

SC064931

Registered provider: Pear Tree Projects Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and managed by a private provider to care for up eight children with emotional and/or social difficulties, and may provide accommodation for children with learning disabilities.

The manager has an appropriate level 4 qualification and was registered in November 2018.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection dates: 1 and 2 March 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding

Date of last inspection: 10 December 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/12/2019	Full	Good
10/09/2018	Full	Good
13/09/2017	Full	Good
17/02/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The children have positive and trusting relationships with the adults in the home. The ethos of the team is to re-educate and re-parent the children. This supportive and nurturing environment helps the children to feel safe and make progress in all areas of their lives.

All children are supported to access education and training. The manager and staff advocate well on behalf of the children so that they receive education that meets their individual needs. This has resulted in all the children achieving recognised qualifications when they leave school.

Children have a positive experience of moving in to the home. Introductions are led by the child's needs. The staff take their time to get to know the child. Children already living in the home are involved in the process. This makes the child feel welcome.

Children's health needs are met. The staff support all children to access healthcare services. This includes those children who have not accessed healthcare prior to living in the home. This has resulted in some children having an improved quality of life. Many of the children have had their COVID-19 vaccinations.

Children have a sense of belonging in the home. One child said:

'I love it here. I would give it a solid nine out of 10. I can manage my behaviour better since have moved here. It's weird... they manage to keep me in check, but they are still like family. I like school now too.'

All children are encouraged to develop their independence skills relevant to their age and understanding. This is enhanced using an accredited scheme, which is personalised to the needs of each child. All children move on from the home with a skill set that is designed to support them with the next stage of their journey. The staff continue to support those children who move on to independent living. This has contributed towards the children having a sense of belonging in their local community.

When a child has moved out of the home in an unplanned way, the staff and the manager have identified creative ways to maintain contact with the child. This has reassured the child that the staff still care about them.

When a child is required to isolate due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the child stays with their key workers in a separate property. This provides continuity of care and ensures that the child's physical and emotional needs are well met.

The home is generally decorated, furnished and cleaned to a good standard. Some areas of hygiene were identified to have fallen below an acceptable standard. Some minor repairs were highlighted as being necessary. These were minimal and were addressed immediately.

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

Children say they feel safe in the home. One child said that they felt safer here than they had done anywhere else. The staff have a good understanding of the children's needs and know how to keep the children safe. The staff support the children to access therapeutic help. This assists the children to safely manage their feelings and behaviours. Children's risk assessments and safety plans are unique to the needs of each child and are updated regularly.

The staff provide clear and consistent boundaries in the home. Positive behaviour is rewarded with spontaneous days out and treats. The effectiveness of this approach is evident through the low number of incidents in the home, the significantly low number of restraints, and the low number of sanctions.

Sanctions that are issued are restorative in nature. All children can comment on their sanctions and many have done so, saying that they find them to be fair.

The children are supported well when they make complaints. The manager takes immediate action when a child makes a complaint and follows the organisation's safeguarding policy and procedure to ensure that the children are safe. The children are informed of the outcome of their complaint and are asked if they are satisfied with the outcome. This allows the children to feel listened to and believed.

Allegations that are made against the staff are taken seriously. The manager takes swift action to ensure that the welfare of the child always comes first and that the children are safeguarded.

Safer recruitment processes are followed when staff are appointed. This provides assurance that they are suitably vetted and qualified to provide care.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager is passionate about meeting the children's needs and leads by example. She wants all of the children to make significant progress while living in the home. She has a strong presence in the home and divides her time well between performing her managerial duties and spending time with the children. The relationships she has formed with the children are testimony to this.

The manager and staff have excellent communication with other professionals and family members. One parent said, 'I am grateful for what they [staff] have done. The work they do is fantastic.' One social worker said:

'I felt emotional as [name of child] settled in so well. It's nice to have an experience where you place a child and are confident that all their needs are being met.'

Another social worker said, 'It's genuinely fantastic. The way they advocate is amazing. Their parenting made [name of child] where he is now.'

The manager is not afraid to challenge the decision-making of professionals on behalf of the children. She is proactive in advocating for their needs to be met. This includes making referrals for expert assessments, and escalating concerns to the senior managers in the children's placing local authorities.

The manager is supported by a long-serving staff team, who follow her example. She is supportive and sensitive to their needs. This has led to a consistent staff team for several years. During the COVID-19 pandemic, she took exceptional steps to keep her staff safe, while maintaining continuity of care for the children.

The manager supports staff effectively with their professional development. She uses practice-related supervision to support the staff to reflect on the children's needs and their own practice.

The manager and her team undertake mandatory training. The manager is proactive in identifying additional training to enable the staff to better meet the needs of the children and keep them safe. The manager has shared aspects of this practice across the organisation. Team meetings are used productively to involve the staff in the development of the home and to facilitate training.

The paperwork in place for all of the children is up to date and contains detailed information regarding the children and their progress. The documents give an excellent oversight into the children's backgrounds and the progress that they have made. All of the documents have management oversight.

The manager makes effective use of the organisation's tracking system, which provides measurable outcomes to monitor and assess risk, safety and progress. If progress is not being made, the manager addresses this by reviewing the plan. This tracking tool helps to evidence the positive progress that the children have made during their time at the home.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should review and update the children's guide as necessary and make sure that the children are given an explanation of any changes. In particular, ensure that the guide contains details for contacting the Children's Commissioner. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 24, paragraph 4.23)
- The registered person should ensure that the home is maintained to a good standard. In particular, that the showers are hygienic and the bathroom panelling is repaired. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

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: SC064931

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Pear Tree Projects Limited

Registered provider address: Peartree House, Bolam, Darlington, County Durham DL2 2UP

Responsible individual: David Bartlett

Registered manager: Diana Hewick-Crawford

Inspector

Julia Hagan, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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