

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	15/12/2015
Unique reference number	SC035235
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 Robb
Registered manager	Bernadette Olney
Inspector	Nick Murphy

Inspection date	15/12/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained effectiveness
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:

- Young people feel safe. They appreciate the help and support staff provide in helping them overcome stress and anxiety.
- Staff develop excellent relationships with young people. This helps young people to form firm attachments to the home, developing their confidence and encouraging them to behave responsibly.
- Some young people continue to struggle in some areas of their lives, such as substance misuse. Nevertheless, all have made progress as a result of living here, some substantially so.
- The Registered Manager and other seniors provide sound leadership. This ensures that staff are mindful of the home's ethos in their daily practice, respecting young people and providing a nurturing environment.
- Two statutory requirements and two recommendations have been made in respect of: restriction of liberty; preparation of young people for independence; and recording of information when young people go missing. These do not have significant impact upon the experiences and progress of young people.

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

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the *Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards*. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The registered person must ensure that any limitation placed on a child's privacy or access to any area of the home's premises is kept under review and, if necessary, revised; and allows children as much freedom as is possible when balanced against the need to protect them and keep them safe. (Regulation 21(c)(iii) and (iv))	29/01/2016
The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ("the statement of purpose") with particular reference to describing any restrictions on liberty. (Regulation 16(1) Schedule 1 (3)(a))	29/01/2016

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that when a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority must provide an opportunity for the child to have an independent return home interview. Homes should take account of information provided by such interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect each child. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 45 paragraph 9.30)
- Staff must help each child to prepare for any moves from the home, whether they are returning home, moving to another placement or adult care, or to live independently. This includes supporting the child to develop emotional and mental resilience to cope without the home's support and, where the child is moving to live independently, practical skills such as cooking, housework, budgeting and personal self-care. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 17 paragraph 3.27)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This section should outline:

The home accommodates up to three children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. It is operated by a local authority.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/10/2014	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
11/08/2014	Full	Good
12/03/2014	Interim	Good Progress
26/11/2013	Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
Detailed care plans set out the objectives for each young person and what staff must do to support young people in achieving agreed targets. These plans are duplicated in easy-to-access files, so that staff can refer to them quickly. Targets are realistic and easy for young people to understand, with red/amber/green ratings to signify progress. This gives them greater ownership of their plans and enables them to take pride in their achievements. A member of staff said of one young person, 'They get a real buzz from seeing the green ratings on their plan when they have reached one of their targets.' A young person said, 'I understand my care plan. Staff talk to me about it and go through what I need to do to improve. They are really pleased when I do something well.' Staff and young people have excellent relationships with each other. Staff respond to young people with respect and an understanding of why they sometimes present challenges. One young person said, 'Even when I'm horrible to them, staff are always nice to me and keep on trying to help me.' As a result, young people trust staff to act in their best interests and give them help when they need it. The close emotional attachments that young people develop with staff helps them to become more settled. They respond more positively to the simple rules necessary for living in a group. One young person had a very disrupted sleeping pattern caused by anxiety. Now they have an undisturbed night's rest and this greatly benefits their concentration in school. At the time of the inspection, young people were getting ready for Christmas. One young person was particularly excited by the preparations, and staff were supporting them enthusiastically in maintaining their belief in Father Christmas. Young people's progress in education is variable. Some struggle to attend despite the best efforts of staff. Others have full attendance and are doing well, reflecting the positive impact of staff support and encouragement. A social worker said, 'Staff have actively supported the young person to attend school which has resulted in a marked increase in attendance.' Young people are generally in good health, although some misuse substances and are resistant to the work done by staff to help them reduce their behaviour. Staff work well with other services in this and other areas of health. They liaise effectively with child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) and individual educational psychologists. These professionals undertake direct work with young people as well as offering consultation to staff. Consequently, staff are enabled to consolidate their own skills with additional specialist knowledge when they provide emotional support to young people. One young person confirmed the effectiveness of staff intervention, saying,	

'Staff help me, they talk to me about my feelings which makes me feel better about myself.'

