

# 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.

The registered manager has been registered since 2017.

**Inspection dates:** 4 to 5 December 2018

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

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

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:** 30 January 2018

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>Inspection type</b>	<b>Inspection judgement</b>
30/01/2018	Full	Outstanding
22/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
29/11/2016	Full	Outstanding
29/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

## 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, 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 registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if—  there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(e))	20/12/2018

### Recommendations

- Regulation 5 sets out overarching requirements that run across all of the Quality Standards. To meet the aspirations embodied in the Quality Standards, children’s homes need to connect with and be part of the wider support system for each child in their care. No children’s home will be able to meet, on its own, all of a child’s needs. It is crucial that the home works in close partnership with all those who play a role in protecting and caring for the child, but particularly the child’s local authority and statutory social worker. The registered person and the staff of the home cannot force a relevant person to engage or work productively with them and the regulation does not require this. The registered person should evidence what they have done to achieve engagement, including any actions taken to escalate concerns. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 11, paragraph 2.3)

In particular, the registered person and staff should seek further engagement through the use of escalation policies to receive relevant local authority documentation for children and young people accessing short-break stays in a timely manner.

- Staff must help each child to prepare for any moves from the home, whether they are returning home, moving to another placement or adult care, or to live independently. This includes supporting the child to develop emotional and mental resilience to cope without the home’s support and, where the child is moving to live independently, practical skills such as cooking, housework, budgeting and personal self-care. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 17, paragraph 3.27)

In particular, staff should plan, record and monitor children and young people’s identified targets and goals to develop their independent living skills. This will

enable them to maximise their potential individually and support their transition to adulthood.

- During a short break, 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. Children using short-break provision may have very complex health needs. Staff will need to be appropriately skilled to care for them and understand that safeguards may need to be greater than for other children. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.20)

Specifically, consideration of implementing a final check between shift changes to ensure that all medication requirements have been met in full.

## Inspection judgements

### Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children and young people have exceptional relationships with staff built on trust. The staff strive to gain a clear understanding of each child or young person's personality and their needs. The management and staff place emphasis on working in partnership with parents and significant others to maximise the potential for a positive short-break experience that provides individualised care to each child and young person. Staffing levels are high; in accordance with individual needs and risk assessments, most children and young people are one-to-one, unless higher levels are identified. This helps to ensure that they are safe and improves the quality of their experience.

Detailed and effective handovers between staff prior to children and young people arriving support the preparation for visits. Children and young people are enthusiastically welcomed into the home, as staff meet them from their respective transport provision. The moment they walk through the door, staff engage them warmly and are attentive to their every need. The staff are always mindful of information shared with them about how a child or young person may be feeling on a given day and staff respond accordingly, implementing distraction techniques, as detailed in behaviour support plans. This ensures continuity of care practice from home or school to the short-break service. The result is that children and young people settle quickly and enjoy their stay.

When the children and young people arrive, they gravitate towards areas of personal interest, i.e. the lounge, sensory soft play area or often to see the cook, who plays a very active, positive part in their lives. There is ample space for wheelchair access and there is a lift available to provide additional access to the bedroom areas. Careful and thoughtful planning enables children and young people to spend their short-break stays with friends and as a result, they can enjoy the full experience of having fun together. Their self-esteem, confidence, resilience and emotional well-being are therefore promoted throughout their stay.

The views and opinions of the children and young people and their families are

extremely important to the continued improvement of the service. The manager and staff ensure that daily views are sought. This may be verbally, through questionnaires or through a variety of communication aids, used with children and young people. To improve on outcomes, the manager has directly involved two young people who are members of the children and young people's council in this task, the purpose being to develop and improve on consultation processes to support forums already in place, such as the children and young people's meetings which are held twice weekly.

A parent commented, 'The staff are absolutely fabulous. [Name] is always looking forward to going. The service is second to none, no faults at all. [Name] loves coming... she particularly enjoys having a chance to be with young people of her own age and staff that are younger than us. She is able to go when her friends are there and with [Name] has a real girls' night.'

The children and young people access a range of activities, either in the home or outside in the garden or local community. Further afield, they have enjoyed trips to the Lake District, participating in a boat trip and have visited the Puzzle Place. Children and young people currently and previously staying at the home attended the summer fair and a half-term holiday was celebrated with a 'Harry Potter' theme. Activities included wand and broomstick making, potion making, flying lessons, etc. The home's mini-bus was named the 'Hogwarts Express' during this time. Feedback gained from staff and children on inspection indicated that this created mutual enjoyment, fond memories and positive experiences for all.

Children and young people are consistently supported to develop a level of independence in accordance with their ability. Many of them carry out basic chores such as setting the table, clearing plates, basic cooking tasks and bringing laundry down from their bedrooms, with prompts. These independence skills become part of their daily tasks and are recorded in their records and shared with professionals and parents. However, there is limited use of goal- and target-setting in plans that would enable progress in this area to be monitored and evaluated effectively.

When children and young people come to stay, staff recognise the anxieties that some will feel in being separated from their families, even for a short period of time. To support and to minimise the effect this has, parents and their children have as much telephone contact as they want. Usually, this reduces once the child or young person has settled into their stay.

