

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC035247
Inspector	Bill Drumm
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 Monica Robb
Registered manager	Helen Andrews
Date of last inspection	23/12/2013

Inspection date	07/10/2014
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	good
Outcomes for children and young people	outstanding
Quality of care	good
Keeping children and young people safe	outstanding
Leadership and management	good

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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The home provides a good, well organised and effective short break service to young people with disabilities. Each young person has a detailed care plan which incorporates their individual day and night-time routines. This helps to ensure they receive a personalised service and are kept safe from harm. Staff are skilled and competent to meet the diverse needs of the young people in their care including those from ethnically diverse backgrounds. Regular training helps to ensure the skills and competencies staff have are kept up to date.

Keyworkers have a detailed knowledge and understanding of the young people they look after and have built excellent working relationships with their families, education providers and health care staff. Staff have also developed positive relationships with social care providers from adult services. This helps to ensure a seamless transfer of information about the young person when they are nearing adulthood and their transition into adult services. This in turn, helps to reduce the anxiety of the young person and their family members.

Staff are committed to ensuring young people have positive life experiences while staying at the home and are enabled to learn new skills, develop their confidence and improve their self-esteem. Additionally, young people are encouraged to participate in community based activities and to raise money for their chosen

charities. All young people have made good progress. Their achievements, no matter how small, are celebrated and certificates awarded. Staff recognise the importance of encouraging young people to achieve their maximum potential. For some, this has resulted in plans for them to continue into further education once they leave school and for others, it means they are able to socialise with other young people and to eat meals with them.

Monitoring processes are thorough and appropriate. This demonstrates that the home, its staff and senior management have a clear commitment to continued improvement.

One requirement and one recommendation have been raised as a result of this inspection. The requirement is in relation to reviewing the home's Statement of Purpose. The recommendation is in relation to ensuring that all staff, including those who are already experienced in working with young people with disabilities receives an appropriate level of formal supervision. Neither of these shortfalls has a significant impact on the welfare of young people.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This local authority children's home provides short-break care and accommodation for seven children with learning and physical disabilities, from nine years and up to 17 years of age.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
23/12/2013	Interim	good progress
16/07/2013	Full	good
03/12/2012	Interim	good progress
26/06/2012	Full	good

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

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 Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
5 (2001)	keep under review and, where appropriate, revise the Statement of Purpose. (Regulation 5 (a))	31/12/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure staff are provided with regular supervision by appropriately qualified and experienced staff. (NMS 19.4)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **outstanding**

Staff communicate with the carers of young people frequently either verbally or by leaving messages in the young person's communication diary. The active communication between the home and parents helps to ensure that the changing needs of young people are fully understood, to ensure carers always feel listened to and to highlight the progress young people are making. Partnership working in this manner helps to ensure that each young person's care plan remains accurate and that all those involved in the young person's care are working toward the same goal. The parent of one young person said, 'Our daughter is having such a good time with friends when she visits the home, she's so happy she comes home 'buzzing'.'

The home has a well organised and positive approach to encourage young people to succeed. All success is celebrated and certificates awarded for achievements at school, helping to make meals or snacks and for being sociable with their peer group. Staff speak with enthusiasm about the progress young people make and in enabling them to experience a wide range of activities. One member of staff said, 'Seeing young people enjoy themselves and to do something for the first time is so rewarding. We can often get them to do things here that they wouldn't dream of doing at home. One young person used to eat their meals alone but now they sit with everyone else at the table.'

Young people achieve some excellent health outcomes during their visits. The home has a positive relationship with health care professionals who frequently visit the home to offer advice and support. One member of staff said, 'we had one young person who was having difficulty swallowing so we spoke to the speech and language therapist. They came and gave us some advice so now we're able to provide a more appropriate diet.' Another member of staff said, 'we know the community nurses are just at the end of the phone if we need anything.' A parent of another young person said, 'I feel safe in the knowledge that if there's ever an issue with my child's well-being the staff at the home will care for them like they were their own.'

All young people enjoy a well-balanced, healthy diet while living at the home including those who require specially prepared food for cultural reasons or who have specialist diets. Young people with specialist feeding needs, for instance those who require fortified drinks or who may have gastrostomies, are also fully catered for. Young people are supported and encouraged, within the limits of their ability, to participate in meal preparation and to enjoy an active lifestyle during their visits. Examples of this include visits to local museums, parks or the seaside. Young people are also actively involved in raising money for their chosen charities, such as McMillan nurses or the local dogs trust. This helps to improve their confidence and self-esteem.

Staff have built excellent working relationships with local schools to ensure that

young people maintain regular attendance. Additionally, the close relationship between schools and staff at the home helps to ensure that all those involved in the young person's care provide consistent handling. This is of particular importance in addressing any challenging behaviours that some young people present. Partnership working also helps to ensure the seamless transfer of information from the school to the home and onto carers. This helps to maintain their school attendance. Where they are able, young people are encouraged to further their education by attending college. Partnership working in this manner helps young people to achieve their maximum potential.

Young people who live at the home are able to learn activities for daily living, self-help skills and to be more independent. Staff involve young people in meal preparation and shopping for food items. This helps to equip young people with the life-skills they need to make a successful transition into adulthood and, where possible, independent living. The parent of one young person said, 'Before our child came here they never left our side, we were reluctant to let them go anywhere really, but now it's a different story. Their confidence has really grown. Now we wouldn't be without the place.'

