

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC035648
Inspector	Paul Scott
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Secure Unit

Registered person	Durham County Council
Registered person address	County Hall DURHAM DH1 5UL

Responsible individual	Carole Payne
Registered manager	Gillian Palin
Date of last inspection	17/09/2014

Inspection date	27/01/2015
Previous inspection	good
Enforcement action since last inspection	There has been no enforcement action since the last inspection.

This inspection

This home was judged good at the last full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judge that it has **improved effectiveness**.

Suitable action has been taken to address the two requirements from the last inspection. The home's Statement of Purpose has been reviewed and updated and now accurately reflects the current management arrangements and the experience of staff working at the centre. Regulation 34 monitoring reports have been routinely submitted to Ofsted and are of a consistently high quality.

One recommendation from the previous inspection has been addressed. A number of additional systems have been introduced to monitor the homes records. This has resulted in improvements to the adequacy and quality of records because shortfalls are now recognised and addressed. Three further recommendations were made at the last inspection relating specifically to the centres education provision. These will be reviewed by learning and skills inspectors at the next full inspection.

Young people continue to live in a safe, caring and supportive environment. They feel that they are well supported by staff who help them to understand and modify their behaviour. The majority of young people speak positively about their care and acknowledge the progress they make. One young person said, 'I am privileged to be here. Staff have helped me loads, especially my keyworker.'

Managers and staff have made a concerted effort to improve behaviour management practice, in particular the reduction of incidents of physical restraint and single separation. All incidents are subject to rigorous scrutiny as part of the centre's commitment to the minimisation of restraint. Shortfalls in practice are quickly addressed with individual staff and common themes are highlighted and discussed as part of monthly team meetings. These processes provide opportunities for staff to reflect and devise more effective ways of managing young people's challenging behaviour. While still in early stages, there is clear evidence that the

number of restraints are beginning to decrease. The Youth Justice board monitor commented, 'The centre has been progressing really well. We have risked assessed them as green and have recognised the improvements they have made. The new quality assurance of incidents and the lesson learnt is a huge step forward to improving systems and practice at the centre.'

The centre has seen an increase in occupancy since the last inspection. A team around the child approach is being developed to ensure a multi-discipline approach. This process starts when young people are first admitted. For example, representatives from various departments, including health, education interventions and case management, meet to consider young people's needs and formulate cohesive plans that are specifically tailored to meet young people's individual needs. This process is also followed in the event of incidents of concern and have proven highly effective in supporting young people through difficult times.

Staffing has presented a challenge due to the rapid increase in occupancy brought about primarily by the closure of another secure setting. Staff have responded positively to this and continue to demonstrate a strong commitment to overcoming challenges and meeting young people's needs. There is a good balance of experience and skills within the team which has been supplemented by agency workers. A number of these agency staff have experience of working in the secure setting and have recently been recruited to permanent posts. These additional posts will enhance skills, experience and knowledge of the staff team and further improve young people's care.

There has been an increased focus on resettlement and mobility. Service level agreements have been established with resources in the community and will be utilised to provide risk assessed mobility opportunities for young people. The centre has recently started using the step down unit, which is located on-site, to further enhance the life skills and independence programme. Clear criteria and procedures for the use of this facility have been developed and introduced into practice. These give good consideration to the reduction in staff supervision, CCTV and security. Young people talk very positively about spending time in this unit and see it as something to aspire to. Given that this is a relatively recent development, only a small number of young people have benefitted from this resource so far. However there are positive indications, including one young person who, upon release, has successfully moved into semi-independent living.

Leadership and management has been exceptionally strong since the last inspection. The current manager has a clear focus on meeting the needs of the young people and has demonstrated a strong commitment to improving the service. Staff talk positively about her management style which is consultative and empowering. This has brought about significant change and further positive changes and development of the service are planned. For example, funding has been secured for a specialist unit which caters for young people at serious risk of harm from child sexual exploitation.

The current manager will be leaving the centre at the end of February 2015 when her six-month secondment concludes. These arrangements were put in place as a temporary measure to enable the Registered Manager to undertake a comprehensive review of the service. At the time of this inspection it was unclear whether the Registered Manager will be returning to her substantive post, and if not what arrangements would be in place for the day-to-day management of the centre. This does not demonstrate good strategic planning and has the potential to impact negatively on the significant progress already made by the centre and that planned for the future.

Information about this children's home

The children's home is operated by a local authority and is approved by the Secretary of State to provide secure care and accommodation. Education is provided on site within a purpose-built facility.

The children's home can accommodate up to 42 young people, who are aged between 10 and 17 years. Up to 24 young people who have received a custodial sentence are placed at this home by the Youth Justice Board. Other young people are the subject of Section 25 of The Children Act 1989 and placed by local authorities. Admission of any young person under Section 25 of The Children Act 1989 who is over the age of 10 but under 13 years of age requires the approval of the Secretary of State.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
17/09/2014	Full	good
28/01/2014	Interim	good progress
07/08/2013	Full	good
06/03/2013	Interim	satisfactory progress

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

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that the effective leadership of the home's staff and operation is maintained; specifically that there is a written plan that makes clear what the arrangements are for the day to day management of the service when the current acting manager leaves the service and that plan is sent to Ofsted. (NMS 14.5)

What inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspections we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.