

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 and managed by a local authority. It provides care for up to three children who may have social and emotional difficulties and who may have learning disabilities.

The manager registered with Ofsted in November 2023.

At the time of this inspection, there was one child living in the home.

Inspection dates: 27 and 28 November 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good

The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 22 May 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection:

This children's home was judged inadequate at the full inspection on 22 and 23 May 2024. Ofsted issued one compliance notice under regulation 12. In addition, four requirements were issued.

Ofsted conducted a monitoring visit on 8 July 2024. The inspector found that the compliance notice under regulation 12 had not been met and was reissued.

Ofsted conducted a monitoring visit on 2 September 2024 to monitor the provider's progress in meeting the steps within the compliance notice. The inspector found that the compliance notice under regulation 12 had not been met. A compliance notice under regulation 12 was reissued. In addition, a compliance notice under regulation 13 was issued.

Ofsted conducted a monitoring visit on 15 October 2024. The inspectors found that the compliance notices under regulations 12 and 13 had been met.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
22/05/2024	Full	Inadequate
06/02/2024	Full	Requires improvement to be good
27/09/2022	Full	Good
22/11/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Since the last full inspection, leaders and managers found it difficult to implement sufficient change to meet the compliance notices issued. Due to the significant damage within the home environment, children needed to move to a temporary home. One child has left the home. These factors have had an impact on the children's stability and ability to make progress. However, at the monitoring visit in October 2024, compliance notices were met and positive changes in practice were starting to occur.

Lots of staffing changes required staff from the provider's other homes and agency workers to work at this home. Children experienced inconsistency from being cared for by people less familiar to them. However, the core team of staff has progressively been re-established, giving children more stability in their care. This has enabled the child to start developing positive relationships with the adults caring for them.

Staff have struggled to consistently meet the needs of children living together. Blameful language about children has been used. Managers have taken appropriate action to challenge this poor practice and promote a child-focused culture, helping to influence staff's warm and nurturing approach to caring for children.

The children spent time living in a temporary home due to the extensive damage caused at this home. Before one child returned to live at the home, leaders extensively improved the quality of accommodation to give children a safe and nurturing environment where they can flourish. The child has personalised their bedroom to their liking to help it feel like their home.

Children have not consistently accessed education, and there was a decline in some children's attendance at school. This is linked to difficulties in staff being able to meet the children's behavioural needs effectively. However, since moving back to the home from their temporary accommodation, the child's attendance has improved. Additionally, clear routines and boundaries have encouraged the child's confidence to re-engage with their learning.

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

Staff have not been able to meet the emotional and behavioural needs of all children effectively. Children lacked routines and boundaries, resulting in staff frequently needing to hold children for their safety. Since managers have achieved a more stable team and effective communication between staff, incidents have reduced.

Key-work sessions with children are reactive to behavioural incidents but not supportive of meeting the children's needs in line with their care plans. Often, sessions did not focus on addressing the child's needs or risks. Recently, staff have developed a key-work plan to ensure that they have more proactive conversations with children. Additionally, staff have a better understanding of the child's needs and worries. As a result, incidents have reduced, and the child is being helped to reflect and learn from behavioural incidents.

The child has a detailed care plan and risk assessment. The documents outline the child's needs and give staff clear guidance on how to meet those needs. Managers regularly review these plans and make changes when needed to ensure that staff have the most up-to-date information.

Managers advocate on the child's behalf to ensure that partner agencies complete relevant assessments. This ensures that the child is cared for and supported in the most effective way.

Staff and managers know the risks to the child when they are in the local community. They proactively work with partner agencies such as the police, and managers have attended meetings with the local community. This helps to promote a coordinated response to safeguarding concerns.

Staff actively look for the child and liaise with other agencies when the child goes missing from home. This helps the child return home safely. Furthermore, the child is given the opportunity to discuss and reflect on their time away, giving them the opportunity to share any concerns they may have.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders and managers have started to make positive changes to address the shortfalls in staff practice. There is a focus on service development to promote better outcomes for children. However, it is early days, and these changes have yet to be embedded.

Staff have been provided with resources and training to help them meet the needs of children. This has mainly focused on embedding therapeutic parenting styles. Training is positively influencing staff practice and improving the child's quality of care. However, not all staff have completed the provider's mandatory training within the provider's required timescales.

Staff said they are feeling more supported by the management team and enjoy coming to work. They speak positively about the changes being made and said communication in the team is now 'more effective'. Staff are experiencing the benefits from regular practice-related supervision and feel 'listened to'. This means that the child is being cared for by adults who themselves feel well supported and valued.

Managers use monitoring tools to support their oversight of the home. However, various minor errors continue in documents, such as missing information or using blameful language. Supervision sessions for staff do not always record the reflective discussions that have been held. This limits the quality of follow-up conversations. Managers have plans to address these shortfalls.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff training is completed within the agreed timescales. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11)
- The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, 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: Fostering & Adoption Team, Spectrum 8, Spectrum Business Park, Seaham SR7 7TT

Responsible individual: Paul Rudd

Registered manager: Amy Philbin-Robinson

Inspector

Jess Elliott, Social Care Inspector

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