

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 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.

A manager has been in post since July 2022 and has submitted their application to register with Ofsted.

There were four children receiving their short-break stay and one child was living in the home during the inspection.

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 February 2023

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: 15 June 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
15/06/2021	Full	Good
30/07/2019	Full	Good
28/08/2018	Full	Good
15/05/2018	Full	Inadequate

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children receive good-quality care. The care that children receive is provided by nurturing and attentive staff. Children are introduced to the short-break service via planned visits with their families. These introductions help with the assessment of the children's needs and enable the children's parents and carers to ask relevant questions. This helps to alleviate any anxieties and to build positive relationships early on. Parents are happy with the care that their children receive, and they confirmed that their children enjoyed their short-break stays.

Children have access to a range of toys, games and books when they come to stay, and they are encouraged to bring their favourite toys and possessions from home. The staff work closely with education and health professionals, and with the children's parents and carers to ensure that the children's needs are met. This helps the children to feel safe and secure as they receive good-quality, consistent care from staff who know them well.

Children's health needs are complex. Effective systems ensure that the staff safely and carefully book the children's medication in and out of the home. The staff are trained to ensure the safe administration of the children's medication. The children's records accurately reflect that the children's medicinal needs are well met.

Children enjoy attending their schools and colleges. The staff attend education meetings and advocate for the children well. When the children have their short-break stays, the staff communicate effectively with the children's schools and colleges via the child's home, through school diaries and face-to-face conversations. The children's well-being and education are promoted at all times.

Children's 'All about me' short-break plans are individualised and well written. Children are supported by a range of professionals, their parents and carers to ensure that their voice is heard and their wishes are acted on. As a result, the children's support needs are known. However, individual identified targets for the children are not effectively measured and documented. This does not show or celebrate the child's progress. The manager is aware of this oversight, and has a plan in place to address this.

Children who enjoy a longer stay at the home are supported in all aspects of their care by a staff team that has quickly adapted to the change in provision. Children who previously enjoyed short-break stays and now access the service on a longer term, make progress. One child has adapted quickly to the stable environment and the personalised routines that the staff follow. Staff support the children to move on from the service through thorough and consistently good planning.

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

Children are safe. The staff understand the children's individual characteristics and vulnerabilities. They use this knowledge to provide close, supportive supervision and care that is sensitive and nurturing. The managers provide effective oversight of any incidents.

Children's individual risk management and safety plans provide effective guidance for staff to follow. The plans are well written and are not overly complicated. Children with complex behavioural and health needs have specific safety plans in place. This helps the staff to consistently follow step-by-step guidance, which supports the well-being of the children.

The staff complete body maps to ensure that there is a record of any potentially suspicious marks on the children that require explanation. This safe care procedure relies on effective sharing of information and good recording. However, one example reviewed was not of a good standard and was incomplete. Although the child had not been harmed, the quality of recording was poor.

Children rarely require a physical intervention. When this is necessary, the staff who are trained to do so implement the agreed holds for the shortest period to avoid harm to a child. The manager has reviewed this practice following a recommendation from the independent visitor. She has now implemented a thorough debrief process that has led to an improvement in practice.

The managers and leaders ensure that the effective recruitment processes in place are followed. This helps to prevent any unsuitable people from being employed to work with vulnerable children. The records are well maintained. As a result, the children's safe care is promoted.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home has a new management team. The manager and the deputy manager have extensive experience of working with children who are accessing short-break stays. There is a good mix of established long-serving and experienced staff and new staff. The team therefore offers a blend of diversity in its commitment to the children who come to stay.

The staff are positive about the changes that have taken place in the presentation of the home. They referred to the new furnishings that have improved the homely nature of the environment. The home was observed to be exceptionally clean and tidy and free of hazards. This provides the children with a positive place where they can safely play and spend time with the staff and their peers.

The management and leaders ensure that the staff have regular supervision sessions. The staff welcome this support as it enables them to explore their practice and the care that they provide to the children who come to stay. However,

supervisors do not consistently record any actions agreed or timelines for completion. This limits the effectiveness of the support and staff development.

Team meetings enable the staff and managers to reflect on the children and the standard of care provided. The meetings consistently have a purposeful agenda that shows the collective responsibility in the staff and management team. A new initiative includes individual members of staff becoming champions for identified areas of practice. This supports an environment of positivity and promotes staff development, and improves outcomes for the children.

Staff training is comprehensive. However, there are inconsistencies in record management of certificates and access to specific training resources, for example awareness of autistic spectrum disorder and alternative methods of communication. This limits the effectiveness of the care provided to the children with certain limitations and differences. The manager and leaders are aware of this oversight and development plans are in place to improve it.

The manager and the deputy manager have introduced effective internal monitoring systems and audits. The quality of care review has been completed with an extensive development plan. The external monthly monitoring from the independent visitor, which is welcomed by the manager, also supports the manager to make noticeable improvements in the home.

The home's statement of purpose does not accurately reflect the conditions and description of the home. The required amendments and review were completed during the inspection. This needs to be sent to Ofsted as required by the regulation.

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, 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 registered person must— keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16 (3)(a)(b)) In particular, the registered person must record the conditions of registration clearly.	30 March 2023

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the staff and managers work closely with health and education professionals and parents/carers to ensure that the outcomes identified, and the progress made by the children in building relationships, independence skills and achieving socially acceptable behaviours, can be recorded and measured. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 38, paragraph 8.4)
- The registered person should ensure that the staff access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs. In particular, these should include specific training courses that enhance staff knowledge and skills further in meeting the children's known needs and conditions. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11)
- The registered person should ensure that they have systems in place so that all staff, including the manager, receive supervision of their practice from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional, which allows them to reflect on their practice. In particular, outcomes and actions should be recorded and dated where able for completion. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2)
- The registered person should ensure that the staff are familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. In particular, records should be completed in full and be in a presentable order. ('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 5UL

Responsible individual: Laura Caunce

Registered manager: Margaret Laidler

Inspector

Michael Dack, Social Care Inspector

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