

SC037984

Registered provider: Darlington Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and managed by a local authority. It provides care for up to three children who may experience social and emotional difficulties. Three children were living in the home at the time of the inspection.

The registered manager left the home in January 2022. A new manager is in the process of applying to register with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 November 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **requires improvement to be good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **requires improvement to be good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **requires improvement to be good**

The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 22 August 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection:

Ofsted inspected this home on 22 and 23 August 2022 and found significant shortfalls in the help and protection of children and the leadership and management of the home. The home was judged to be inadequate and Ofsted issued four compliance notices under regulation 11, 12, 13 and 14. Ofsted completed a monitoring visit on 11 October 2022 and found that sufficient action had been taken to meet the steps in the compliance notices under regulation 12 and 14. The steps

required to meet the compliance notices issues under regulation 11 and 13 had not been met and these were reissued. Progress to meet these notices has been considered as part of this inspection.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
22/08/2022	Full	Inadequate
01/03/2022	Full	Good
14/08/2019	Full	Good
15/05/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Children's relationships with staff are improving. They now have opportunities to enjoy a range of activities and have recently been on a short holiday with staff. Photographs show the children having fun and making happy memories with staff. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection and supports children's development.

Education progress for some children is not yet good enough. During the inspection, some children did not attend education, despite encouragement from staff. Staff did not offer structured activities throughout the day to provide a routine, or alternative learning opportunities. Non-attendance in education is having a negative effect on children's educational progress and social development.

One child's health needs are difficult for them to accept and manage. Although staff carry out one-to-one sessions with the child, these sessions are only partly effective. These sessions do not help to raise the child's awareness about the associated longer-term risks of their medical condition. This does not encourage the child to make any positive changes to managing their physical health.

Some children receive therapy to help them to manage their anxieties and improve their emotional well-being. Staff support children to reflect on their feelings and frustrations. This means that children learn new coping strategies and their self-esteem is developing. For one child, this has greatly influenced their self-confidence, so much so that they will be presenting their artwork to an audience.

Staff support children to spend time with their families. They help rebuild relationships between children and family members and, for one child, this has resulted in overnight stays. This helps children to retain a sense of their identity.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Children's risk assessments are detailed and provide staff with clear actions to follow when children are at risk of harm. The manager reviews and updates these risk assessments. This provides staff with up-to-date information, which helps them to determine the severity of the risks to children's safety and how to manage and reduce these.

Since the last inspection, occasions when children go missing from the home have reduced. When children are missing from the home, staff go out and look for them. This tells children that the staff worry about them and will do what they can to bring them home.

There have been no physical restraints since the last inspection. Staff know children's triggers and mitigate the escalation of their behaviours through verbal redirection and following children's support plans.

Staff respond to self-injurious incidents in line with internal policies and procedures, and with the child's safety plan. One child's family said, 'We all work consistently when supporting [child's name] with their social and emotional well-being.' Consequently, self-injurious behaviours have significantly reduced and this is recognised by other professionals.

Some children receive financial reparation when they cause damage to property. The manager has recognised that this is ineffective and has adopted a restorative approach across the home. Children now help to fix any damage that they cause. This helps children to take responsibility for their actions.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The manager has a clear understanding of the shortfalls in the care provided to the children. Leaders and managers have recently taken steps to make improvements to the quality of care that children receive. This includes better-quality staff training and the redecoration of one child's bedroom.

The manager has effective working relationships with other professionals from health, education and social care. She will direct staff to professionally challenge placing authorities to make sure that children's records and plans are up to date and reflect all of their support needs.

All staff have had training in trauma-informed care by a therapeutic social worker. Staff have easy access to therapists for support with their practices, and this helps them to overcome any barriers of delivering better care to the children. This means that staff can now provide the children with therapeutic responses and consistent care.

Staff are supported to reflect and focus on their practice through regular supervision sessions and team meetings. This ensures that staff are learning about new approaches to supporting children and increases their opportunities to share good practice. Staff said that they feel supported by the manager and find supervision sessions useful.

The manager is aware of the home's strengths and the areas for development. The monitoring systems in place mean that when shortfalls are found, the manager can take action to address these.

The inspector concluded from this inspection that the compliance notices issued under regulation 11 and 13 have been met. Staff are now trained in building positive relationships with children and are trained in trauma-informed practice.

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 education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— understand the barriers to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child to overcome any such barriers; and help each child to understand the importance and value of education, learning, training and employment. (Regulation 8 (1) (2)(a)(iii)(iv))	29 December 2022
The health and well-being standard is that— the health and well-being needs of children are met; children receive advice, services and support in relation to their health and well-being; and children are helped to lead healthy lifestyles. (Regulation 10 (1)(a)(b)(c))	29 December 2022

Information about this 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: SC037984

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Darlington Borough Council

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

Responsible individual: Christopher Bell

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Gemma McDonnell, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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