

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC035235
Inspector	Bill Drumm
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 Monica Robb
Registered manager	Bernadette Olney
Date of last inspection	12/03/2014

Inspection date	11/08/2014
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	good
Outcomes for children and young people	good
Quality of care	good
Keeping children and young people safe	good
Leadership and management	good

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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The home provides very good levels of care and support to young people who have complex needs. The home's manager provides strong, clear leadership to a dedicated and experienced staff team. This combination helps to keep young people safe and provides them with the support necessary to move forward in their lives. Consequently, young people have made, and continue to make, good progress since their admission. They continue to develop an awareness and understanding of their health needs, how to keep themselves safe and how their behaviour impacts on others. Their achievements, no matter how small, are celebrated which in turn helps to promote their self-confidence and self-esteem. The atmosphere within the home is warm, caring, supportive and very relaxed. Young people are very friendly, polite and demonstrate a great sense of humour.

Young people are supported to attend school or college and to actively seek work. Staff have high aspirations for the young people they care for. This helps to motivate them to achieve their full potential and to have the best possible life chances. Young people have a wide choice of leisure pursuits; physical, cultural, sporting, or simply recreational. This helps them to participate in new activities, keeps them occupied and provides them with opportunities to enjoy new experiences. Learning new things helps young people to take pleasure in their achievements and helps to build their self-confidence.

Areas identified for improvement relate to: the homes development plan and the written records of when a young person goes missing. None of these directly affect the welfare or safety of young people.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The children's home provides care and accommodation for up to three young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The provider is a local authority.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/03/2014	Interim	good progress
26/11/2013	Full	good
30/01/2013	Interim	good progress
08/10/2012	Full	good

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

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that the written records kept by the home for when a child goes missing detail the action taken by staff, the circumstances of the child's return, any reasons given by the child for running away and any action taken in light of the reasons (NMS 5.10)
- ensure that the home has a written development plan, reviewed annually, for the future of the home. (NMS 15.2)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Young people living at the home make good progress. Their self-confidence and self-esteem increases and they become more emotionally resilient. They develop very strong relationships with the staff team and learn how to relate to one another in a positive manner. One young person said, 'I get on well with everyone here.'

The physical and emotional health of young people improves while they are at the home. All young people have access to primary health care services as well as any specialist support services they may require, for instance drug and alcohol advisers or mental health support services. Young people develop the confidence to arrange and attend their own health care appointments and to accept prescribed treatment or advice. This is something they may have refused or been unable to do previously.

Despite some young people having inconsistent school attendance in the past, they are all now making very good progress in their education. Those who have completed their full-time education have plans in place to attend college. Young people's motivation to succeed improves while they live at the home. Staff offer on-going help, support and encouragement and the good progress they make from their starting points at the time of placement is significant. This improves their life chances.

Young people are fully involved in their own care. One member of staff said, 'when I first started here it was evident that young people are included in the decisions about their care and how the home is run.' Additionally, young people have a real say in matters such as activities and daily routines. The excellent relationships young people have with staff members, who understand them well, means that young people are central to all decisions made in the home.

Where appropriate, young people benefit from positive contact with their friends and families. They receive very good support to ensure that contact is both maintained and a positive experience for them. This helps young people retain important links with those who are important to them and to build on existing relationships.

Quality of care **good**

The environment within the home is relaxed, warm and caring. Staff adopt a calm approach to looking after young people who can sometimes display challenging behaviour. The relaxed demeanour adopted by staff is non-threatening and enables young people to feel comfortable in their surroundings. This in turn helps them to develop both physically and emotionally. All young people have comprehensive placement plans in place that highlight what their needs are and how they can be

met. Clear, well written risk assessments have also been undertaken. The risk assessments help staff to minimise the risks young people face in their daily lives as well as the risky situations they sometimes put themselves in. One young person's social worker said, 'the home has good staff who work in a child centred way.' Young people living at the home are clear about what is expected of them, how they can be helped and what living at the home is meant to achieve.

Staff regularly monitor and review the care they provide to young people. This enables them to evaluate the strategies they use to help young people overcome their specific difficulties in a pro-active manner. One young person's social worker said, 'staff regularly contact me to discuss my young person's care and how they want to try different approaches to helping them.' Written records of all statutory reviews and care team meetings are available within the home. The changing needs of young people are met in a prompt and timely fashion.

Young people's files are both detailed and well ordered. Written information retained within the home provides an extensive record of each young person's life there as well as the help and support carried out by staff. One staff member said, 'within the home there is a very strong bond between staff and young people.' Young people enjoy open and honest dialogue with staff and are able to discuss how the home is run as well as helping to identify any improvements that can be made. One young person said, 'we're always talking about things. I like it here and I know I get listened to.' Staff actively promote each young person's rights and ensure they are able to participate in a wide range of activities. This helps young people to develop their confidence and self-esteem.

