

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	29/09/2015
Unique reference number	SC036804
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Gateshead Council
Registered person address	Civic Centre, Regent Street, GATESHEAD, Tyne and Wear, NE8 1HH

Responsible individual	Mrs Debra Patterson
Registered manager	Mrs Susan Poad
Inspector	Mr Mark Broomhead

Inspection date	29/09/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Improved Effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Outstanding
The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceeds the standards of good. The actions of the home contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help, protection and care.	
how well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC036804

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is outstanding because:

- The care provided to children and young people is very well organised to ensure they have all their needs met. The unit is a very caring and nurturing environment. Children and young people enjoy a loving environment where staff genuinely make every effort to ensure they are safe and enjoy the time they spend at the unit.
- Staff at the unit make significant efforts to ensure they know and understand children and young people very well.
- Children and young people are enabled to make significant progress and make personal achievements within the limits of their own abilities.
- Deployment of staff and bookings for children and young people is done in a way that promotes building of relationships between staff and promotes friendships between children and young people while they are having a short break. This extra effort promotes social skills and enables children and young people to look forward to being cared for by people they know and spending time with their friends.
- Information kept about children and young people's care is very well written and comprehensive. This ensures that those that are providing care understand fully the needs of children and young people using the service at that time.
- The manager actively seeks information to provide a better service. The staff use various methods to gather information from children and young people and have recently employed a new application for the electronic tablet which allows them to express their views in a way that enables them to communicate effectively. The manager also seeks the view of parents and uses this to improve the service provided.
- Children, young people and their parents said that they looked forward to coming to the unit. They enjoy their time there and that it was a safe environment. Some children and young people were upset when it was their time to leave and go back home.
- The physical environment is maintained to a high standard. There is equipment that allows staff to create a relaxing environment and help children and young people learn tasks to aid their independence.

- Staff at the unit communicate effectively with schools and community nurses to provide continuity of care.
- The staff continually focus on the individual needs of the children and young people. They ensure they regularly discuss their needs at every opportunity, including formal handovers, team meetings and supervisions.

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

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets 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 with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>The independent person must produce a report about a visit ("the independent person's report") which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether—</p> <p>(a) children are effectively safeguarded; and (b) the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being.</p> <p>(Regulation 44(4))</p> <p>In particular, the report should demonstrate analysis of information that leads to their opinion. Reports should be submitted to HMCI in a timely manner.</p>	<p>31/12/15</p>

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- Ensure that staff are responsible for maintaining a child's ongoing health treatment, including the management of medication on arrival and departure from the home and recording and sharing information about when medicine was administered. (The Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, page 36 paragraph 7.20)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This local authority children's home provides short-break care for up to six young people with physical disabilities and/or learning disabilities.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/12/2014	CH - Interim	Improved Effectiveness
10/06/2014	CH - Full	Outstanding
17/10/2013	CH - Interim	Good Progress
16/07/2013	CH - Full	Outstanding

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
<p>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</p>	<p>outstanding</p>
<p>Children and young people who use this service are supported by staff to build trusted and secure relationships. Staff work exceptionally hard at preparing those that use the service to feel secure and safe. They spend time getting to understand children and young people and their particular individual needs. Most of the children and young people that use this short break service have very complex health needs and managers and staff ensure that there is a comprehensive care plan in place before they start to use the service.</p> <p>Staff at the unit invest time with the children and young people on a continual basis. Deployment of staff is carefully considered to ensure that children and young people feel secure in their environment and are looked after by people that they know and trust. Children and young people visit the unit a number of times before they spend the night. This allows them to become familiar with the surroundings and build trust in staff so that when they spend time away from home they are not anxious. This is important for all children and young people but especially so when looking after those who struggle with transition between locations. One young person said, 'It's a nice place to meet your friends that you don't often see. It's a nice place to be. It's very calm and peaceful.' This is because the manager actively considers the preferences of children and young people and makes bookings to promote those friendships which in turn develops children and young people's social skills, confidence and self-esteem. In addition to staff building relationships with children and young people, they also spend time getting to know their families and important people. One parent said that the impact the staff had on their child meant they were confident and had improved their self-esteem which allowed them to succeed in mainstream school. They described him as being, 'like a different child'.</p> <p>Staff also ensure they build relationships with education providers and frequently attend schools so they can assess children and young people's behaviour. They work together to better manage those behaviours and provide continuity of care for them which in turns improves transition to the unit. Link workers also attend and participate in meetings that affect the care provided to children and young people. They attend reviews at schools and also when the authority is reviewing their care plans. This supports parents and carers in seeking the level of care that their child needs.</p> <p>Children and young people are actively encouraged to participate in the day to day running of the unit. They participate in children's forums and also children's</p>	

