

SC035235

Durham County Council

Monitoring visit

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

A local authority operates and manages this home. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to three children and/or young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The manager registered with Ofsted in August 2008. She has been absent from her post since 26 September 2020.

Inspection date: 25 November 2020

This monitoring visit

Ofsted received information via safeguarding notifications that highlighted potential poor practice in relation to the care and protection of children and young people. Serious, but not widespread concerns were found.

When children and young people make allegations against staff, the leaders and managers have not followed the relevant protocols. This includes not reporting allegations to the designated officer in the local authority. Furthermore, there is no record of the measures which may be necessary to protect children and young people following an allegation made against staff. Children and young people are not told about the steps that will be taken in response to their allegation. This means that children and young people will not know that their allegations will be taken seriously. Poor staff practice in relation to handling allegations exposes children and young people to the risk of harm.

The manager does not consider impact risk assessments for children and young people prior to their admission. There has been an increase in bullying and disruptive behaviour due to the poor dynamics and mix of children and young people. This does not provide children and young people with positive experiences and increases their anxiety when conflict occurs.

Regular key-working sessions provide opportunities for children and young people to discuss their risk-taking behaviours with their key workers. This helps children and young people to develop ways of reducing such behaviours. This has been effective

in reducing some children's and young people's risks, particularly in relation to the safe use of social media. However, bullying is an ongoing topic of discussion within key-working sessions. This provides children and young people with the opportunity to continue to reflect on their behaviour, aiming to reduce risks in this area.

Staff do not have opportunities to attend regular team meetings or receive debriefs following significant events. The manager does not sufficiently support staff to reflect as a team on their practice or discuss any issues relating to children and young people. This means that there are limited opportunities for staff to improve their practice and understanding of children's and young people's needs.

The manager does not have an effective monitoring system in place. For example, staff use restorative approaches to support children and young people to reflect and learn from their behaviours. There is no record or log of the manager reviewing staff practice in response to such intervention. Insufficient scrutiny of staff practice means that the manager is unable to track for themes and trends to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided to children and young people.

The acting manager has devised an action plan to improve staff practice, and staff training is identified as an area for improvement. A range of training events booked over the coming months will support staff to develop the skills and knowledge that they need to meet the needs of children and young people. The effectiveness of this will be addressed in the next inspection.

The provider did not notify Ofsted of several incidents considered serious under regulation 40. This means that, as a regulator, Ofsted has not had an opportunity to review the actions taken by the provider to ensure that they protect children and young people from harm.

Four requirements made at the last inspection under regulations 12, 13, 39 and 40 are not met. They have been reissued. Regulations 13 and 40 are reissued as compliance notices.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
26/11/2019	Full	Good
24/07/2018	Full	Good
06/06/2017	Full	Good
14/02/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) 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(s) must comply within 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— 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; help each child to understand how to keep safe; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; 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 are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)) In particular, ensure that safeguarding policies are followed when children and young people make allegations against staff. This includes notifying the relevant agencies. In particular, ensure that the manager considers impact risk assessments for each child and young person prior to any admission.	17 January 2021

*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 work as a team where appropriate; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child; 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; demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received; and use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1) (2)(b)(e)(f)(g)(ii)(h))	17 January 2021
Subject to paragraph (6), the registered person must establish a procedure for considering complaints made by or on behalf of children. In particular, the procedure must provide that no person who is the subject of a complaint takes any part in its consideration or investigation, except at the informal resolution stage if the registered person considers it appropriate. The registered person must ensure that a record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of any investigation. The registered person must ensure that no child is subject to any reprisal for making a complaint or representation. The registered person must supply to HMCI, at HMCI's request, a statement containing a summary of any complaints made during the preceding twelve months and the action that was taken in response to each complaint. (Regulation 39 (1) (2) (3) (4) (5))	17 January 2021

In particular, ensure that the manager has an effective system in place to record and investigate any allegations and complaints.	
*The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation; an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious; 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); or there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4))	17 January 2021

*These requirements are subject to 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 DH1 5UL

Responsible individual: Claire Morris

Registered manager: Bernadette Olney

Inspector

Jacqueline Tate, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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