

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	11/10/2016
Unique reference number	SC035235
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Durham County Council
Registered provider address	County Hall Durham DH1 5UL
Responsible individual	Karen Robb
Registered manager	Bernadette Olney
Inspector	Colin Imrie

Inspection date	11/10/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Good
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC035235

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- The staff team has shown a great deal of commitment and dedication to the children and young people, through some difficult and challenging times. The quality of their care practice and their support for all the children and young people, and for each other, have enabled them to offer a very good service.
- The leadership and management are strong. The registered manager and the senior workers show good leadership skills and have been well supported by senior managers in the local authority.
- Currently, one place at the home is not being offered to a new young person. This is because managers have judged that both young people currently living at the home require a further period of stability and minimum change. This is positive management.
- One young person who has found going to school difficult has been supported to attend an alternative education provision. This was negotiated by the staff and is proving to be successful and should lead to this young person being able to be re-introduced into more formal education in the near future.
- The staff have dealt well with a range of challenging behaviour shown by the children and young people. One young person has been helped to manage drug use, and another to positively change their behaviour. There has been a reduction in incidents of missing from home and support to manage mental health issues.
- The staff have been quick to refer children and young people to external specialist workers when needed. They have accessed specialist mental health support, particularly in crisis situations. At times, this has been very important to young people.
- The staff have worked well with the families of children and young people and have supported them to maintain and improve their relationships with their families.

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

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that the necessary support is given to children and young people to enable them to access their education or training. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', 2015, page 28, paragraph 5.13)

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is run by a local authority and is registered for the care and accommodation of up to three children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
15/12/2015	Full	Good
21/10/2014	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
11/08/2014	Full	Good
12/03/2014	Interim	Good progress

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The staff give the children's and young people's care and welfare the highest priority. The past year has been challenging in a number of ways, and staff have shown considerable commitment and dedication and continued to offer high standards of care throughout. One placing social worker said that the staff cared for the young person they placed at the home 'like one of their own', which says a great deal about the culture at the home. They said that staff went over and above their duty. One parent made a similar remark, saying that the care that their child had received was 'absolutely brilliant'. Since the last full inspection, the same three children and young people have lived at the home. There have been no new admissions during this period. Recently, one of these three young people has successfully moved on to independent living. All three of the children and young people in question had significant difficulties, challenging behaviour and very different complex needs when they arrived at the home. All of the children and young people have made some progress, and two have made very good progress. The basis of this progress has been that the staff have formed very good relationships with the children and young people. This has happened despite the challenging behaviour shown towards staff. One young person who was unhappy to be admitted to the home has been supported to make substantial changes to their life. They have overcome significant drugs misuse and have been supported to keep themselves much safer by stopping going missing and by avoiding mixing with concerning people. Much of this progress was helped by a key worker engaging the young person in key work about feelings, emotions and self-esteem. One child who has learning difficulties has been very well supported to make many positive changes to their behaviour. They have been supported to stop running away from the home and are now able to have some unsupervised but planned free time in the local community. They have also been able to make changes to their aggressive and antisocial behaviour. This is really positive and is very good progress. One young person has been supported very well through a developing mental health crisis. They have not made a great deal of progress in other areas of their life because of this, but have now been helped to get the medical attention that they require. Parents of this young person are very complimentary about the substantial efforts of the staff team to support this young person. There have been other concerns about this young person's behaviours, and staff have worked	

through these in order to keep them safe and to ensure that others are safe.

The staff have managed the children's and young people's health needs well, and all necessary appointments have been made and kept.

It has been a difficult year in terms of supporting the children and young people to attend their education and training placements. Two of the young people are now school leavers and they have struggled to find further education or training opportunities that they could commit to. The staff have made good efforts to find appropriate resources, and the young people have attended some of these for some of the time, but, overall, both young people have not made the best of these opportunities. While the staff have made efforts to find the best education placement for these young people, the inspector considers that more could have been done, and a recommendation has been made that this should be done in future. One other child who was not making progress at school was found an alternative, activity-based education resource, and this is working well. Staff have not agreed the timescale for a return to more formal education for this young person, and this now also needs to be actioned. The recommendation also covers this issue. This child is supported to participate in many leisure activities, ranging from rock climbing and trampolining to train spotting and computers. Staff make extra efforts with this child during school holidays, as they have identified that they become easily bored when their time is unstructured.

One young person has recently moved to independent living, which has been successful. The young person is very happy that staff have supported them before, during and after this move, and the good relationships between them are continuing. A parent of this young person was also very complimentary about the staff's efforts, saying that they would, 'never have believed this was possible'. This young person is now working and continuing to do well.