meetings. Both are used to capture the ideas that children and young people have to make improvements to the unit. For example, a recent outcome from a forum meeting was to use a particular application on the unit's electronic tablet. This was considered by children and young people to be effective in promoting communication, in particular for those who have limited verbal ability. In addition, they felt this would allow children and young people to communicate in a way that is less pressured and causes them less anxiety. The application uses a combination of pictures and words and allows formulation of more complex messages. Children and young people are able to influence the meal choices and also contribute to themed evenings. The unit was preparing for a Rugby World Cup evening and were preparing various different foods representing the different countries participating in the competition. They were also preparing symbols representing the teams, for example, red dragons in support of the Welsh team. On the first day of the inspection interviews were taking place for a new member of staff. In addition to the managers from the unit sitting on the interview panel a young person had been invited to take part in the interview process. He was able to ask questions of the interviewees and participate in the decision making of the selection process.

Children and young people enjoy a range of activities in and outside the unit. There is a room dedicated to sensory stimulation. There, they can enjoy using a hammock, colour changing ball pool, projector and various other items that allow them to experience different feelings and sensations as well as play with toys and games. In the garden there are children's characters and solar powered lighting with outdoor seating nearby. This creates an inviting environment for children to enjoy, particular when the weather is nice enough to spend time outside. There are also swings, a trampoline, football nets and games that can be accessed from a wheelchair, such as outdoor connect 4 and basketball. There are plants that attract butterflies and also a number of bird feeding tables. The garden is very large and is made secure by a surrounding fence.

Children and young people also take part in activities outside of the unit. They have a number of locations that they enjoy visiting, such as, Tanfield Railway, The Discovery Museum, Whitley Bay and the National Glass Centre. They also go bowling and visit the Metro Centre. The service has an adapted mini bus that staff can drive. They use this to go on outings after school and at weekends. Staff are proactive in suggesting activities and are currently planning Halloween and also an evening to celebrate Children in Need, wearing onesies or pyjamas. There are many pictures around the house showing children engaging and enjoying activities.

Progress that children and young people make is exceptional. The unit has a separate skills room. This is equipped so that children and young people can learn to make themselves toast or a drink. There are instructions both in symbol format and words for them to follow. They have access to cooking facilities and the cupboards are designed so the contents lower as the door is opened. The worktops are lowered and they also have an ironing board. Children and young people have

a folder which they list the goals they want to achieve. One young person had made toast themselves and another had selected ingredients to make a sandwich, and then clean and tidy their crockery. Children and young people also use this room to have cinema nights. They select age appropriate films and then make popcorn, pizzas or snacks that they then share and eat while watching a film together.

Staff at the unit are adept at enabling children and young people to have new experiences and to celebrate their achievements. They take pride in being able to record their progress and have been able to evidence almost every child or young person celebrating success. For example, some have simply had a very good introduction to the unit and settled very well, one young person progressed to getting up and coming out of their room independently and another has made significant progress developing emotional maturity which has allowed them to reflect on their past feelings and behaviours. Children and young people receive certificates of their success and receive various types of rewards when they achieve something new.

Children and young people who attend the service have complex health needs. These are managed by careful planning and ensuring that medication is administered correctly and on time. Staff know their needs well and are sensitive to changes in their body language or demeanour to identify if they are feeling unwell. This also means that staff can act quickly when behaviours escalate and take steps to reduce them before children and young people enter a stage of crisis.

While at the unit I was able to observe the interaction between staff, children and young people. In addition, I was able to speak to other people who are involved in their care and hear staff talk about the children and young people with each other. It is very clear that the children and young people are at the centre of all that the staff do. They spend their time thinking about how they can deliver better care and experiences during the time they spend there. They do this so well and so frequently that it is considered the norm and can easily be overlooked. Everyone I spoke to who knew the children and were involved in their care said how well they were looked after by staff, how much they enjoyed their time at the unit and that they looked forward to their visits.

Children and young people enjoy a caring and nurturing environment. One parent commented in a questionnaire, 'we can relax knowing that she is very well cared for in a safe, comfortable and enjoyable environment. It is great that she has social experience with her peers of similar age and ability.' Another parent said that the unit, 'is the only place I have ever left my child and felt happy about it'. Children and young people also have access to a file that staff have prepared that lets them know more about the people that are looking after them. It has the staff's photograph, information about their role in the unit and also about their interests and hobbies. This supports children and young people to feel more settled and helps them build better relationships with those who are responsible for their care.

