

# SC036804

Registered provider: Gateshead Local Authority

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

The home is owned and managed by the local authority. It may provide care and accommodation for up to six children under short-break arrangements. It may provide care and accommodation for children with learning disabilities, and physical disabilities.

The manager registered with Ofsted in January 2017.

Inspectors observed and interacted with the three children who were staying at the home during the inspection.

### Inspection dates: 4 and 5 January 2023

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account** requires improvement to be good

How well children and young people are helped and protected requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers requires improvement to be good

The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

**Date of last inspection:** 13 July 2021

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
13/07/2021	Full	Good
03/12/2019	Full	Outstanding
04/12/2018	Full	Outstanding
30/01/2018	Full	Outstanding

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good**

The home is equipped with resources to provide the children with education and stimulation. However, the manager does not always consult with health professionals prior to purchasing equipment. This oversight may have contributed to one child, who is unable to communicate verbally, sustaining an unexplained bruise during their stay. The manager subsequently worked with all safeguarding agencies to ensure that this was investigated correctly.

The children are not consistently supported to seek independent advocacy and support to ensure that their wishes and feelings are listened to and understood. Consequently, one child has now declined to attend the service they once enjoyed.

Children have a say about how their home is managed and their suggestions are acted on. Children are regularly consulted through the use of feedback forms, and they are supported to attend the children's council meetings. This allows the children to make suggestions for improvements, such as the home having a greater focus on learning independence skills.

Children's introductions to the home are individual to the needs of each child. Most parents and carers say that they feel well supported during this process and communication has now improved. Where possible, the manager matches the children's stays with other children that they know. This provides the children with unique opportunities to spend time with their friends. Children are equally well supported when they leave the service. They are provided with memory books and photos that capture their special moments from their time spent in the home.

The home benefits significantly from a charitable organisation consisting of parents and carers, in which the manager plays a significant role. Their fundraising activities have provided the home with a minibus to enable the children to enjoy activities out of the home.

Staff are committed to treating the children with dignity and respect. Children present as happy in the home and respond positively towards staff.

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good**

Staff do not consistently follow the organisation's safeguarding procedures. One staff member noted on a body map that a child sustained a bruise during their stay. However, this was not documented elsewhere to offer any explanation or timescale of the injury. It was also not shared with a senior staff member, the child's social worker or the child's parent. This prevented the manager from assessing if further safeguarding processes were required to keep the child safe.

Since this incident, staff have followed appropriately the organisation's safeguarding procedures on two separate occasions. The manager and staff have consulted with external professionals to improve the safety planning for the children. However, poor record-keeping by the staff hinders the manager's ability to be assured that all the steps have been taken to safeguard the children.

Children's risk assessments are detailed and personalised. These are updated regularly based on the staff's knowledge of each child. However, there is no process in place to assure the managers that all of the staff are familiar with the child's most up-to-date risk assessment. Furthermore, when these assessments are updated, professionals and those with parental responsibility are not consistently consulted. This prevents the manager from being assured that the staff have, and then follow, the child's most up-to-date plans.

Consent forms are not consistently sought or maintained. Some children's files do not contain signed consent forms. Therefore, the staff have not been provided with the legal powers to provide the children with homely and prescribed medication, to use surveillance and monitoring equipment, and to seek emergency medical treatment for the children. Opportunities to obtain the consent for these areas have been missed when those with parental responsibility visit the home. This oversight may hinder the staff from being able to legally seek any additional healthcare that a child may require in an emergency.

One child's historical risk assessment, care plan and signed consent forms have been shredded. This means that the child and the home do not have an accurate record of the documents created and used during the child's time spent in the home.

Some children's records are poor. Documents are not consistently completed, signed and dated, and some staff signatures are illegible. This is particularly evident on the children's body maps, which do not provide an explanation of how injuries may have been sustained or how concerns have been reported. This prevents the manager from being assured that the staff have completed their duties in a timely manner.

Physical restraints have not been used in the home, which is a testament to the staff's relationship with, and understanding of, the children and their needs. However, the home's statement of purpose does not set out how the staff are trained in the use of physical restraint, should this be required. This prevents individuals from being assured that staff are suitably trained to use this method of behaviour management.

Rewards are frequently given to recognise the children's achievements, such as when a child helps to make the evening meal. This helps the children to make progress and meet their targets.