Quality of care

good

The needs of young people are assessed prior to them accessing this service. They all have clear care plans in place that also incorporate their health care needs. The health care plans of young people include details about any specific allergies, prescribed medication or complex health care conditions they may have. Key-workers stay in regular contact with the parents and carers of young people to ensure any changing health care needs are known prior to their admission. This helps to ensure the young person's health needs can be adequately met.

Staff are trained and competent in the handling and administration of medication. The home's manager carries out regular audits of the administration records and swift action is taken to address any short-comings. Furthermore, staff are able to call on the expertise of health care professionals for advice, guidance or training where necessary. This helps to ensure that risks to young people are minimised and that their health care needs are met.

All staff spoken to have high expectations and aspirations for the young people in their care and are committed to helping them achieve their goals. Ongoing encouragement and support helps young people to make good progress in developing personal care skills, daily living skills and social skills. Examples include helping to plan trips out, shopping for food items and learning to bathe themselves properly.

Staff engage young people as far as possible in their own care by using a range of communication systems and by offering support and encouragement. Team

meetings, individual supervision sessions and informal discussions amongst the staff team helps to ensure staff consistently deliver good quality care. Young people have clear care plans and risk assessments in place which outline what their care needs are and how any risks can be minimised. Staffing levels within the home are good, which helps to ensure young people are kept safe from harm.

Staff strongly advocate for the needs of all the young people in their care who are supported and enabled to make individual choices about their lives and their futures. Several young people are nearing adulthood and are considering moving into further education or adult services. Staff at the home have been a valuable resource to parents and social workers in developing plans for the future. Staff are aware of the progress being made in relation to each individual young person moving on from the home.

Keeping children and young people safe outstanding

All relevant health and safety checks are up-to-date and certificates are in place which helps to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the young people, visitors to the home and staff. Young people who access this service have a combination of medical health needs, specific conditions or some challenging behaviour. Staffing levels within the home help to ensure young people are kept safe and that they do not go missing from the home.

Each young person has a positive behaviour plan in place and they are encouraged to develop socially acceptable behaviour. The parent of one young person said, 'My daughter really loves the home. She's forever looking in my diary to see when she's next there. She's made new friends and that's helped her with her confidence.' Behaviour plans are reviewed frequently. Keyworkers at the home are in regular contact with parents, carers and other professionals to discuss changing needs. Amendments or additions to care plans are quickly made. Regular contact and dialogue between staff, parents and other professionals helps to ensure young people make progress and achieve their full potential.

Sanctions are not used within the home to help young people modify their behaviour, instead staff offer continued support, encouragement and praise to promote and reinforce positive behaviour. Restraint or holding young people is only used to prevent young people from causing harm to themselves or others. High staffing ratios and the skilled use of diversion techniques helps to ensure that restraint is rarely used. This means young people are able to develop positive behaviour and are kept safe in a warm, caring and nurturing environment.

All staff are trained in safeguarding and child protection procedures. They are fully aware of the signs and symptoms of abuse and know the procedures to follow if they suspect abuse may be taking place. Safe working practices ensure that young people are effectively safeguarded.

The home's complaints procedures are available to parents and young people in a range of different formats to aid understanding. There have been no complaints from parents or young people since the last inspection. However, several compliments have been received from both professionals and parents. One carer said, 'You have all been amazing but when you acted as a group you were awesome.' Clear lines of communication between the home and parents help parents to feel listened to. Any anxieties they may have are quickly dealt with which in turn helps them to feel confident about the care their children receive.

There has been one new appointment at the home since the last inspection. The home's recruitment and selection processes are robust and well established. This helps to ensure young people are kept safe from harm.

Leadership and management

good

The Registered Manager has been registered since August 2008. She has the appropriate qualifications to be a Registered Manager of a children's home as well as holding a suitable management qualification.

The home is successfully managed by a qualified and child-focused manager who is supported by a dedicated and enthusiastic staff team. Monitoring practices ensure that the manager is fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. A development plan is in place to help ensure the home's continued progress. This means that the home runs efficiently and provides high quality care for young people. A parent of one young person said, 'I have nothing negative to say about the home, the staff there are great.'

Staff have access to excellent training opportunities, including refresher training and professional development. In addition, regular supervision helps to further support their development and provides them with an opportunity to share any concerns they have about working practices or the care needs of young people. However, one experienced member of staff has not received regular supervision since transferring to the home from another in the same authority. Young people are cared for by a suitably skilled and qualified staff team although not all are fully supported.

Young people receive care from staff who have the knowledge, skills and resources to meet their often complex health care needs. For example, specialist nurses provide staff with training in how to care for children with autistic spectrum disorders, epilepsy and other health related conditions. The parent of one young person said, 'I don't think I can think of a way to tell you how much of a difference having my child come to you has made to our lives.'

The home has a Statement of Purpose in place which provides information about how the home is run and what a placement there is meant to achieve. However, the

Statement of Purpose does not fully comply with regulations. The home's manager is in the process of reviewing the document to ensure these shortfalls are fully addressed. This will help placing social workers know about the aims and objectives of the home and the services and facilities it provides.

The care needs of young people are frequently reviewed through staff meetings, individual supervision sessions and the formal statutory review processes. Additionally, after each care episode the staff team discuss how the young person has been, what they've achieved and what activities they've taken part in. This helps to keep information about each young person up to date and helps to plan strategies for promoting their further development.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The 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 relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.