Admissions to the home are well planned. Where possible, existing residents are consulted about any new admissions and are encouraged to make them feel welcome. Staff are committed to ensuring each young person enjoys a positive experience while living at the home and that they are fully supported to overcome their difficulties and move forward in their lives. One member of staff said, 'we always want what's best for the young people here. We try to involve them in everything we possibly can.' The admissions process and the support of staff helps young people to overcome any anxieties they may have.

Young people enjoy living in an urban area. Each young person has their own bedroom and they are encouraged to make them as comfortable and personal as possible. Young people have access to a computer and computer gaming equipment. There is a television in the lounge where young people can relax. The home also has a dining area where members of staff and young people can socialise and enjoy a meal together. In all, the home provides a comfortable and pleasant environment for young people to enjoy.

Young people are encouraged to enjoy a healthy lifestyle and to take responsibility for their own health care needs. Written consent forms are in place in order for members of staff to administer medication or first aid where this is necessary.

Members of staff have also had training in the safe handling and administration of medication. The welfare of young people is, therefore, safeguarded.

Staff encourage young people to become more independent and to learn activities for daily living. The home has a very well organised and detailed training package in place that young people can follow. The format allows young people to learn independence skills in a systematic fashion that builds on their existing skills. This helps to prepare young people for independent living and adulthood.

Keeping children and young people safe good

The home has clear systems in place that help to promote and safeguard the welfare of young people. One young person said, 'staff look after me and want me to be safe.' There have been a small number of occasions since the last inspection when young people have been missing. The home has clear and robust procedures in place for staff to follow when this happens. Records retained within the home of these occasions are generally well written and detailed. However, in some instances the actions taken by staff and the time at which they were taken is not clear. This means that a clear and accurate record of the incident is not recorded.

Staff take a pro-active approach to countering bullying and as a result there have been no incidents of bullying reported in the home since the last inspection. All members of staff are fully trained in safeguarding and receive refresher training to keep their skills and knowledge up to date. This helps to ensure they are all confident and competent in dealing with any safeguarding issues should they arise.

Young people are encouraged to develop positive behaviour and to take responsibility for their actions through reward systems, restorative techniques and positive role modelling from staff. Boundaries are consistently applied and punitive measures such as sanctions and restraint are seldom used. Staff are trained and skilled in de-escalation techniques which reduces the risk of physical intervention. Young people learn what the impact of their behaviour has on other people and are supported to learn different strategies for coping with their anger and anxieties.

The home's communal areas are very well decorated, furnished and maintained. Young people's bedrooms are homely and have been individualised by the young people themselves. Regular health and safety checks are carried out by the home's manager and senior staff. This ensures a prompt response to any issue within the building that may require attention. Young people live in a building which is safe.

There have been no new appointments to the staff team since the last full inspection. The home has clear recruitment policies and procedures in place and staff personnel files contain sufficient information to fully meet regulations and national minimum standards. This helps to ensure young people are looked after by suitable people and that they are protected from potential exploitation or abuse.

Leadership and management

good

The Registered Manager has been registered since September 2003. She has the appropriate qualifications to be the Registered Manager of a children's home, as well as a suitable management qualification.

The home's manager and staff are all experienced, competent professionals. Staff members are fully motivated and enthusiastic about improving the life chances of all the young people they care for. The home meets the aims and objectives set out in its Statement of Purpose, which fully complies with national minimum standards and regulations. Placing social workers know precisely what the home sets out to do and how young people placed there are being looked after.

Regular staff meetings take place to ensure consistent messages are conveyed to the team and to discuss behaviour support strategies for individual young people. One member of staff said, 'I have been encouraged to share my opinions and views with all the staff team' and, 'I feel the staff team and the manager work extremely well in supporting each other and the young people in their care to a very high standard.' All staff have a sound understanding of the needs of individual young people, they are child-centred and outcome-focused. Young people's experiences at the home, since their admission, have had a significant impact on many aspects of their lives.

The home's manager and senior staff have demonstrated a capacity for, and commitment to, further improvement. Requirements and recommendations raised at the previous inspection have been fully met. Additionally, the manager has a development plan for the home in place. The manager and staff know what the strengths and weaknesses of the home are and what improvements they wish to make. However, the development plan does not contain specific, measurable targets for improvement and progress. This means that the progress the home wishes to make may be slower than desired.

Written records of daily events are retained in the home which helps to build a broad picture of each young person's life there. Detailed notifications of all significant events are received by the regulatory authority in a timely manner.

The local authority demonstrates a commitment to staff development by ensuring their training is kept up to date. This helps to ensure staff members retain the skills and competencies they have and encourages them to develop new ones.

The home's manager has systems in place to ensure that the quality of care is regularly monitored. Problem areas which may be identified are quickly highlighted and swift action is taken. Monitoring visits from someone independent of the home take place every month. The person undertaking these visits talks, where possible, to staff and young people. In addition, and where possible, the independent visitor also

talks to the parents or relatives of young people. These visits help to ensure that the home is run properly and that young people are well cared for.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The 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 relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.