

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 Durham local authority. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to seven children who have learning disabilities. The manager registered in May 2017. The provider has made an application to vary its conditions of registration to accommodate children on a longer-term basis.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020. The home was last inspected in July 2019. The report is published on our website.

Inspection dates: 15 to 16 June 2021

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

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

Date of last inspection: 30 July 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
30/07/2019	Full	Good
28/08/2018	Full	Good
15/05/2018	Full	Inadequate
25/07/2017	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children receive good care. The care that children receive is in line with their individual care plans. The manager considers the needs and mix of children before new children are admitted. Children enjoy playing together and doing activities of their choice. This enhances children's experiences and enables them to form friendships.

Children's experiences of coming to stay at this home are good. Children can stay at the home in a planned or in an emergency situation. Staff work with other agencies and carers to plan children's admissions effectively. Children settle in well as a result. Children receive care that is consistent with their health and education plans. At times, children's plans from the local authority have been out of date. The manager has challenged this, but at times this has not been effective.

There is an effective system in place for booking children's medication in and out of the home. When there is conflicting information about children's medication, staff take steps to resolve these issues. This supports the safe administration of children's medication. As a result, there have been no errors in administering medication.

The home closed for a period during the COVID-19 pandemic. The service reopened several months ago. Measures are in place to admit children in a safe way. Pre-admission checks are in place. This is to ensure that children have no symptoms of coronavirus at the point of admission. It also provides opportunities to discuss the children. This helps to keep children safe and healthy. It also provides opportunities for staff to speak with families, which enhances relationships between staff and families.

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

Children receive support from staff to promote their safety and well-being. Safeguarding procedures are followed, and the manager has effective oversight of any incidents.

Individual risk management plans for children provide guidance for staff to follow. Staff share any concerns about children with the relevant agencies. This helps to protect the children more effectively.

There has been an isolated incident of bullying. Staff intervened quickly and effectively to support both children. Staff discuss bullying with children in house meetings. This provides children with positive messages that bullying is not acceptable.

There has been one incident of physical intervention involving one child. This incident was managed appropriately. However, the manager did not ensure independent scrutiny of practice on this occasion.

Some children with complex health needs may require emergency medication which needs to be accessible at all times. Children do not always travel to and from the home with a person who can administer emergency medication. The manager has challenged the placing authority about the shortfall. There have been no incidents where children required their medication. However, this shortfall remained unresolved. The provider has now taken urgent action at this inspection to escalate this and address the shortfall. There is now a safety plan in place.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager has extensive experience of working with children who are accessing short-break provisions. She has high expectations of her staff. This ensures that children receive a good standard of care.

The manager maintains positive working relationships with a range of professionals. Professionals giving feedback used comments such as 'child focused', 'amazing' and 'nurturing'. Children spoken to were also very positive about their care. One child said, 'I love it here. I want to stay here for one hundred days.' This reflects how positive children's experiences are during their stays.

There are several new members of staff. They are currently in an induction period. Staff spoken to are positive about the support that they receive from the manager.

The manager ensures that staff receive regular supervision. She also understands the importance of staff accessing learning and training. This enhances the skills and knowledge of the staff team, which benefits the children because it means that they receive care and support from a competent staff team.

The manager completes a quality of care review every six months. She has produced a development plan following her most recent review. The manager shared her quality of care report with Ofsted but not her development plan. This has not affected the quality of care that children receive. However, it has delayed the regulator in reviewing the effectiveness of the manager's plan.

Children accessing this service share their views with staff. House meetings and key-working sessions provide opportunities for children to express their views. Children say how they would like to spend their time during their short-break stays. The manager does respond to children's views, but has no system in place to give feedback to children. This means that some children may not know the action taken by the manager in response to their views.

Overall, records in children's documents are of good quality. They detail how staff help and protect children. There are some minor errors in the information recorded in children's documents. A recommendation made at the last inspection is not met and is reissued.

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
In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— seek to involve each child's placing authority effectively in the child's care, in accordance with the child's relevant plans; seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child's needs; if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans; and seek to develop and maintain effective professional relationships with such persons, bodies or organisations as the registered person considers appropriate having regard to the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the children's home is to provide care and accommodation. (Regulation 5 (a)(b)(c)(d)) This specifically relates to the manager challenging and escalating concerns with children's placing authorities where there are shortfalls in the quality of care provided.	17 July 2021
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	17 June 2021

necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)) This specifically relates to the manager ensuring that there is a risk management plan in place for transporting children who require emergency medication.	
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality of care review") at least once every six months. In order to complete a quality of care review, the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating— the quality of care provided for children; and any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. (Regulation 45 (1) (2)(a)(c))	17 July 2021

Recommendations

- The registered provider should ensure that any person involved in a physical intervention with a child is not directly involved in the review of the incident. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.59)
- The registered provider should ensure that children know that their views are listened to and acted on. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.11)
- The registered provider should ensure that staff record information accurately and consistently in children's documents. ('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: SC035247

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Durham County Council

Registered provider address: County Hall, Durham DH1 5UJ

Responsible individual: Claire Morris

Registered manager: Kathryn Bulman

Inspectors

Jacqueline Tate, Social Care Inspector

Emma Ridley, Social Care Inspector

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