a potential property for children to access while refurbishments take place, the move has not yet happened. There have been significant delays in identifying options to prevent children living in unsuitable home conditions, which include damage to the property and items such as the cooker.

At the time of the last inspection, children were engaged in full-time education. However, currently, the children do not always attend school. Staff are not effective in ensuring that children access education. Children are often awake throughout the night as staff are not able to manage their behaviours. This limits the children having a stable routine.

Discussions take place with the children about their behaviour, which are mainly instigated by the managers. There is minimal evidence of staff having these conversations to help to understand children's behaviours. There is a lack of planned and structured discussions to address the support to children when they are in crisis, or other aspects of the children's plans.

Following a case review on 12 July 2024, the provider was informed of Ofsted's intention to restate the compliance notice under regulation 12. The requirements

that were previously issued under regulations 12, 11, 13 and 40 were reviewed during the visit. They have not yet been met, so for this reason they are restated.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
22/05/2024	Full	Inadequate
06/02/2024	Full	Requires improvement to be good
27/09/2022	Full	Good
22/11/2021	Full	Good

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 with 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— manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and 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)(iv)(v)(vi)(d)) This requirement has been restated.	1 September 2024
The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— 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—	1 September 2024

meet each child's behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child's relevant plans; help each child to develop socially aware behaviour; 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; strive to gain each child's respect and trust; understand how children's previous experiences and present emotions can be communicated through behaviour and have the competence and skills to interpret these and develop positive relationships with children; are provided with supervision and support to enable them to understand and manage their own feelings and responses to the behaviour and emotions of children, and to help children to do the same; de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children; and that each child is encouraged to build and maintain positive relationships with others. (Regulation 11 (1)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(viii)(ix)(x)(xi)(b)) This requirement has been restated.	
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.	1 September 2024

In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home’s statement of purpose; ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate; ensure that the home’s workforce provides continuity of care to each child; and understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(e)(f)) This requirement has been restated.	
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; a child protection enquiry involving a child— is instigated; or concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry); and there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(c)(d)(i)(ii)(e)) This requirement has been restated.	1 September 2024

*This requirement is subject of a compliance notice.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this visit was to monitor the action taken and the progress made by the children's home since its last Ofsted inspection.

This inspection was carried out under The Care Standards Act 2000.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC035235

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Durham County Council

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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