

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 company. It provides care for up to eight children who may experience social and emotional difficulties. Seven children were living at the home.

The manager registered with Ofsted in November 2018.

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 March 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 15 March 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
15/03/2023	Full	Outstanding
01/03/2022	Full	Good
10/12/2019	Full	Good
10/09/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children in the home are doing well and making good progress. This is despite shortfalls in safety in the home and the way the home is managed. Children have trusted adults who they can talk to. Children say that if they are sad or anxious, they can approach staff and talk to them. Children at the home feel safe.

Feedback from children about the home is positive. They say that they have a range of activities they enjoy. This includes spending time on the provider-owned farm working with horses, going on holidays and being part of local football teams.

Children make progress with their education and staff support them with their attendance. Staff work with the children in the home and also provide support in school. The communication between school and the home is good.

Children are making progress in their ability to manage their own emotions. Children feel that the support from staff helps them to do this. The children achieve accredited qualifications, which lead to certification in topics such as internet safety, knife crime and relationships. This helps children to understand their behaviour and equips them with life skills.

Friends and families are important to children and staff know this. Staff ensure that children maintain close relationships with those who are important to them. This sometimes involves travelling long distances, so these relationships endure. The majority of feedback from family members was positive.

Children's views and wishes are listened to and there are processes in place to make sure their views are actively sought. However, children's views are not always considered, and some decisions which affect the welfare of the children are taken without discussion with individual children or their social worker. This does not help children to feel involved in their own care.

Since the last inspection, there have been several children who have moved into or out of the home. These moves are not always managed well. For some children, documentation was not in place to review the relationships between children in their new home or how the transition to the home would be planned and managed. This does not help children to feel secure.

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

Children have individual plans and risk assessments which are in place to guide staff to care for children appropriately. These are not fully reflective of the needs of the children. When incidents occur, allegations are made, or there are concerns

regarding specific behaviours, risk assessments are not always updated in a timely manner. This means that a similar incident is likely to happen again.

There have been previous occasions when staff have physically intervened with children using holds that they are not trained to use. However, staff are now trained to physically intervene when necessary.

Health and safety is reviewed regularly. The registered manager consults with outside agencies to complete a risk assessment of the local area, which helps to keep children safe. However, a number of fire doors in the home do not close securely and some doors were propped open. In the event of a fire, flames and smoke could spread more easily. This is a risk to the safety of children and staff.

Children do not always have access to all appropriate areas of the home. The door to a bathroom is locked, as this was used by staff. This does not value children's ability to move freely around their home.

Feedback from professionals regarding the home is positive. They describe good communication with the home. Professionals who work with children said staff have a good knowledge and understanding of the children and will advocate for their rights. The provider has also developed other ways for obtaining feedback from children and others via surveys.

Children do not go missing from this home. Positive relationships between the children and staff help them to stay safe. A missing from home protocol is in place for each child and this contains contact information of people who are important to the children. This helps to reduce harm to children.

Recruitment checks and verification processes take place before staff begin work at the home. This provides assurance that staff are suitable to work with children.

Guidance is available for children if they wish to complain or highlight any concerns. Staff talk to them about this. When children make a complaint, this is investigated appropriately and they receive a formal response from the home's manager or another manager if or when needed.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement

The manager has oversight of the home and completes regular audits of documentation and records. This has not enabled the manager to recognise when risk assessments, incident reports or children's plans have not been updated to contain the necessary information. This does not support staff to be consistent in the care they provide.

The manager has not ensured that statutory documents required by regulation contain the correct information, are reflective of the service, or detail the qualifications of the staff.

Staff complete mandatory training and this is up to date. However, staff training records do not reflect that staff have the necessary skills or training to meet the individual needs of children. For example, staff are not trained to support specific health conditions.

Some documents relating to children contain language that can be viewed as stigmatising. This is not measurable and does not explain what the behaviour being described looks like. This is not helpful for children who may wish to read their records now, or when they are older.

The home's statement of purpose describes a therapeutic approach to care. Staff at the home could not describe the model of care in place, but could discuss an alternative model, not described in the statement of purpose. Only a few staff have received formal training.

The home is warm, homely and comfortable with the decoration and furnishings being in good order. The manager has a development plan for the home and has discussed additional plans to enhance the home. There are regular visits to the home by an independent person and the manager responds promptly to any actions arising from the report.

Staff meetings are held regularly and there is good attendance by the staff. Children are a focus of the meeting. Staff have regular supervisions, which include discussions about safeguarding and the mandatory training required. Most of the staff said the management team is supportive. New staff complete an induction, which includes the opportunity to meet the children and the staff.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person 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 must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The protection of children standard is that the registered person must ensure that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure — that staff assess whether a 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 harm to children; that known risks are reviewed and risk assessments are completed which keep children safe; 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. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(b))	31 May2024
If the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005(a) applies to the home — the registered person must ensure that the requirements of that Order and any regulations made under it, except for article 23 (duties of employees), are complied with in respect of the home. (Regulation 25 (2)(b))	31 May2024
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that — In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to — ensures that staff have the experience, qualification and skills to meet the needs of each child;	31 May2024

use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements to the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1) (2)(c)(h)) In particular, that documents such as the statement of purpose and the Annex A are reflective of the service and contain accurate and necessary information. Also, ensure that children's case records are kept up to date and are reflective of the known risks to children.	
The children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who — take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives. (Regulation 7 (1)(c))	31 May2024

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that, just as in a family home, children should be able to access all shared areas of their home unless there are specific reasons why this would not meet a child's needs. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.10)
- The registered person should work with children's placing authorities to ensure that each child's transition is planned. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 57, paragraph 11.9)
- The registered person should ensure that the staff record information about children in a non-stigmatising way. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

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

Inspectors

Jo Cansfield, Social Care Inspector

Gail McGann, Social Care Inspector

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