In general, staff are good at managing transitions of young people into and out of the home. For example, staff put a planned programme of support in place for a young person after they left recently to move into independent accommodation. This helped them to adjust to life after being in care. Staff make some attempt to work with young people to help them acquire the skills they will need in adulthood. These include budgeting, shopping, and cooking. Procedures to assess young people's abilities in this area and plan activities to address deficits are not systematic. This means that young people are not receiving sufficient support to help them become more self-reliant.

Many young people have difficult relationships with their families. Staff are good at promoting and supporting successful contact and maintaining important links. Where contact between a young person and their parents is potentially volatile or even unsafe, staff will supervise visits. Their ability to mediate and support has resulted in improvement in some young people's family relationships.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Staff are effective in protecting young people. This is confirmed by young people, one saying, 'I feel safe here. I like to go to my room and know I can lock the door if I want to.' Documents set out all areas of risk for each young person and what needs to be in place to manage them safely. Sometimes the home has concerns regarding young people's ability to understand road safety. In these circumstances, from tea time onwards, staff keep the front door locked and young people are unable to open it without the assistance of staff. As a temporary measure this restriction of liberty is necessary and appropriate. Other young people understand the reason for it, one saying, 'It can be annoying at times, but I know why it has to be done and I'm OK with it.' Arrangements for fire safety have been reviewed and there are no concerns. However, the risk assessment for locking the door is not reviewed frequently enough or in sufficient detail. This means that what began as a temporary measure has been in place for some months. There is no clear written evidence setting out how the decision that it is still required has been reached. In addition, the use of this measure is not spelt out in the home's statement of purpose, reducing the accuracy and accountability of this important document. The number of times that young people have gone missing has reduced	

significantly. There were two incidents in September 2015, one in October and none since, compared to earlier in the year when there were several every month. Staff manage such incidents well, working with police and other agencies to reduce the time when young people are away. The placing authority is diligent in ensuring that on every occasion when a young person returns, they are interviewed by their social worker. There is no record of what the young person has to say in these interviews that is available to staff. This means that the opportunity is lost to use potentially valuable information that could make young people safer.

Relationships between young people are good. Bullying is not an issue. Boundaries for young people are clear and consistently enforced. Staff manage behaviour well. They use comprehensive plans for each individual young person which set out what triggers challenging behaviour and how to respond to it most effectively. These are shared with young people, so they know what their targets for improvement are and how well they are succeeding in achieving them. For example, one young person has the very simple target of reducing how often they use bad language. Staff address this by challenging them on each and every occasion and giving small rewards when they manage periods without swearing. This approach is having a positive impact, with the additional benefit of increasing the young person's acceptability when out in the community.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
The home provides a welcoming environment, demonstrating to young people that they are valued. The building is compact but provides sufficient privacy for young people as well as space for them to have group activities if they wish. There are plans in place to upgrade some areas of the accommodation, for example, the bathroom. Documentation is generally well organised, enabling staff to access the information they need and to share young people's plans with them. The Registered Manager is suitably qualified and has lots of experience. She leads her staff team very effectively, promoting the ethos of the home consistently for the benefit of young people. As a result, young people feel that all staff care about them and 'go the extra mile'. One young person wrote down his feelings about various staff members, saying '...X has been there for me and really changed my life...the manager is a lovely gaffer, she always cheers me on to do well...Y is great and always checks if I am OK...Z is a funny, caring man...' The Registered Manager and her senior staff provide regular formal supervision to staff. This is of high quality; detailed, focused on young people, and recorded clearly. In addition, staff have annual appraisals of their performance. Management oversight and support ensures that staff are consistent in maintaining their	

nurturing approach and that they have the right skills to help young people effectively. Staff also have access to regular training opportunities, including those specially commissioned to meet the particular needs of young people. For example, the registered manager has arranged for staff to have training in autism awareness.

The home's performance is subject to regular scrutiny and evaluation both by an independent visitor and by the Registered Manager. The latter in particular is very informative, and shows clearly the impact of the home in achieving better outcomes for young people. The Registered Manager has fully addressed all requirements and recommendations made at the last inspection. Risk assessments are updated more frequently, making them more accurate when taking account of changing circumstances in young people's lives. The home's development plan now contains clear timescales for actions to be achieved. This enables managers and others to be held accountable if agreed improvements in practice are not in place within a reasonable time.

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 looked after children 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 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 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 who 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*.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance *raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted*, which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, workbased learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It inspects services for looked after children and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2015