

SC444289

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 four children who experience social and emotional difficulties and who may have a learning disability.

There were four children living at the home during this inspection.

The manager registered with Ofsted in July 2012.

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 July 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	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 15 November 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
15/11/2023	Full	Good
21/02/2023	Full	Good
05/01/2022	Full	Good
21/01/2020	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The children have developed trusting relationships with staff, who encourage them to make progress. Children enjoy living in their home and being part of life on a farm. The home is comfortable and well furnished. Children can choose their own bedroom furniture and decoration. Children say they love living in the home.

All children are now attending education regularly and increasing their attainment. Most of the children attend the on-site school and enjoy caring for the animals as part of their curriculum. Education providers commented on the good communication from staff and the positive impact that they have on the children's progress.

The staff show determination to engage the children in after-school activities, sports teams and social groups. Children are encouraged to attend and experience new opportunities. The children are now regularly involved in clubs which interest and motivate them. As a result, the children have increased their confidence and are making new friends.

Children's physical and mental health needs are being met. Routine health appointments take place and actions from health assessments are addressed quickly. The staff work with child and adolescent mental health services to inform assessments and support children to receive therapy. The staff talk to children and discuss the importance of good health when they are reluctant to attend appointments or talk to health professionals.

Children and their families are supported by staff to enjoy their time together. The staff offer transport to brothers and sisters so they can meet closer to family homes. Parents are also given information on local activities so they can plan for their visits. This support increases the quality of the time that children spend with their families. Parents say the relationship with their children has been protected because of the work that staff do.

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

The children are provided with warmth and understanding from a familiar staff team. The routines and boundaries set by the home increase the children's sense of well-being and safety. Children say they feel safe and would not change anything about where they live or how they are cared for.

The children are increasingly able to manage their emotions and maintain their relationships in the home. There have been no significant incidents, missing-from-home episodes or physical interventions since the last inspection. Staff help children to learn how to express their thoughts and feelings appropriately through direct work activities. Consequently, children are more settled and making progress in managing difficult feelings.

The children's risk assessments are easy to understand and give clear direction to staff. The manager includes links to research and reports an improvement in how well staff understand the children's needs and behaviours. This helps staff to be more effective in safeguarding the children.

The manager reviews incidents of self-harm to improve how staff respond to children. Staff have introduced 'self-soothe boxes' which contain sensory toys and have been created with the children to help them manage difficult feelings. Snapshot profiles provide important information about how children should be supported. These are a quick and easy guide to help staff who are new to children. These actions have reduced the frequency and seriousness of self-harm incidents.

Staff help children to understand the consequences of their actions when their behaviour is not appropriate. However, it is not always clear that consequences have been applied consistently in accordance with the children's plans. Furthermore, information is not always accurate, and staff sometimes use language that is not helpful to the children in the recording. This hinders the manager's oversight of measures used to address children's behaviour.

When there is a new or emerging concern, the manager informs the staff and updates the risk assessment. However, the process is not consistent and there is sometimes a gap between staff being informed and updating plans. This means children may receive inconsistent responses during times of need.

The duty manager did not adhere to the provider policy for the management of allegations within the home. Following an initial allegation by a child, the report was sent to the subject of the concern. This breached the home's own allegation management policy. This was identified early and managed appropriately. However, it could have negatively impacted upon the child and the internal investigation.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager and deputy manager have good oversight of the home's progress through effective systems and processes. The management audit tool is a live document which they use to identify shortfalls quickly. Actions are completed in a timely way and are rarely carried over to the following month.

Leaders and managers complete their own assessments of children's needs to complement the local authority care plan. The information is used to develop children's plans and how staff will meet their needs. This ensures children receive support that reflects their individual needs and is reviewed as part of their statutory care review.

The manager and staff review their practice regularly. Fortnightly team meetings focus on the individual children and what can be learned. This approach seeks to continually develop the understanding of the staff and improve the care experience for children.

Leaders and managers work well with professionals and families. The manager challenges services when they are not fulfilling their responsibilities and escalates any concerns, for example to obtain updated care plans. The feedback from professionals and parents is overwhelmingly positive. Parents are assured that their children are safe and making progress.

The manager and staff receive regular and effective supervision. Staff say they are managed well and given excellent emotional and practical support. Supervision is child-focused and allows staff space to reflect on their responsibilities and the impact they have on the progress and care of children. Practice issues are identified, and the manager quickly puts in place support to address staff performance. No new staff have been recruited this period creating stability for the children.

The manager's review of the quality of care does not consider the actions required to improve practice in the home.

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
The protection of children standard is 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— are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies; 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)(vii)(b))	22 August 2024

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that staff understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording when recording consequences for children. Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way and information 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' paragraph 14.4, page 62)
- The registered person should have a system in place that allows them to monitor the matters set out in the regulation at least once every six months and generate a report. The report should identify any actions required for the next six months of delivery within the home and how these actions will be addressed. The whole review process and the resulting report should be used as a tool for continuous improvement ('Guide to The Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards' paragraphs 15.2 and 15.4, pages 64 and 65)

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: SC444289

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: Gary Ramsbottom

Inspector

Lee Riley, Social Care Inspector

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