

SC035648

Registered provider: Durham County Council

Interim inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This secure home is operated by a local authority, and is approved to restrict children's liberty by the Department for Education.

The children's home accommodates up to 38 children aged between 10 and 17 years. It provides care for up to eight children placed by the Youth Custody Service, and 30 children who are placed by local authorities and are accommodated under section 25 of the Children Act 1989.

Any child who is admitted under section 25 of the Children Act 1989 and is under 13 years of age requires the approval of the Secretary of State.

The commissioning of health services in this home is the statutory responsibility of NHS England under the Health and Social Care Act 2012. Education is provided on site in dedicated facilities.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since October 2015. He holds suitable higher-level qualifications for this role.

Inspection date: 3 November 2021

Date of last inspection: 13 April 2021

Judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

This inspection

The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection

This home was judged outstanding at the last full inspection.

At this interim inspection, Ofsted judged that it has sustained effectiveness.

At the last inspection, in April 2021, Ofsted made five recommendations. One recommendation related to a shortfall in health, and two recommendations were made with regard to education. Ofsted will consider the progress made in addressing these recommendations at the next full inspection.

Children continue to enjoy warm and supportive relationships with staff. These relationships help them to develop trust in the people who care for them. Consequently, the children are able to reflect on their life experiences and establish positive strategies to deal with challenges. This helps children to move forward with hope and confidence.

Partnership working between managers, staff and other professionals who support the children is extremely effective. This helps staff to collaborate closely and to implement care plans which promote and protect each child's welfare. It is very clear that members of staff know the children well, and know how each child prefers to be supported and nurtured. As a result, children continue to make good progress because they live in this home.

Children who are preparing to move to other homes benefit from well-thought-through plans which increase their chances of success. Managers and staff advocate strongly on behalf of children if they feel that placing authorities are not acting effectively.

The use of physical restraint is appropriate. Incidents are scrutinised by managers and external professionals. This ensures that the measures used are proportionate and safe. Recordings and closed-circuit television footage confirm that the use of de-escalation and negotiation by staff is consistent. Physical restraint is used a last resort, and is only used to protect the children from themselves and to safeguard others.

There are still very few incidents of enforced single separation and children being 'managed away' from their peers. Staff use their skills and manage to engage children and defuse situations that could escalate. However, some written reports lack detail and do not provide the necessary context or rationale for the decision to manage children away from their peers or enforce separation. Some staff had recorded incidents as single separation when there had been no need to do so. Managers have identified this shortfall and have provided training for staff to ensure

that they fully understand the difference between single separation and being managed away.

Children are confident about using the complaints process and procedure. On the whole, responses are swift and the complaints are responded to at a low level. In some instances, recording is inconsistent and does not show how the complaint has been resolved.

At the last inspection, a recommendation was made in relation to encouraging children to eat together as a group more often. This has been addressed. Children mix with their peers at mealtimes. Some children do prefer to eat on their own, and staff know and understand the feelings and anxieties that cause them to make this choice. Guidance and reassurance are given to these children so that they can become confident about using mealtimes as a social opportunity to mix with peers and staff. This is sensitively balanced with their preference to eat on their own.

Management monitoring is effective and practice issues are identified and addressed. On occasions, it has been necessary for members of staff to receive additional supervision so that they can explore and reflect on specific incidents. While these sessions have occurred in a timely manner, the records of the supervisions have not always been completed promptly and shared with the staff concerned. Although this has not had an impact on the children's welfare, it does mean that sometimes there have been delays in members of staff receiving written records of their own supervision sessions.

Safeguarding professionals reported positively on the quality and promptness of communication. They reported that there are swift responses to any issues, and commended the staff's transparency of approach and willingness to reflect on and learn from any incidents.

Managers have responded to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in a thoughtful and diligent manner. They have implemented plans which have ensured that any issues arising as a result of the pandemic have been dealt with effectively. Consequently, the pandemic has not compromised the consistency of care or the children's well-being and safety.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
13/04/2021	Full	Outstanding
04/02/2020	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
10/09/2019	Full	Outstanding
19/02/2019	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children are consulted regularly on their views about the home's care, to inform and support continued improvement in the quality of care provided. In particular, ensure that records of complaints consistently show how the complaint has been resolved to the child's satisfaction. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.11)
- The registered person should ensure that all staff consistently follow the home's policies and procedures for the benefit of the children in the home's care. In particular, the registered person should ensure that there is full oversight of the health governance arrangements needed to ensure an effective and safe service is delivered. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.20)
- The registered person should ensure that leaders, managers and teachers use the analysis of children's starting points to demonstrate individually how children know more, remember more, and can do more than they could when they entered the home. This should include how they develop wider skills, behaviours, and attitudes such as confidence, resilience, self-esteem and independence. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 26, paragraph 5.2)
- The registered person should ensure that measurements of children's educational progress include how well the child is being prepared for their next stage of education, training or employment, and quantitative data where available. Other metrics can also be taken into account, such as rewards and recognition of achievements, improvements in attendance and, where appropriate, reduction in behavioural incidents, including exclusion. Managers and teachers must provide helpful written feedback on children's work to help children to develop and improve their individual knowledge, skills and behaviours. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 26, paragraph 5.2)
- The registered person should ensure that a note of the content and/or outcomes of supervision sessions is kept, and that both the person giving the supervision and the staff member have a copy of the record. In particular, ensure that staff have prompt access to records of supervision, especially if they relate to disciplinary, conduct or practice-related matters. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.4)
- The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's records on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear record-keeping. In particular, ensure that records of being 'managed away' and single separation are consistently clear regarding the rationale behind

the process and the decisions made. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

Information about this inspection

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full 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: SC035648

Provision sub-type: Secure unit

Registered provider: Durham County Council

Registered provider address: County Hall, Durham, DH1 5UJ

Responsible individual: Martyn Stenton

Registered manager: Selwyn Morgans

Inspectors

Paul Taylor, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Cath Sikakana, Social Care Inspector

Debbie Holder, Social Care Inspector

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