

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 operated by a local authority and is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to seven children and/or young people who have learning disabilities. The manager was registered in May 2017 and has extensive experience of working with children and young people in this setting.

Inspection dates: 30 to 31 July 2019

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: 28 August 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/08/2018	Full	Good
15/05/2018	Full	Inadequate
25/07/2017	Full	Good
20/12/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

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

Recommendations

- Staff should continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. Where there are safeguarding concerns for a child, their placement plan, agreed between the home and their placing authority, must include details of the steps the home will take to manage any assessed risks on a day-to-day basis. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)
- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children and young people staying at this short-break provision are sensitively welcomed into the home. Children, young people, parents and carers are included in the planning and preparation for overnight stays. Teatime visits are offered before progressing to overnight stays to help children and young people to become familiar with the adults who will care for them. This helps children and young people to settle. A parent commented, 'I cannot fault the staff. They have been so accommodating to us as a family. I couldn't leave [Name] with just anyone. I feel that we are consulted and that as parents we have been listened to also.'

There is a good range of games, books and other activities that are suitable for the interests and needs of the children and young people. The registered manager ensures that if friendship groups form between children and young people that their stays are arranged together where possible. This means that children and young people have opportunities to enjoy activities as well as to develop friendships.

The staff team members work well with education, health and social care professionals. Targets set in the home's care plans include those areas of development identified within education, health and care (EHC) plans. This means that children and young people receive continuity of care and support, helping them to make good progress considering their starting points.

The manager has developed a system to record steps taken to help children's and young

people's progress. Six-monthly reports reflect the progress and further areas of development for children and young people. Consultation with children, young people, parents and carers is documented to ensure that there is clear planning for children and young people. The use of photographs to help capture moments when children and young people achieve means that children, young people, parents and carers are also able to recognise and benefit from seeing progress being made.

The home continues to support an animal charity. This enables the children, young people and their families to fundraise and to make a positive contribution to their community. This helps to improve feelings of self-worth as well as having an interest in helping others.

House meetings and key-worker sessions are regular. This means that children's and young people's views are given significance. The registered manager has developed a newsletter that acknowledges the views of children and young people and how she and the staff team will respond to their requests. This provides positive messages to children and young people that they are listened to and valued.

The registered manager has developed a welcome pack for children and young people starting to use the service. She states that there are still areas for improvement, but that they help to improve communication with children and young people with varying communication abilities. This means that children and young people are consulted with and are given information about their stays, regardless of how they communicate.

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

Risk assessments identify key risks as well as making links to wider safeguarding issues. Some strategies read as ambiguous and this makes it difficult to see how children and young people will be helped and protected in some areas. This has been an ongoing area of development that the registered manager has considered. The staff team members have received specific training to help them strengthen their writing of risk assessment plans. It will take time for the staff team members to adopt those skills and to use them more confidently.

There is a good safeguarding culture in the home. Safeguarding topics and issues are discussed well within staff supervisions, team meetings and senior team meetings. This has been effective as demonstrated when there have been safeguarding incidents, the staff team members have shared concerns and followed the correct procedures. This helps to ensure that children and young people are safeguarded.

Daily living plans are individualised to reflect each child's and young person's care requirements. The staff team ensures that the relevant individuals and care team members read and sign daily living plans as well as risk assessments. This means that there is a clear and consistent approach to the care arrangements for children and young people.

Recording systems are good and demonstrate how safeguarding protocols are being

followed. The registered manager monitors incidents to ensure that effective and decisive action is taken. The inspector found some recordings that did not provide enough evaluation to understand the decision-making responses to some safeguarding issues. Consistency and quality of recordings is an area for improvement.

There is a proactive approach to managing behaviours. Anti-bullying workshops are completed with the children and young people to help educate them and to raise their awareness of the issues. Incidents of bullying have been responded to swiftly, preventing further episodes or escalation of behaviours. Rewards and incentives are effectively used to manage low level disruptive behaviours.

There has been one use of physical intervention that was proportionate and used to safeguard children and young people. Despite incidents of physical interventions being rare, the staff team followed the correct protocols.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is appropriately qualified for the position held. She has extensive experience of working with children and young people accessing short-break provisions. She is supported in her role by a nurturing and dedicated staff team. The registered manager has had a period of absence since the last inspection. Despite this, she has helped to guide her team to drive improvements forward.

The registered manager continues to maintain positive working relationships with a range of care team professionals. Comments such as 'child-friendly' and 'nurturing' were commonly used in feedback from professionals. One professional commented, 'They are just a fantastic team that wants the very best for these children. They absolutely see the child before the disability. I cannot fault them in any way.'

The registered manager has a good understanding of the home's strengths and areas for development. Since the last inspection, she has acted on feedback from her inspector and independent visitor as well as making effective use of her own audit and monitoring systems. This means that she can respond to shortfalls swiftly to improve standards of practice in the home.

There is a variety of skills and experience within the team. The registered manager recognises the importance of having a skilled staff team and has sourced specific training to address the needs of the children and young people who they care for. Training includes understanding mental health and recognising sexually harmful behaviour. Other training includes Signs of Safety that aims to strengthen the safeguarding culture and practice within the home. The staff team members feel valued and motivated and as a result retention of staff is high.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: Karen Robb

Registered manager: Kathryn Bulman

Inspector

Jacqueline Tate: social care inspector

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