

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	27/09/2016
Unique reference number	SC035648
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Secure unit
Registered provider	Durham County Council
Registered provider address	County Hall Durham DH1 5UL

Responsible individual	Carole Payne
Registered manager	Selwyn Morgans
Inspector	Shaun Common

Inspection date	27/09/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Improved effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
Outcomes in education and related learning activities	Good

SC035648

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Staff build and develop very positive relationships with young people.
- Staff show impressive levels of resilience and commitment while working with young people who have very complex needs and display very challenging behaviours.
- Good assessment and care planning provide for young people's holistic and diverse needs. Young people receive a comprehensive and detailed initial assessment of their learning needs which helps effectively to plan their learning.
- Young people enjoy education, have good levels of attendance and make good progress. They develop good skills in vocational training.
- Excellent resettlement processes ensure that young people are well prepared to move onto the most appropriate placement.
- Partnership working between relevant professionals and other agencies is robust and effective, contributing to good outcomes for young people.
- Matters that require improvement include some recording systems, the use of sanctions and restorative practice, more effective use of monitoring processes, written feedback from teachers to young people and better use of data to inform teaching staff development.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person(s) meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
12.—(1) The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— (a) that staff— (i) assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; (v) understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; (b) that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm; (e) that the effectiveness of the home's child protection policies is monitored regularly. Specifically, ensure that there is a policy, procedure and process (which may be added to the home's existing child protection or self-harm policies and procedures) that set out how and when ligature cutters are to be checked and verified as fit for purpose.	31/12/2016
Ensure that within 24 hours of the use of a sanction in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes— (a) a description of the measure and its duration; the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; (b) within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35(3))	31/10/2016
13. The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard, the registered person must— (2)(h) use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.	31/12/2016

Ensure that all employees undertake appropriate continuing professional development; and receive practice-related supervision. (Regulation 33(4)(a)(b))	31/12/2016
Implement the policy for the prevention of bullying in the home, which must in particular set out the procedure for dealing with an allegation of bullying. (Regulation 34(3)) Specifically, ensure that records of any incidents are fully completed and demonstrate impact.	31/10/2016
Ensure that a record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of any investigation. (Regulation 39(3))	31/10/2016

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further, the service should take account of the following recommendations:

- The ethos of the home should support each child to learn. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 29, paragraph 5.18)

Specifically, improve the observation of teaching, learning and assessment to ensure that observers focus on the impact of teaching on young people's progress. Use the analysis of data on young people's progress better to inform the judgement on the effectiveness of teaching and link this effectively to staff development and performance management.

- The ethos of the home should support each child to learn. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 29, paragraph 5.18)

Specifically, ensure that written feedback by teachers to young people clearly identifies to young people what they need to improve, to enable them to make faster progress.

- The ethos of the home should support each child to learn. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 29, paragraph 5.18)

Specifically, improve the quality of information technology equipment better to support learning.

- The ethos of the home should support each child to learn. ('Guide to the

children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 29, paragraph 5.18)

Specifically, introduce the new rewards and sanctions system for education, and ensure that teachers and young people are clear about its use. Link the rewards system to personal development targets for young people.

- Sanctions used to address poor behaviour should be restorative in nature, to help children recognise the impact of their behaviour on themselves, other children, the staff caring for them and the wider community. In some cases, it will be important for children to make reparation in some form to anyone hurt by their behaviour, and the staff in the home should be skilled to support the child to understand this and carry it out ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.38)
- Records of restraint should enable the registered person and staff to review the use of control, discipline and restraint to identify effective practice and respond promptly where any issues or trends of concern emerge. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.59)

Specifically, ensure that records of staff debriefings provide evidence of personal support offered and provided.

- Children must be consulted regularly on their views about the home's care, to inform and support continued improvement in the quality of care provided. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.11)

Specifically, improve the consistency of the minutes taken in community meetings, and evidence clearly the responses of staff and the steps taken by them to the suggestions, requests and choices made by young people at those meetings.