Children and young people enjoy an environment that is furnished with modern equipment and high quality furniture. They enjoy bedrooms that are themed and each has specialist equipment that can accommodate their needs. The unit has excellent facilities for bathing. Children and young people can use a shower room or a multi-sensory jacuzzi bath. The house is beautifully presented and has televisions, computers and games consoles for everyone to enjoy. The unit has a lift which allows those not able to use stairs to reach the first floor. Those that are staying the night are able to bring with them some items from home to make their rooms more personal and comfortable while they are there.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
<p>Children and young people enjoy a service that provides a safe environment. They can identify and trust adults with whom they can share any concerns. They are able to express how they feel to staff who have the appropriate skills, competence and experience to react appropriately to support them. One young person had started using the service being very cautious of male staff. Staff understood this and so adapted their interaction with the young person to engage little and often, and presenting only positive experiences. Because of this innovative approach, the young person has reached the stage when, during their last stay, they asked for that male member of staff to make sure he would be there while they were sleeping. This is significant progress for that young person in relation to feeling safe and secure and understanding that not all adults want to harm them.</p> <p>Managers at the unit ensure that training necessary to provide the levels of care required at this unit is undertaken. The Registered Manager has a comprehensive training matrix which identifies who requires training and when, and also when training has been applied for and awaiting a course. In addition, the Registered Manager has identified a member of staff who takes a lead role in training for the staff team. She has recently delivered training to keep children and young people safe and is being supported to apply for a City and Guilds Certificate in Education and Training which will formalise her ability to train others. This will be a valuable resource for the unit and allow them to deliver training quickly and effectively.</p> <p>Risks associated with the children and young people who use the service are known and understood by adults looking after them. They have clear and comprehensive daily logs and contact sheets which they use to keep themselves up to date of any changes to their care or behaviours. There have been no incidents of missing from the unit but staff are acutely aware that this is a possibility for</p>	

some young people and so are vigilant. The Registered Manager ensures that staffing levels and deployment of staff match the individual needs of the children. Due to the nature of a short breaks service this can be difficult to manage but it is carried out very effectively.

Staff understand the importance of ensuring children and young people's health is managed. They ensure that instructions from medical professionals are followed and also work closely with the community nurses to ensure any medication that they cannot administer is done so by a trained professional. The staff communicate effectively and timely with the nurses so that they can plan appropriately to ensure a nurse is available. They keep records of when medication should be taken and ensure that they log when it has been administered.

When there are new children and young people coming to the unit, managers and staff plan and prepare exceptionally well. They take time to understand their needs before their first introduction to the unit and validate this during their first few visits. They work closely with parents, carers and social workers so they have as much information as possible before they make their first overnight stay. The timescales for this are flexible and the Registered Manager, together with other staff, assess whether the time is right for overnight stays to commence. This ensures that staff are ready to manage their individual care and behavioural needs and that the child or young person is not anxious about being away from home.

There are no incidents that have required physical restraint or sanctions. Children and young people are frequently praised for their achievements. This method of reward has been used to great effect at the unit.

I was able to speak with one of the young people that uses the unit. They confirmed to me that they felt safe when they stayed at the unit. They said they, 'felt safe', and that they, 'didn't feel worried'. During discussions with parents and social workers, all commented positively on the care being provided by staff. One social worker said, 'Staff were really intuitive to his needs, he's clearly happy when he's there.' They also said that, 'This is one of the biggest resources, without it families would fall by the wayside. They would go into crisis which would result in more children in care.' Another social worker said, 'They got to know her very quickly and recognise when she needs time out. They also know when she's in a good mood and so get her involved in the group activities.' Every professional, parent and carer I spoke to confirmed that they felt their child or young person was safe while they were staying at the unit.

The children and young people have access to the internet during their stay at the unit. This has security so that inappropriate content cannot be accessed.

The Registered Manager has independently sourced training which has been accessed without charge. This has enabled her to gain knowledge which she has been able to share with the team. This training has covered learning more about

autism and how to manage challenging behaviour. In addition, she, along with the wider staff team, have also used the internet to search and download information relating to protecting children against abuse. Staff are also proactive in gathering information that can be shared with children and young people. For example, during a team meeting they discussed obtaining equipment that allows them to show YouTube videos on the television and tablet. This was so they can share safeguarding information with children and young people so that they can be helped to understand why staff sometimes complete body charts.

The staff at the unit follow an updated policy and procedure in relation to child protection, managing allegations of abuse and allegations against members of staff. There are no allegations recorded since the last inspection.

Staff are subject to the appropriate checks and vetting procedure before they start working at the unit. This ensures that children and young people are looked after by adults who are safe to do so.

