

SC036804

Registered provider: Gateshead Council
Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home provides short breaks for up to six children or young people who have physical disabilities and/or learning disabilities. It is operated by a local authority.

Inspection dates: 30 to 31 January 2018

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **outstanding**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 22 March 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is outstanding because:

- The management and staff teams work closely with parents/carers and other relevant professionals to enable children to benefit from bespoke care plans. As

a result, attention to detail is excellent, ensuring that children progress in all identified areas of their plans.

- The home is maintained to an exceptionally high standard. Specialist equipment needed to meet individual children’s needs is provided. This enables children to enjoy every aspect of their care, while also benefiting from the warm, homely environment.
- The management of the home is focused on providing a stimulating offer of care to children. Relationships with children and their families are highly valued and are unquestionably based on trust and respect.
- The registered manager is dedicated and forward thinking. This commitment ensures that staff are supported in providing the best possible care to children.
- The staff team is committed to ensuring that children’s rights are promoted through gaining children’s views on all aspects of their care whenever an opportunity arises. This determination is responsible for notable improvements in children’s behaviour and self-determination.
- The children are supported to develop new friendships and spend time with established friends through careful matching and staff flexibility. The children spend time together shopping and experiencing a range of activities. Time spent on their own is accommodated, with close supervision from staff. Socially, children thrive within an environment of positivity.
- The staff team is highly skilled in the administration of medication, and the management team ensures that competency checks are carried out to maintain the staff team’s excellent skills.

The children’s home’s areas for development:

- Individual risk assessments and behaviour management plans are in place for each child. These documents are under review, and modifications are being made to improve on specific detail and streamlining information. Work has already started, and the management team needs to ensure that this is completed as soon as possible.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
22/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
29/11/2016	Full	Outstanding
29/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
29/09/2015	Full	Outstanding

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

Recommendations

- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and clear recording. In particular, ensure that dates and times are recorded when, after an incident, a debrief takes place with a child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)
- In addition to the requirements of this standard, the registered person has specific responsibilities under regulation 34 to prepare and implement policies setting out arrangements for the safeguarding of children from abuse or neglect. In particular, the policy on e-safety should be reviewed regularly and revised where appropriate. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 44, paragraph 9.19)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The children have exceptional relationships with staff. They are provided with an individualised level of care that has been formalised in highly efficient and dynamic care plans. The plans are clear and detailed sufficiently to ensure that each child has opportunities to access social activities and to develop peer relationships. This means they enjoy their experiences in a safe, caring environment. The children enjoy going out on community-based activities with staff and peers. There are also vast ranges of DVDs and games in the home. I was informed on my visit that some of the older boys sometimes go off to a local shopping complex to spend their money as the 'lads' group' and girls will go shopping together, as young people do. Careful planning of stays with friends and high staff ratios enable children, on their particular days, to enjoy all the experiences of being young and having fun together. Other children like spending time with individual staff and enjoy long walks, and the children who are less able enjoy supported outings and relaxation time in the home's sensory room. While the focus is on having a good time during the short breaks, there is also an educational element. Guidance is given to children about how to manage themselves in the community and be respectful of their peers in the development of friendships.

A parent said: 'My daughter would not socialise before coming here, she would not mix and now she is a completely different child, more sociable and mixing with other children. I don't recognise her.' Careful planning is in place to enable parents and carers to view the home before their child stays over, which is followed up with a visit with the child. This is all part of the intricate planning to enable children and their families to slowly come to terms with coming to a new place and seeing the property in its entirety and with staff, normally the identified keyworker. It is clear that the staff team value this process and are happy to showcase the home. The front lobby of the home has been

enhanced with a very child-friendly approach to first impressions. In the corner there is a 'fairy door' with a miniature key in a bottle, and a Disney print on the inner door. The manager informed me that the children love the fantasy element. To ensure that all children are provided with key information, the lobby also has the photographs of each member of staff on duty that evening. The children and families who come for the first time also have access to a range of information pertaining to the home, if they so wish, to read or take away. A warm welcome is provided that puts the children first and families at ease, recognising any presenting anxieties. Additionally, all new children and families receive a welcome pack full of essential information.

Children's complex health needs are met by well-trained staff. The staff have received training around complex eating disorders/conditions that has been provided by health professionals. The home benefits from having its own cook, and staff go out of their way to ensure that all children's dietary needs are met. Children have developed variation in their diets and stronger appetites since their stays. A consistent approach, in partnership with families, has enabled children who have more complex needs to come off peg feeding. Diets and activities have had an enormous, positive impact on the health of children. The home acquired an outside pizza oven that has become a particular favourite of the children. The kitchen generates fantastic smells, and the children identify the cook as one of their favourite members of staff. The dining area is spacious with two dining tables, allowing children and staff to dine together, promoting family life. A social worker said: 'They have an amazing cook. She accommodates all diets, very nutritious. The children's relationship with food improves by coming here.'