- Staff should encourage children to share any concerns about their care or other matters as soon as they arise. Children must be able to take up issues or make a complaint with support and without any fear of that this will result in any adverse consequences. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.13)

Specifically, ensure that young people have free access to complaints forms and do not have to request these from staff.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This secure children's home is managed by a local authority. It is approved by the Department for Education to restrict young people's liberty. The children's home can accommodate up to 42 young people aged between 10 and 17 years. It provides care and accommodation for up to 18 young people placed by the Youth Justice Board and 24 places for young people accommodated under section 25 of the Children Act 1989 who are placed by local authorities. The admission of any young person under section 25 of the Children Act 1989 who is under 13 years of age requires the approval of the Secretary of State. Education is provided on site in dedicated facilities.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
15/03/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
13/10/2015	SCH – Full	Good
27/01/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
17/09/2014	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
Young people enjoy warm and trusting relationships with members of staff. These are often formed over significant periods of time and provide a sense of continuity, trust and stability. As a result, young people make good progress, and have the opportunity to reflect on their behaviours and histories with a view to improving their life chances. A young person stated, 'They've changed me into a much nicer person.' Staff show impressive levels of resilience and commitment while working with the young people, who often have very complex needs and can display very challenging behaviours. This further underpins the young people's feelings of safety and being well cared for. Detailed and individually tailored care plans ensure that staff have information to support the young people and provide good-quality care. Close liaison between multidisciplinary teams, such as mental health services, substance misuse workers, nurses and case managers, ensures that care planning is thorough. Care plans and strategies are reviewed and updated in a fluid response to young people's changing needs. They demonstrate the good progress being made, and include the views and opinions of the young people. As a result, there is a strong sense of collaboration and a meaningful drive to improve outcomes. Young people benefit from regular individual and group sessions with staff in order to reflect upon their histories and behaviours. These sessions are specific to each young person's needs, and include addressing offending behaviour with those placed by the Youth Justice Board. Sessions include anger management, staying safe in the community, appropriate relationships and impulse control. Young people engage with specialist workers in areas such as substance misuse and the risks of sexual exploitation. As a result of these opportunities, the young people are able to develop better coping strategies, and to increase their self-worth and self-esteem. Young people know how to complain if they need to. They do have to ask staff for a complaints form and hand it back to them in order for it to be processed. This could potentially inhibit a young person from making a complaint. However, this minor shortfall has not impacted on the young people accessing the procedure. They also have other avenues to raise any concerns, such as access to telephones in their rooms, from where they can directly contact various agencies and services, such as the Office of the Children's Commissioner.	

Young people have regular house meetings and wider centre meetings, which are referred to as 'My Space' meetings. Although these are regular, the recording is inconsistent and makes it difficult to ascertain if the young people's views and wishes have been acknowledged and responded to. This undermines the value of these meetings.

The value of education is embedded in the routine and culture of the home. Young people are expected to attend education, and the feedback that they give about the opportunities that this has given them is positive. Young people have access to a wide variety of activities with an emphasis on fitness, well-being and physical exercise. This supports the young people to lead healthy lifestyles as well as enjoy fun activities. Facilities include the swimming pool, swings, gymnasium and fitness suite. A young person stated, 'They do keep us busy here; there's lots to do.'

Bespoke programmes help young people to develop life and social skills. Opportunities to develop independence skills are numerous, and these are part of routines. For some, individual programmes of mobility, which are the planned and approved visits out of the secure setting into the local community, enable them to test their impulse control and build trust. The process also helps them to adapt to living outside of a secure environment.

Healthcare provision is excellent. Young people have access to a wide variety of health professionals who can ensure that health needs are met. Thorough health assessments ensure that all the young people's health needs, whether physical or psychological, are known and understood, and programmes are put in place to meet these needs. Young people's emotional and psychological well-being is promoted to a particularly high standard. This is supported not only by psychologists and psychiatrists, but also by all members of staff collaborating to ensure that individual programmes are conscientiously followed in order for the young people to feel well, safe and nurtured.

Young people are able to have contact with their families and friends, in line with their agreed plans. Members of staff provide sensitive support to young people if they find contact with their families challenging or difficult. The awareness of staff of the impact of these matters is acutely sensitive and very responsive. This reassures the young people that there is support readily available, if they need it.