A parent said, 'The quality of care is excellent. I am very happy, he [the child] has a good time while he is there and appears very settled. I believe it is a great place for him to go. I always get a call before he goes and after, sharing everything that he has done whilst there. They write in home-school diaries. [Name] is his key worker and she always attends meetings that are arranged.'

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

The children and young people are provided with a safe environment by a skilled staff team. The high level of planning that takes place prior to arrival contributes to children and young people feeling safe and secure in a nurturing and supportive home. The staff work with the family and other professionals to provide consistency and to minimise disruption in children and young people's lives.

The staff are supported in their delivery of safe care and emotional well-being by very good 'All about me' care plans. These are well written and involve families, carers, professionals and children and young people in the gathering of important information that is unique to each individual. As a result, behaviour management and personal care are personalised, ensuring that children and young people are protected from harm.

The staff do not use sanctions. Rewards and incentives are given for positive behaviour and staff also innovatively use them in de-escalation and distraction techniques to return children and young people to a calm and controlled state of mind. Incidents that do occur are attributed to anxiety and stress associated with each child's and young person's inability to consistently self-regulate their moods and feelings. The staff use identified strategies, such as offering to play a game or to go for a walk, or just a change of staff working directly with children and young people at the time of stress. Such changes, which are implemented with skill, maintain each child's or young person's safety and emotional well-being.

Children and young people do not experience bullying and high staffing levels and individual support help children and young people to build trusting relationships with each other. These, along with positive relationships with staff, prevent incidents of going missing and exploitation. The use of physical interventions is extremely low and only used as a last resort and for the minimal amount of time required to prevent harm. All staff are trained and skilled in using de-escalation techniques and safe holds.

Children and young people who come for short breaks often have a variety of complex needs that impact on their health. The staff have an open and proactive approach, ensuring that children and young people have good health outcomes. The home has a system in place to ensure the safe handling and administering of medication. However, there has been one incident since last inspection which has resulted in processes being reviewed and improved on. Further steps are being considered to ensure that children and young people are safeguarded.

The staff team considers the safe care of children and young people consistently during appropriate forums such as supervisions and team meetings, where time is prioritised to discuss their overall needs, promoting discussion and analysis to generate best possible outcomes for children and young people.

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

The online safety policy and practice guidance has been reviewed and updated and informed by current research, trends and technology. Staff, following attendance at an online safety conference, have been able to access relevant research information and tools to support children and young people to remain safe while online.

The home is equipped with appropriate aids and adaptations that keep children and young people safe while they are in their rooms and bathing areas, for example sound monitors, pressure pads, changing tables, specific types of safe beds and specialist moving and handling equipment. In addition, the outside space is vast and secure. A high perimeter wall with a large gate and sensory lighting ensure that the outside space is secure and well maintained.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding**

The manager is appropriately qualified and a highly experienced, passionate leader. She embraces change and focuses on ensuring that children and young people receive the best possible service during their short-break stays. She is supported by a dedicated, equally passionate assistant management structure.

Individual staff members are routinely expected to source information, research and resources to improve on a highly efficient short-break provision. One member of staff has undertaken further training in the specific understanding of Jewish culture to be responsive to the needs of the local community. Other staff, including members of the management team, have sourced relevant research information linked to children and young people's medical diagnoses. This information is shared with all staff including the home's excellent cook, who is proactively involved in development of nutritional diets in order to meet specific needs of individual children and young people. The intention is to consistently improve on positive experiences that enable children and young people to flourish and achieve.

The members of the staff team receive regular supervisions and appraisals. The management team is very approachable and helps to inspire a dedicated staff team, whose morale is very positive. One member of staff commented, 'I absolutely love my job. I get so much back from the children and young people. I absolutely love coming to work. The diverse needs of the children ensure that every day is completely different, and I hope everyone feels that way.'

The manager has taken on a supervisory role for all residential care officers (staff). This is to aid consistency across case management and file audits and provide consistent support. It also promotes her knowledge of every child and young person who comes to stay at the home and helps to identify priority areas for action, maintaining a 'tight ship'.

The strength of the manager shines through in her desire to develop the living environment for the children and young people and the home's future. She consistently sources new equipment and opportunities for learning and adapting what is already in place, for example working with occupational therapists and suppliers to explore 'safe

space' beds and equipment to provide individualised support for a child. The home is now part of the local authorities commissioning framework, enabling other children and young people in need of short breaks to access the home across the North East, some of whom have already spent time enjoying what the service has to offer.

Monitoring and audit processes have been improved. The manager has introduced a recording system on children and young people's 'All about me' files. This is to identify current updates and highlight delays in accessing paperwork from respective social workers. The manager has used the escalation policy to request documentation that has been delayed and ensured that this has gone through appropriate leadership channels. This has not affected the level of care provided but could leave children and young people's plans less effective.

The quality of professional relationships with health, education and families is exceptional. Communication is at the centre of excellent working together practices. This helps to ensure that each child and young person receives the best possible care experience.

The manager promotes an excellent safeguarding culture in the home and serious safeguarding incidents are notified to HMCI. However, the most recent incident was not immediately notified as it had not been fully concluded. Nevertheless, a notification should have been sent. This has since been rectified.

## **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, Tyne and Wear  
NE8 1HH

**Responsible individual:** Elaine Devaney

**Registered manager:** Laura McNeill

## Inspector

Michael Dack, social care inspector

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