

# SC037984

Registered provider: Darlington Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

This children's home provides care and accommodation for up to three children or young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home is located within the local community and there is good access to schools and local amenities. The home is operated by a local authority. The registered manager is an experienced practitioner who has been in post since December 2013. The registered manager has the appropriate skills and qualifications to carry out her role, and has attained additional degree-level qualifications to improve her knowledge and performance.

**Inspection dates:** 14 to 15 August 2019

|                                                                                           |             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| <b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account</b> | <b>good</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|

|                                                             |      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 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:** 15 May 2018

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement   |
|-----------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| 15/05/2018      | Full            | Good                   |
| 05/09/2017      | Full            | Good                   |
| 18/01/2017      | Interim         | Improved effectiveness |
| 14/04/2016      | Full            | Good                   |

## 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, the 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   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <p>The registered person must prepare and implement a policy which is intended to safeguard children accommodated in the children's home from abuse or neglect and sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect.</p> <p>Subject to paragraph (2), the procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect must, in particular, provide for records to be kept of an allegation of abuse or neglect, and the actions taken in response. (Regulation 34(1)(b)(2)(d))</p> | 31/08/2019 |

### Recommendations

- The registered person should oversee the welfare of the children in their care through observation and engagement with: each child; the home's staff; each child's family/carers where appropriate; and professionals involved in the care or protection of each child including their social worker, Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO), teachers, clinicians and other health professionals etc. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.23)
- The registered person should actively seek independent scrutiny of the home and make the best use of information from independent and internal monitoring (including under regulations 44 and 45) to ensure continuous improvement. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)

In particular, the registered person should evaluate the findings in their regulation 45 report, and provide an action plan that sets out any identified shortfalls and how these will be addressed.

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good**

The children and young people who have been accommodated since the last inspection have all made good progress as a direct result of living at this children's home.

Transitions for those children and young people who have moved on from the home have been extremely positive. A young person has successfully moved into independent-living accommodation; a child has returned to live with his family; and another young person has moved into a bespoke placement that meets their individual needs.

Feedback from the social workers of these children and young people was positive. Comments included: 'This children's home provides top standards'; and 'This was an excellent placement. Because of the staff support [Name of young person] is living independently in the community. This outcome exceeded all expectations.'

The staff strive to form positive bonds and relationships with the children and young people. The relationships are pivotal to delivering individualised care and support. The child currently living at the children's home is beginning to develop trusting relationships with some of the staff. She is engaging in developing her care planning and adhering to the home's boundaries and expectations.

The child also has an excellent relationship with her social worker. The child said: 'This is the best social worker that I have ever had.' The level of individualised care increases the likelihood that children and young people will progress and achieve.

The staff provide good, individualised support during key-work sessions that focus on children's and young people's needs, including their safeguarding needs. The registered manager and the staff have gathered a wide range of child-friendly documentation and interactive information booklets, which they use during key-work sessions. Topics include e-safety, risks associated with exploitation, and information about county lines. The staff also meaningfully consult with the children and young people regarding their views and wishes. This promotes children's and young people's rights, equality and diversity.

Education outcomes are good. The staff actively work with education providers, taking into account the children's and young people's needs, capabilities and wishes. The child currently living at the home was fully consulted and involved regarding the selection of her forthcoming education placement. Consequently, she is keen and really looking forward to starting school in September.

Good partnership working and inter-agency working result in children and young people accessing the services they need, including those that meet their health and welfare needs. The staff have good links with other specialist professionals and agencies, and use these positive relationships to ensure that the children and young people receive high levels of individualised care.

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

The ethos of this home is that safeguarding children and young people is paramount. The quality of individual risk assessments is very good. Safeguarding risks are clearly set out and understood by the staff. Corresponding strategies for reducing risks are individualised and specific, and match with the local authority's risk management plans. The risk assessments are regularly monitored, updated and evaluated, which increases the likelihood of staff being able to keep the children and young people safe.

The registered manager attends all of the local authority multi-agency meetings that are held due to children and young people who go missing from home or who are at risk of child sexual exploitation or online exploitation. This level of involvement ensures that the registered manager is aware of any risks associated with the children and young people. The staff work closely with the specific police unit that responds to incidents when children and young people go missing or who are at risk from exploitation. This adds additional protection for those children and young people who are vulnerable.

There are some aspects of keeping children and young people safe that do not meet regulation. Child protection referrals are reported to the relevant designated officer, but these are not always recorded in the home's child protection log. In addition, the home's child protection procedure has not been updated to include recent changes relating to how and where child protection concerns are reported to the local authority.

This has not affected the safety of the child who is currently accommodated. Nevertheless, a failure to correctly record and monitor child protection referrals, and the actions taken in response to these, could potentially negatively influence the outcomes for children and young people.

The staff manage behaviour positively by using rewards and incentives, and by working directly with the children and young people to develop their empathy. Progress has been made by meeting a requirement from the previous inspection regarding the use of restraint. There have been no restraints carried out since last inspection, which is a positive outcome for the children and young people.

The children's home provides a safe, homely environment that meets children's and young people's needs. All safety checks are carried out regularly, and all visitors to the home are vetted, have their identity checked and sign the visitors' book. This protects the children and young people from unsuitable adults.

## **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

The registered manager and the staff work together as a cohesive team with a shared ethos in order to improve the lives and outcomes for the children and young people. Members of staff described the team as consistent and committed. Staff said that they

work well together as a team, and that staff morale is good.

The provider and the registered manager have prioritised the training of the staff and their development which have been instrumental to the staff providing good-quality, individualised care. There is an active learning culture that is reflected in meaningful team meetings and individual staff supervisions and appraisals.

The home has a wealth of learning resources that are accessed by the staff, and all the staff have the minimum level 3 diploma in caring for children and young people. These measures improve childcare practice and the care that children and young people receive.

The home's administration is extremely organised. Children's and young people's case files are effectively audited to ensure that the staff have access to the information that they need. Private and confidential information is appropriately managed and stored securely. Care is taken to record information about children and young people in a professional and factual way. This ensures that the records can be easily accessed, and are understandable should a child or young person wish to read about their childhood experiences in later life.

The registered manager, staff, local authority social workers and associated professionals have high aspirations for children and young people. Multi-agency and partnership working reaps positive results and outcomes. Communication between all professionals encourages good teamwork.

The overall monitoring in the home is good, but this is not adequately reflected in the registered manager's regulation 45 report that is submitted to Ofsted. This report is used by inspectors to monitor the performance of the home between inspection visits. There is little evaluation in the report to demonstrate what the registered manager has specifically analysed in order to scrutinise how the home is performing. There is no clear section in the report that highlights areas for improvement, or how these shortfalls will be addressed.

In addition, the specific views of children, young people, staff, social workers and other significant others are not adequately included in the regulation 45 report. There is little evidence that these omissions are affecting the quality of care, but a failure to rigorously monitor the quality of care over a prolonged period could adversely affect the outcomes for children and young people.

## **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:** SC037984

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** Darlington Borough Council

**Registered provider address:** Town Hall, Feethams, Darlington DL1 5QT

**Responsible individual:** Jane Kochanowski

**Registered manager:** Toni Mace

## Inspector

Debbie White: social care inspector



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