Young people are encouraged to personalise their rooms with pictures and posters. This helps them to feel that they have an investment in their environment and that they have an influence over their living areas. All parts of the home are appropriately domestic and homely.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Young people did not raise any concerns with inspectors about their safety. They feel that they always have someone to talk to, if needed. Bullying does occur, and the home keeps records evidencing that the incidence is low. Some records provide good detail about the concern and how this has been addressed, though others are lacking and present a missed opportunity to demonstrate the impact that the home has. For example, the section that indicates young people's satisfaction with the outcome were, on occasions, not completed. There have been 26 incidents of a safeguarding nature that have been referred to the local authority since the last full inspection. Some are not related to a young person's time at the home. The home is fastidious, with some referred matters not meeting the threshold for enquiries. This shows that the home takes safeguarding very seriously, though managers need to consider initial advice from relevant professionals, where deemed appropriate, that would assist in decision making about making formal referrals. All matters were dealt with by the home in a timely and appropriate manner, in line with local policies and procedures. Records are well kept and include actions that have been, or are being, taken to help to keep young people safe. There are good links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). The board provides an overview of physical restraint, set out in its annual report. The review does not include a sufficiently detailed assessment of the LSCB's views of physical restraint practices in line with 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015'. The manager is in the process of discussing this with local authority senior managers. The allegations manager for the local authority spoke positively of the professional relationships, good communication and transparency of the home. The manager is very aware of his responsibilities under the government's 'Prevent' agenda and the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015. Staff are trained in awareness of radicalisation. The manager has a direct link to a senior manager in the local authority, who liaises as required with the regional police counter-terrorism team. Processes and procedures for assessment, review and formal referrals, if required, are established. On admission of a young person, staff carry out a formal assessment of any risks and vulnerabilities, specifically in relation to suicide or self-harm. Plans and risk assessments are drawn up quickly and then shared with all relevant staff to help them to support young people to stay safe. Importantly, staff have a good understanding of the risks to any young person and implement risk assessments to help keep young people safe. The home's system and records do not provide information about the viability of all ligature cutter blades, and if/when blades	

should be replaced, if not used for a period of time, to ensure that they always remain fit for purpose.

The home has policies and procedures about searching practices. Searches of young people are undertaken only when needed to promote and maintain safety and security. A senior manager's approval is needed for any personal search. The home's personal search policy and procedure define three levels. Level A is a 'pat down' over clothing. Level B is a 'pat down' over clothing and the use of an electronic wand. Level C requires a young person to remove their outer clothing in private and to put on a dressing gown. A 'pat and wand' check is then also utilised. Clothing is searched and returned. Records are kept showing all relevant details, including the justification for a search, the authorising manager and anything found. Errors and omissions are sometimes evident on forms, though the manager is aware of these and is ensuring that they are rectified.

Since the last full inspection, there have been two incidents of young people absconding while out of the home on approved visits with staff. Appropriate and immediate actions were taken in line with the home, local authority and police agreed procedures. During one of these incidents, the young person was never out of sight of staff. Clear records are kept and staff are aware of the actions to take, should an incident occur, in order to help to keep young people safe.

Young people are supported to develop positive social skills and behaviour by the use of an incentive scheme and by staff who are positive role models. The scheme has levels going from standard to platinum, with increasing rewards and privileges for positive behaviour. Sanctions are used to address any negative behaviour. There is a predominant use of some sanctions, rather than constructive or restorative alternatives that are better suited to the misdemeanour. Records are not always sufficiently detailed. For example, the effectiveness of the measure is not well recorded, so the impact of the sanction in addressing negative behaviours cannot easily be determined to shape future interventions. The specifics of some sanctions is not always clear, and young people's comments are not always present. There is no suggestion that sanctions are used inappropriately, but records are not always to the expected standard.

Physical restraint is used in line with regulations. After any incident, a duty manager carries out a review that includes the use of closed-circuit television to ensure that practice is appropriate. A more formal quality assurance process then takes place by senior managers, with further scrutiny to identify lessons that can be learned or practice that can be improved further. Records are made of all incidents that are very detailed and include young people's views and comments. Staff debriefing records were noted to be of a high quality, recognising good practice and learning points, though the immediate and ongoing personal support needs of the staff involved in any incident were not evidenced.

