

SC035235

Registered provider: Durham County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is run by a local authority and is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to three children or young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The manager has been registered since 2007.

Inspection dates: 26 to 27 November 2019

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers requires improvement to be good

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 24 July 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/07/2018	Full	Good
06/06/2017	Full	Good
14/02/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
11/10/2016	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(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) and (vii)) In particular, that the home's child protection policies are followed and any allegations against staff are referred to the appropriate agencies. This includes the designated officer.	23/12/2019
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the	23/12/2019

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— 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. (Regulation 13 (1)(g)(ii))	
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)) In particular, that the registered manager has an effective system in place to record and investigate allegations and complaints within the home.	23/12/2019
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,	23/12/2019

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)(a)(b)(c)(d)(i)(ii) and (e))

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children and young people are supported by carers to take pride in their home. Photographs and pictures displayed around the building provide a homely environment. Children and young people are consulted regularly and given opportunities to have a say about how their rooms are decorated. This helps children and young people feel valued and there has been minimal damage in the home as a result.

Carers understand the benefits of supporting children and young people to spend time with family and friends when it is appropriate. Carers maintain positive relationships with a range of friends and family members. This means that when issues arise, positive communication resolves issues quickly without there being any adverse impact for children and young people.

There is a good ethos to education attendance and attainment. Where children and young people require extra support, additional tuition is sourced. The registered manager and her team are effective at advocating for children and young people. When there have been shortfalls in accessing specialist services and education, health and care plans, the registered manager and her team have been influential in securing the support required. Consequently, children and young people are making good progress from their starting points.

Children and young people are encouraged to take part in activities to further develop their social inclusion and enjoyment and promote a healthy, well-balanced lifestyle. The use of photographs captures the various achievements and successes of children and

young people. This helps children and young people to recognise their own progress.

Effective key-working sessions are well considered in line with individual care planning. Children and young people contribute to themes and they are given time to reflect on their own progress. Life-story work provides children and young people with a sensitive and truthful explanation about their journey. This is helping the children and young people to understand their history and experiences.

Since the last full inspection, there have been examples of admissions that have been well considered and transitions to alternative placements that have been sensitively planned. This makes these experiences more positive for children and young people. Children and young people maintain contact with carers after they leave. This provides ongoing emotional and practical support for children and young people.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Risk assessments identify known risks and strategies to mitigate the risk of harm. They are regularly reviewed and updated following significant events. Behaviours are not always considered or recorded to provide an opportunity to learn about any patterns or triggers. While this has not had a negative impact on children and young people, risk assessments need to be reviewed to ensure that all information is included.

There have been several incidents where there have been bullying and/or negative behaviours displayed between some children and young people. The registered manager sourced up-to-date training for the staff team to support their management of this. This supported carers' understanding about how to recognise negative attitudes and behaviours. This has benefited the children and young people.

When there have been safeguarding concerns, the registered manager and her team have acted quickly to ensure the immediate safety of the children and young people. However, there have been multiple incidents where the registered manager has not involved all other agencies in the safeguarding procedures. While this did not result in any serious harm to children and young people, this reduces accountability and other professionals' assurance that all safeguarding procedures have been followed. HMCI has not been notified of all serious incidents. This has reduced oversight by the regulator.

There have been several allegations and complaints made since the last full inspection. The registered manager has a complaint log but does not have an effective system for recording and investigating such matters. This means that themes and trends are not sufficiently monitored and reviewed. Furthermore, children and young people are given poor messages about how to complain. This is because there is no formal process to respond to complaints made and no feedback on the outcomes of any investigation.

Negative consequences are not a favoured option to address low-level disruptive behaviours. Instead, carers use restorative approaches that enable children and young people to reflect and learn.

When children and young people go missing from home, the appropriate protocols are followed to aid their safe return home. Additionally, children and young people are provided opportunities to speak with an independent visitor on their return. The means that children and young people can share their views about why they went missing with an independent person.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The registered manager is highly experienced and suitably qualified for the position held. She has been on planned leave since mid-September 2019. In her absence, an equally qualified and experienced senior member of the team has acted as the home's manager. There has been minimal disruption in the home, given that he has been part of the current stable staff team.

The registered manager and the acting manager continually seek out learning opportunities for staff to enhance the existing and varied skills within the team. Supervisions are regular and focus on reflective practice, learning and development for individuals as well as the home's overall development.

Discussions with the staff team confirm that they share the passion and vision of their registered manager and acting manager. When shortfalls were identified during the inspection, the acting manager and his team responded positively. Their motivation and enthusiasm to drive improvements forward was notable.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and 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.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, 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'.

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: Karen Robb

Registered manager: Bernadette Olney

Acting manager: Peter Purdy

Inspector

Jacqueline Tate, social care inspector

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