

SC035648

Registered provider: Durham County Council

Interim inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This secure children's home is operated by a local authority and is approved by the Department for Education to restrict children and young people's liberty. The children's home can accommodate up to 38 children and young people who are aged between 10 and 17 years. It provides for up to 18 children and young people placed by the Youth Custody Service and for 20 children and young people accommodated under section 25 of the Children Act 1989 who are placed by local authorities.

Admission of any child under section 25 of the Children Act 1989 who 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 registered manager is registered with Ofsted and has managed the home since October 2015. He holds suitable higher-level qualifications for this role.

Inspection date: 19 February 2019

Judgement at last inspection: good

Date of last inspection: 18 September 2018

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 good at the last full inspection. At the interim inspection, Ofsted judges that it has sustained effectiveness.

At the last inspection in September 2018, Ofsted made one requirement and six recommendations. Three of the recommendations relate to shortfalls in education. Ofsted will consider any progress made to address these at the next inspection. The registered manager has taken appropriate action to address the remaining shortfalls. However, Ofsted has made a further requirement and two additional recommendations as a result of this inspection.

The registered manager and senior leadership team now use monitoring data and information to identify service patterns and trends. Managers are now able to consider the impact that individual and collective incidents and events have on children's progress. This is because improvements to assessment and evaluation tools lead managers to highlight possible antecedents that influence children's behaviours. This means that the service can continue to evolve to meet children's changing needs.

To further support the registered manager's strategic review of the service, house managers and assistant house managers are responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operation of each 'home'. However, varying practice between managers means that shortfalls are not always identified in a timely manner. For example, some house managers ensure that they review the quality of reports and records on a daily basis, while others only complete this task at the end of each month. The senior leadership team does not randomly audit house managers' practice. This is a missed opportunity to improve consistency across the service.

Staff manage children's risk-taking and challenging behaviours well. This is because they embrace the home's multi-agency approach to supporting children and the 'secure stairs' model of helping children to build emotional resilience. This is a considerable strength of the service. Care, health and education professionals successfully collaborate to identify children's risks. They use this information to develop effective strategies to manage and reduce these. This helps children to learn to manage their own behaviours and risks.

The use of physical restraint continues to reduce. Staff use a range of verbal de-escalation techniques to encourage children to find alternative methods of managing their anxieties and frustrations. Managers scrutinise all restraint records. They now ensure that staff write an accurate account of all incidents rather than relying on the viewing of closed-circuit television. Furthermore, staff now make sure that they consistently capture children's views and comments. This enables managers to effectively review all incidents, ensure the lawful use of this measure of control and identify any areas for staff development. Consequently, this approach promotes children's safety and welfare.

Relationships between children and staff are immensely positive. Children said that they feel 'cared for' and 'loved'. Staff understand how difficult it is for some children to live far away from home. They work in partnership with children's families to facilitate regular visits and telephone conversations. This means that children are not isolated from their families.

Children continue to make good progress in all areas of their development. They are positive about their day-to-day experience and said that they benefit from their time in the home. They understand how to make a complaint and the various channels open to them should they wish to raise any concerns. Nevertheless, records of children's complaints do not consistently detail the actions managers take to investigate or address these issues. Consequently, managers cannot demonstrate that complaints are always appropriately resolved in a timely manner.

Staff continue to work with children to support them to maintain a healthy diet and life-style. Children can access a range of 'in-house' sporting and leisure activities. For some children, there are opportunities to access leisure facilities in the local community as part of agreed mobility programmes. Staff recognise the importance of helping children to make healthy food choices. They now balance this with appropriate treats that would mirror practice in a family environment.

Children have the opportunity to personalise their living spaces and bedrooms to create a homely ambiance. However, there is evidence of graffiti in some areas of the home, and this is noticeable in some bedrooms. On one occasion, staff did not ensure that graffiti was removed from a bedroom before moving a child into the room. This did not create a welcoming environment for child.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/09/2018	Full	Good
16/01/2018	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
06/06/2017	Full	Good
15/02/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

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 ensure that a record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of any investigation. (Regulation 39(3))	30/04/2019

Recommendations

- For children's homes to be nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of their children, they will, in most cases, be homely, domestic environments. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

This is with specific reference to the timely removal of graffiti.

- As with all the Quality Standards, the responsibilities and accountabilities in this standard fall on the registered person. In practice, just as with the other standards, those responsible for the day to day running of homes, including leadership teams in large homes and specialist advisers within other settings play a key role in enabling the registered person to fulfil the requirements of this standard. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 52, paragraph 10.2)

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.

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.

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 address: County Hall, Durham DH1 5UL

Responsible individual: Margaret Whellans

Registered manager: Selwyn Morgans

Inspectors

Jo Stephenson, social care inspector

Elaine Allison, social care inspector

Sue Atkinson Millmoor, regulatory inspection manager – shadowing

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