Single separation and managing away are used, in line with regulations. Records are made of all incidents, and include the justification for imposing such a measure of control. Observations of young people are recorded in line with their risk assessment, along with the reasons for any ongoing incident. Managers' oversight and monitoring of these incidents are thorough.

There have been a number of new staff employed since the last inspection. The home has a clear recruitment process and procedure, and has records of all the checks that are carried out. These confirm a robust process to try to ensure that the right people are employed to work with vulnerable children.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
The registered manager is an experienced childcare and social work practitioner. He holds suitable professional-level qualifications for this role and registered with Ofsted in October 2015. The registered manager has a good knowledge and understanding of managing services for young people. He has addressed the four requirements raised at the monitoring visit in May 2016. These include ensuring that single separation is used and recorded, and that care packages are personalised to address young people's individual needs. The registered manager has also addressed the requirements previously raised relating to the development of monitoring systems and the provision of adequate staffing levels. This demonstrates a capacity for continued improvement. The registered manager is extremely child focused. He is committed to ensuring that young people receive good-quality care and that their day-to-day and overall experiences are positive. He continually reviews young people's progress against their individual needs and the specific conditions of their placements. This approach identifies young people's achievements and encourages them to recognise and celebrate their successes. This appropriate balance between the provision of care and the legal requirement for control ensures that young people's progress is measurable and sustainable. Since the last inspection, the registered manager has made significant changes to the centre's senior management team. In addition to embedding a focus on promoting a nurturing ethos across the service, this restructure clarifies the lines of responsibility and accountability. This ensures that staff receive adequate support in their day-to-day role. Staff benefit from regular, formal supervision sessions. However, the structure of these sessions is not consistently related to practice. Although staff are able to access reflective practice sessions with externally commissioned specialists, this means that there are missed opportunities for staff to review their own practice and professional development.	

The registered manager regularly reviews and updates the statement of purpose. This comprehensive document describes the aims and objectives of the centre and defines the services available for young people. As a result, placing local authorities and the Youth Justice Board fully understand the function of the home. The young person's guide complements the statement of purpose. This easy-to-read booklet provides young people with a good overview of the service and an account of how the home will meet their needs.

Partnership working arrangements between the home and other agencies, such as specialist health teams and placing agencies, are robust and effective. This is a strength of the service. Managers confidently challenge other professionals when their actions or inactions hinder young people's progress and development. This ensures a holistic approach to meeting young people's needs.

Young people receive support from a largely stable and experienced staff team. Although there are some staffing vacancies, a recent recruitment drive means that the registered manager is addressing this shortfall. This means that the home is less reliant on the use of temporary agency staff. Induction plans for new staff are comprehensive and detailed. These include mandatory courses such as safeguarding and physical restraint training, and bespoke workshops relating to supporting young people in a secure environment. This broad programme ensures that staff gain the competencies and skills that they need to meet young people's needs.

The majority of staff are suitably qualified. They have achieved the required level 3 diploma for residential childcare. Staff who have yet to complete this course are on target to do so by the required date. Although staff have the opportunity to refresh their mandatory training courses regularly, training records of these events are poorly maintained and monitored. This means that the registered manager is unable to evaluate the ongoing training needs of the service adequately.

The registered manager has devised a varied range of monitoring processes to support the review of the care provided by the home. These systems allow for the collection of quantitative data. However, they do not facilitate the assessment of qualitative evaluation. For example, data charts show the number of complaints received since the last inspection, but do not indicate if these are resolved in line with prescribed procedures. This means that current monitoring systems do not effectively support the continuous development of the service. Furthermore, there have been occasions when staff have failed to implement correctly the operational procedures relating to the recording and resolution of complaints and allegations of bullying. Although young people confirm that staff address these concerns, the documents do not demonstrate all the actions taken. The registered manager is unable to appraise the strengths and weaknesses of the service fully, because of these administrative shortfalls.