The staff have worked hard to support all the children and young people to become more independent and to learn necessary skills. There is good evidence of regular key work taking place to address identified issues, and this is having a positive effect. The children and young people are consulted about their care plans and about the daily running of the home.

The young person who has recently left the home owned a horse for some considerable time when they lived at the home, and they were able to care for the horse appropriately without help from the staff. This not only shows how well the staff support the young person but how flexible they were able to be as well.

The staff have put good effort into encouraging the children and young people to maintain and develop their family relationships. This has been particularly successful with two of the young people.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The children and young people in this home are kept safe. The staff understand risks and are able to assess them well and put in place appropriate plans to manage and minimise these risks. One young person who has some learning difficulties was running off into the community without permission and was putting themselves at risk of being involved in an accident. Staff installed a key-fob system to prevent them from leaving the building without permission. The system allowed the other young people living at the home to come and go as they wished. This has worked very well, combined with a significant amount of support from staff. The young person has now learnt not to run away from the home, and the restrictions have now been lifted. This is very good progress. This young person has made considerable progress in other areas of their life. They have been supported to change their aggressive behaviour and to be able to mix with others socially much more easily. This excellent progress is a direct result of staff demonstrating clear boundaries and expectations. Over time, these have worked. There have been a number of incidents of other older young people going missing, but these have been decreasing, and appropriate work has been carried out to ensure that young people are found and returned as quickly as possible. Independent return home interviews have been carried out on each occasion. One young person who arrived at the home had a significant problem using drugs. This young person has been supported by staff to overcome this. In their own words, they say that without this support, 'I do not think I would still be here'. The placing social worker also said that staff have done some positive work managing the risks to help this young person become safer. Not only were there risks for them associated with drug taking but also risks of sexual exploitation. One young person has been identified as having some mental health issues while living at the home. At times, their behaviour has been concerning. There have been a few incidents of their making threats towards the other young people and of bullying the other young people. These incidents were dealt with quickly and effectively and they have not been repeated. Staff have made good efforts to ensure that all the children and young people are safe when together in the house. This has been achieved by increasing numbers of staff and by providing more supervision and activities. One young person has been held by means of a physical intervention on a couple of occasions for a very short period. On these occasions, it was appropriate. There have been no other physical interventions. Staff have used sanctions on occasions,	

and these have been appropriate. However, generally staff rely on their excellent relationships with the children and young people to influence their behaviour and to bring about change.

There have been no reported safeguarding issues at the home since the last inspection. No complaints or allegations have been made.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
The registered manager has considerable experience and is appropriately qualified. The home meets the aims and objectives set out in the statement of purpose, which is up to date and comprehensive. The registered manager has led the staff team effectively, and, because of this, the children and young people have made good progress from some very low starting points. The staff have dealt with children and young people who have very different sets of needs, and they have all been well supported with their different needs. The culture in the house is supportive, and the children and young people are clearly supportive of each other, which is nice to see. The registered manager has provided good support to staff. There are good records of regular supervision, which contain discussions about the children and young people. All the staff are well qualified and continue to receive regular refresher training and other new training as required. There is good evidence that the registered manager has brought in additional training about mental health issues when this was necessary. The registered manager and senior staff have been able to develop good relationships with external agencies and workers, and to challenge others when required. Staff have been able to find and negotiate more appropriate education placements when this was required and they have been tenacious and persistent when additional support was required by one young person who had developing needs. Staff were instrumental in ensuring that a series of mental health assessments have been carried out, which have resulted in one young person receiving the care and treatment that they clearly needed. These good relationships with other professionals have been in place consistently and are clearly valuable. The staff also have good relationships with others in the local community and have been able to keep one young person safer because of this. When one young	

person was starting to access the local community on their own, they sometimes demonstrated behaviours that were concerning, and staff have been able to work together with local shopkeepers and local leisure centre managers to monitor and support the young person to continue to spend time in the community.

The needs of one young person who is currently staying in hospital are being given very careful consideration. Staff are clear that a return to the home would, in many ways, be desirable because this young person regards the home as their home. However, they are equally concerned about the needs of the other child who is still in the home and want to ensure that they would not be adversely affected by the young person returning to the home. They are clear that full multi-disciplinary assessments and clear planning need to be carried out prior to any decisions about the young person returning. This is positive and appropriate thinking.

No requirements or recommendations were made at the previous interim inspection. No requirements and only one recommendation have been made at this inspection. That is to ensure that additional support is given to children and young people in accessing appropriate education and training.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of children looked after is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place. However, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or that result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference that adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, 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.

This 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 Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

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