

SC035247

Registered provider: Durham County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This short-break children's home is owned and managed by a local authority. It is registered to provide care for up to seven children who have learning disabilities. The home also provides care for children who may require accommodation on a longer-term basis.

The manager was registered with Ofsted in March 2023.

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 March 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 21 February 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/02/2023	Full	Good
15/06/2021	Full	Good
30/07/2019	Full	Good
28/08/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children make progress from their starting points. This varies and is influenced by how frequently the children come to stay in this short-break home. One child is now brushing his teeth; for another child staying away from home is a huge achievement; and another child is becoming more confident with their personal care. Children have opportunities to spend time with their friends, and the registered manager tries to accommodate this where possible.

Children stay in a well-equipped home with ample play equipment. Staff have developed social stories and use signs and pictures to make information displayed around the home easier for children to read and understand.

Children receive a well-planned introduction to the home before their short-break stay. Staff work well with families and professionals to understand children's individual needs. This ensures that children receive tailored care and that staff have the right skills to care for them.

Staff prepare each child's chosen bedroom before their stay in the home. This includes personalising the room with photos, pictures, and any resources the child may need. This supports children to have familiar, personalised items during their stay.

Children are supported to build positive and trusting relationships with staff. Children were seen and heard to arrive for their stay; they sounded happy and keen to engage in activities.

Staff consult with health professionals to understand children's complex health needs. Training is provided to ensure that staff have the skills to administer medication, and this is safely managed.

Children are supported to access activities that provide them with new opportunities. These may be in the home, such as having new tastes, new feelings, and sensory experiences. Additionally, children have trips in the community or access activities that may not be available to them at home. The staff capture these experiences in photos that parents can access through a secure social media group. This helps families see their children's experiences in addition to the feedback that they receive from staff.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Children's care plans and risk assessments are detailed and up to date. Staff understand how to provide care for each child and manage any known risks. This ensures that children receive consistent responses from those who care for them.

Children are helped to stay safe in the home. Staff ensure the environment is well maintained and free from hazards. Staff supervise children at all times to ensure children can explore their environment safely.

There is an effective system in place to ensure the safe storage and administration of medication. Staff understand how each child's medication should be administered and are creative in the ways they achieve this, particularly with children who are reluctant to take their medication. This approach ensures that staff continue to meet children's health needs as safely as possible.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The leadership of the home is effective. The manager is enthusiastic about her role and has a clear vision for developing the service. She is supported by an assistant manager who is equally invested in the home's journey. The manager has a strong presence in the home and makes sure that she spends time with the children.

The registered manager cares about and supports the children and families who visit the home. Professionals and families describe the registered manager as having a flexible and responsive approach. Communication is a strength of the staff team. Staff are enthusiastic and are keen to develop and improve the home further.

The registered manager and staff recognise the achievements that children make, and how important these are to children and families. They are beginning to monitor how staff capture these achievements and build on them. This helps children to continue to develop skills and become more independent.

The registered manager and deputy manager use learning from their own experiences alongside feedback from families and professionals. This helps to further develop and improve the experiences of children. The registered manager is insightful of the strengths and weaknesses of the service. Feedback from parents and professionals is overwhelmingly positive about the registered manager and the staff team.

Staff have regular supervision. However, the quality of these sessions is not consistent for all staff. Some staff do not receive reflective supervision. Similarly practice issues are not always addressed. As a result, the manager misses opportunities to develop the whole staff team.

The manager does not ensure that children are given consistent opportunities to engage with the independent visitor about their experiences of their short breaks. The independent visitor has not observed or consulted with the children for a considerable time, with most of the visits taking place while the children have been at school. This limits opportunities for children and parents to feel listened to and valued.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person 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 must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The registered person must ensure that all employees— receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(b)) In particular, staff supervision must enable staff to reflect and act upon how their own feelings and behaviour may affect the behaviour of children they care for. The registered person must have systems in place so that all staff receive supervision which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care.	1 September 2024
The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month. When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the independent person— if they consent, to interview in private such of the children, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as the independent person requires; and to inspect the premises of the home and such of the home's records (except for a child's case records, unless the child and the child's placing authority consent) as the independent person requires. (Regulation 44 (1) (2)(a)(b))	1 September 2024

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: SC035247

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Durham County Council

Registered provider address: County Hall, Durham DH1 5UJ

Responsible individual: Paul Rudd

Registered manager: Margaret Laidler

Inspector

Claire Webster, Social Care Inspector

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