	Judgement grade
Outcomes in education and related learning activities	Good
Young people receive a comprehensive and detailed initial assessment of their learning needs soon after arrival at the home, which helps effectively to plan their learning. Since the last inspection, improvements to the process for initial assessment have resulted in ensuring that young people who arrive during education holiday periods are assessed more timely. Diagnostic assessments identify effectively young people's support needs in English and mathematics. A speech and language therapist provides a detailed assessment of young people, which informs teaching strategies effectively. Very good support provided by the educational psychology service mental health team and local primary care trust informs young people's wider support needs. Education healthcare plans are utilised effectively to support young people needs. Young people enjoy their learning and make good progress, given their starting point. The majority of young people successfully achieve their functional skills qualification in English and mathematics. Young people's understanding of the application of English and mathematics in their vocational work is good. Young people make good improvements in their reading skills during their time at the home. Young people following vocational courses make good progress in achieving unit accreditation. Young people who are following GCSE courses receive good support. The tracking of individual academic progress is generally good. However, the recognition, recording and monitoring of personal development and behaviour are not taking place. Since the last inspection, a new rewards and sanctions system for education has been developed, but has not yet been introduced. The current system is not sufficiently clear to young people and is not used effectively by teachers to set targets for improvement in young people's attitudes and behaviours. Young people are developing good personal and social skills. They quickly improve their confidence and self-esteem, and they talk with confidence about their work. Young people's attitudes to learning are generally good and standards of behaviour are broadly appropriate. Young people develop good skills in vocational training. In lessons, they work effectively in groups and individually. Young people produce good standards of work, particularly in construction and art. The curriculum is appropriate, with a good range of courses and activities. However, the variety of courses in vocational training are limited to construction, food technology, and hair and beauty. The 'Brighter Futures' project is very effective in helping young people to develop an understanding of the skills needed within the workplace. Young people develop employability skills such as CV	

building, and job application and interview techniques. Some good work experience opportunities are in place for young people to gain valuable work skills. For example, one young person has undertaken work experience in the catering industry and one has undertaken a mock interview with solicitors.

The standard of classroom accommodation is very good, providing a positive learning environment. Learning resources are adequate. Computers and software are out of date, which is delaying the opportunity for young people to sit functional skills examinations, particularly during non-term time.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is generally good, with young people making good progress in the majority of lessons. Teachers are skilled in working with groups of young people who have a wide range of abilities. Teachers manage behaviour well. In a minority of cases, inappropriate language used by young people goes unchallenged by teachers. In most cases, teachers provide sufficient challenge in lessons to help young people to progress. In vocational training, coaching is good, with clear links to employability. In a minority of cases, the written feedback provided to young people by teachers does not ensure that they are clear about what they need to do to improve. Consequently, young people make slower progress.

Enrichment activities are good. Themed activities planned jointly between care and education staff during non-term time engage young people effectively in a variety of activities that widen their learning experience. Most of the activities are accredited. Good links with external partners help to provide activities such as dog handling, animal care, art and crafts. Enrichment during term time includes a range of courses on health, substance misuse and safety. Effective use of mobility supports young people's education needs. For example, young people have attended college interviews and work visits.

Access to independent careers advice is good. Most young people engage with the careers advisor at their induction. This results in a detailed action plan being produced, based on the longer-term objectives of the young person and their prior attainment. Young people are directed to the most appropriate courses to help them to achieve their objectives. Careers advice provided prior to transition is clear and helps to form the longer-term plans for young people. Good links are in place with a variety of further education colleges. Good information on young people's attainment while at the home is provided, where appropriate, to the relevant youth offending services. Young people develop a good understanding of their next steps into employment or training.

The quality improvement of teaching and learning is a key focus of the new headteacher, who has been in post for three weeks. The observation of teaching, learning and assessment process is firmly established and takes place on a regular basis. Observers during lessons focus too much on teaching, with insufficient links

made to the impact on learning and the progress that young people make. Data collected on young people's individual progress is not analysed to measure the performance of individual teachers or inform course evaluations. The new headteacher, in an initial review of the quality improvement, has recognised these areas for improvement.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place, however, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, 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 who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This 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 Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

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