The physical environment for children and young people is safe. There are appropriate resources made available to ensure they are kept safe while they are in their rooms, for example, sound monitors, pressure pads and specific types of beds. In addition, the outside space is large and secure. The gardens are surrounded by a fence and the house is set back from the road down a short driveway. There is access to the back garden from the drive which is protected by a large wooden gate.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
<p>The unit is effectively and efficiently managed by a permanent, suitably experienced and qualified Registered Manager. She is supported by assistant managers and a large staff team.</p> <p>The unit is very well staffed by a team who have been working at the unit for a considerable amount of time. This in itself is demonstrative of what a nice place it is to work. The staff team is stable, suitably vetted and qualified. Since the last inspection there have been two new members of staff at the unit. They have already completed the qualification required by regulation.</p> <p>Supervision of staff takes place regularly and is very effective. It focusses on the children and young people within their care and considers not just whether they like being at the unit, but also what has gone well and what they can do to make it</p>	

better. Sometimes staff are able to identify changes required to facilities, such as handrails, and also to further support their progress. One member of staff reported in their supervision record that one young person, 'had a first long stay and that staff had noticed a difference in the young person already, showing more maturity'. The supervisions are a tool for managers to assess whether staff understand the needs of the children in their care. In addition, the supervision time encourages staff to reflect on their practice and decision making. This reflective approach to provision of care is essential to develop staff to their full potential. It also allows them to raise any concerns they have about their ability in a confidential and supportive environment. Supervisions are individual to the person's tasks within the unit. For example, those who work mostly with children and young people focusses on their interaction but includes developmental areas. Those who also have managerial responsibilities also include how well they performance manage. The supervision also accommodates the staff needs in terms of any health and safety issues and how much annual leave they have. Managers then use this to plan the deployment of staff effectively.

The Registered Manager has implemented a system which records the progress and achievements of children and young people. This not only celebrates how well they do, but also demonstrates the significant impact that the staff have on children and young people's lives. The Registered Manager has also implemented a system which records similar information on each person's file. This gives anyone who needs to view their history a good indication of how they have progressed and what they have learnt while they have been at the unit.

All staff work proactively and positively with other agencies and professionals. They build effective relationships with parents and carers and work together to ensure changes to care practice is understood by staff prior to a children or young person's stay at the unit. Staff at the unit use a school diary which allows them to have regular contact with their teachers. This is a two way process and also allows the teachers to engage with the unit and share information about their school day and any health or behaviour concerns that the staff need to be aware of. Staff also visit the school and have supported parents during meetings with schools. Staff also take part in children's reviews about their care. The Registered Manager also attends panel meetings when consideration is being given about children and young people starting to use the service. This enables her to actively feed in to the meeting about the unit's ability to meet their needs and what they can offer.

The Statement of Purpose is kept under review and updated when necessary. There is shortly to be an update due to some staffing changes and to the induction process. The Registered Manager was working on this at the time of inspection.

The Registered Manager ensures that the physical environment is maintained to a high standard, meets the needs of children and young people and is very well resourced. The unit is currently employing an individual to assist with driving the minibus and maintenance of the unit. This allows for a speedy remedy to any faults

at the unit to ensure it remains safe and looks and feels like a family home.

Generally, the recording of children's records is excellent. However, during a review of children and young people's files I found a discrepancy in a recording of medication that had been received in the unit. A count had been made of the number of tablets being received. What should have occurred is that the following day, after medication was administered, a further count should have taken place. This would have identified the error at the first opportunity. Evidence gathered suggests that a further count did not take place but the number of tablets given was deducted from the number recorded. When the medication was counted to be sent home, this was the point that the error was discovered. This error should have been reported to the manager and action taken to reduce the risk of it happening again. Administration of medication was never at risk and so the impact of this error in relation to the care provided was low.

An independent person visits the unit regularly and provides a report. This is a tool for the Registered Manager to have someone outside the unit consider whether children are effectively safeguarded and that the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being. The opinion of the independent person in relation to these two aspects must be set out in the report. When reviewing the independent person's reports I was able to see that it does not contain their opinion. The latest reports prepared by the independent person does ask a question about the standard of care provided and how effectively the home is safeguarding children in their care but this does not meet the requirement in regulation and in addition, the independent person does not answer the question in their report. This reduces the ability of the Registered Manager to use the report as evaluation of the unit and to make improvements.

The Registered Manager is required to complete a review of the quality of care provided at least once every six months. The manager is skilled at gathering information from those that use the service and incorporates an analysis of this in the report. This validates the very high levels of care provided to children and young people and allows the manager to take steps to identify improvements, progress and achievements in a formal way.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place, however, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, 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 who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service 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*.

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