The home accommodates past and current children and their families at regular seasonal events such as the summer fair and Easter party. Throughout December there was an advent calendar of activities displayed on the wall. This provided an activity for everyone to take part in on every day in December, and included making decorations, wreaths and cards, which the children took home. There were other activities such as Christmas movie nights and trips out to see Fenwick's window, pantomime and Christmas lights. The home also held a Christmas party at a central location with a DJ, karaoke (at the children's request), a Santa's grotto and a visit from the Disney princesses. The party was well attended by children, parents, carers and siblings. Young people who previously used the service also attended with their families. An array of photographs capture the memories of these events so that children can revisit them with the staff and their families. The management and staff teams provide a range of positive experiences, sharing the memories with children and their families, thus enhancing relationships and developing confidence and self-esteem in children.

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

The home is exceptionally effective in the management of risk. The attention to detail when planning children's short breaks contributes to outstanding improvements in behaviours and quality of life. For example, many behaviours associated with anxiety and frustration that are experienced at school and at home are rarely seen to the same level during the children's short stays. The children are provided with space to enjoy their environment, supported by a well-resourced sensory room and living spaces, which

allow children to move freely and enjoy being on their own or with friends. The staff team is skilled in supervision, but not to the detriment of a child's well-being, and maintain observation discreetly, preserving respect for privacy for children who are more able.

The children rarely require physical intervention for negative behaviour, but when required the staff team, which is highly trained in de-escalation techniques, will physically intervene to safeguard children. The manager is forward thinking in her approach to improve the staff team's skills, and an independent training provider has been sourced with the intention of further enhancement of skills and techniques to avoid any harm to children or staff.

The staff team undertakes risk assessments on each child, initially from information provided by relevant persons via the referral process for short breaks. 'All about me' booklets, supported by specific information provided by parents and carers, fully enhance the understanding of behaviours and triggers a child may have. This detail is critical to developing strategies and risk management plans. The management and staff teams review and update these on a regular basis, and therefore use them as 'live' documents that support safe care. Specialist aids and adaptations are maintained by specialist independent agencies on a regular basis. Spaces such as bedrooms and bathrooms specifically incorporate this equipment and are kept meticulously clean. These rooms are kept appealing by staff and support children's intimate care requirements, care that is provided with sensitivity and compassion.

The staff team is vigilant in observing children and their behaviours. Body maps are completed to ensure that any marks are identified and reported as soon as possible through the appropriate safeguarding channels. Comprehensive training around a range of associated safeguarding areas, such as child sexual exploitation and online abuse, ensures that the staff team is highly effective in its care practice knowledge. This further supports overall safe care. Competency checklists are completed routinely, covering areas such as the administration of medication and safeguarding. This frequent and proactive response to safe care provides families with reassurance and trust that their child will be protected by trusted and skilled adults from any harm.

The children are routinely rewarded for positive behaviour and praised for being polite to one another by the staff team. The children's experiences while at the home are highly valued by families, and relationships are unquestionably strong. The rules and boundaries are simple: everyone respects each other and has fun together trying new experiences.

Staffing levels are high, which allows for children to enjoy individual activities in the community or in the house. Matching considerations always take into account an individual's requirements and needs. Meticulous care and attention to detail ensures that each child enjoys a safe time away from their families and carers.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The manager is a dedicated and enthusiastic leader who embraces change and focuses on moving forward during difficult times. Equally, she is supported in maintaining a highly efficient and compassionate team by two able and skilled assistant managers. The manager is a strong advocate for children's rights, and uses every opportunity provided to ensure that forums are facilitated within the home. These are either chaired by the independent children and young people's involvement worker or the children themselves, supported by staff. She is always keen to consider new ways of accessing views, and is considering the use of the local authority's 'Mind of my own (MOMO)' app to help children express themselves either with support or independently. Currently, children use this app with their social workers to participate in their reviews, respecting individual opinion and promoting their rights to be heard. The children were consulted over the redevelopment of the 'skills' room, which currently has a kitchen and television. The children have suggested adding soft furnishings and decorations to make it more appealing to the slightly older children who are able to use the room for independence skills development and relaxation with friends. This participation develops children's confidence and social interaction.

The management and staff teams value greatly the relationships with parents/carers and families. The home benefits from a group of parents that has achieved charitable status and regularly communicates with the manager and the staff. The parents and staff work together, fundraising and raising the profile of the home as a valuable resource in the local authority for families and their children who have additional needs. A social worker informed me that she had been able to arrange a meeting with parents at the home to share their views. This was facilitated by the manager. This embracing of a potentially challenging environment recognises that this manager will endeavour to improve services for children and their families whatever the circumstances.

The staff team is supported to express its views and opinions through formal and informal supervisions. Team meetings are held monthly and cover a vast array of topics, ensuring that each child who has stayed during that month is discussed in detail. Safeguarding is also a standalone agenda point. Staff meeting minutes are comprehensive and enable reflection and opinions to be shared. This is a dedicated and motivated team that is coming to terms with changes in rotas that reflect streamlining of council services, without impacting on the level of care offered to children. A social worker said: 'Staff here do not look at the child's disability in that they do not treat the child any differently to any other; the staff team are so intuitive to each child's needs. They observe and respond to each child's needs.'

The management team has been involved in marketing the provision recently to promote its service and what it can provide. This is a new direction for the home that is forward thinking and ensures that the provision continues to provide outstanding care for children in the region.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and 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 whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: SC036804

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Civic Centre, Regent Street, Gateshead NE8 1HH

Responsible individual: Elaine Devaney

Registered manager: Laura McNeill

Inspector

Michael Dack, social care inspector

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