Staff follow the home's medication procedure well. Medication trays are clearly labelled, and children are given medication as prescribed.

## **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good**

The manager's monitoring and review processes are ineffective. While the manager's auditing processes have identified some of the shortfalls, she has failed to take effective action to resolve these areas quickly. Furthermore, the manager's oversight of important documents such as the children's body maps is poor. This has resulted in the manager failing to identify an unexplained bruise, and from being assured that the child was safe.

The manager does not use the organisation's escalation process effectively. Consequently, children's records are not up to date, as they do not include all their essential care planning documents. This prevents the staff from having access to the most up-to-date health and care plans for the children.

There have been significant delays in the manager submitting important documents to Ofsted. This includes the notification of one serious incident, the most recent statement of purpose, and the three most recent reviews of the quality of the service. This has prevented Ofsted from having effective oversight of the service. In addition, the statement of purpose does not contain all of the necessary information required, which may prevent individuals from being able to complain or access the home's child protection policy.

Internal and external monitoring systems are ineffective at supporting the manager to improve the quality of care for children. Although internal audits and external reviews by an independent visitor are regularly completed, these have not identified the shortfalls identified during this inspection.

The manager is well supported by suitably experienced and qualified staff, which includes two deputy managers. This means that children receive consistent care. The manager has identified the need to develop staff relationships, which has been improved through a team development day. Staff receive training and regular reflective supervision sessions to ensure that they have the necessary knowledge and skills to provide the level of care that the children require. Staff say they feel well supported by the management team.

## 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
<p>In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff—</p> <p>seek to involve each child’s placing authority effectively in the child’s care, in accordance with the child’s relevant plans;</p> <p>if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority’s or a relevant person’s performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child’s needs are met in accordance with the child’s relevant plans. (Regulation 5 (a)(c))</p> <p>In particular, the registered person must ensure that they seek the views of the child’s social worker in a timely manner when updating the children’s risk assessments.</p> <p>The registered person must ensure that the manager and staff follow the organisation’s policy and escalate their requests for information when this has not been provided in a timely manner.</p>	<p>1 March 2023</p>
<p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person;</p> <p>are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home’s child protection policies;</p>	<p>1 March 2023</p>

<p>that the effectiveness of the home’s child protection policies is monitored regularly. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(v)(vii)(e))</p> <p>In particular, the registered person must ensure that they report any unexplained injuries which they observe a child to have sustained while staying in the home, in line with the organisation’s child protection policy.</p> <p>The registered person must review the effectiveness of the staff following safeguarding procedures. The registered person must also ensure that staff record that they have followed the organisation’s safeguarding procedures, in line with the organisation’s policy.</p>	
<p>The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children’s home that—</p> <p>helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and</p> <p>promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(h))</p> <p>In particular, the registered person must ensure that they have an effective monitoring and review system in place, so that they can be assured that the staff are following the organisation’s safeguarding procedures, and documenting their actions appropriately.</p> <p>The registered person must ensure that there are effective systems in place to ensure that the children’s case files contain the relevant information necessary to support the staff to care for the children during their stays.</p> <p>The registered person must ensure that the statement of purpose contains all of the necessary information to enable individuals to access the complaints and child protection procedures, ensure that it reflects how the staff are trained in restraint, and that this is sent to Ofsted within 28 days of it being prepared.</p>	<p>1 March 2023</p>

<p>The registered person must ensure that reviews of the home are completed at least every six months and sent to Ofsted within 28 days of completion.</p>	
<p>The registered person must maintain records (“case records”) for each child which—</p> <p>include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child;</p> <p>are kept up to date; and</p> <p>are signed and dated by the author of each entry.</p> <p>Case records must be kept—</p> <p>if the child dies before attaining the age of 18, for 15 years from the date of the child’s death;</p> <p>in cases not falling within sub-paragraph (a), for 75 years from the child’s date of birth;</p> <p>securely in the children’s home during the period when the child to whom the case records relate is accommodated there; and</p> <p>in a secure place after the child has ceased to be accommodated in the home. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(b)(c)(d))</p> <p>In particular, the registered person must ensure that children’s records are not destroyed in line with Regulation 36 (2)(a)(b)(c)(d).</p> <p>The registered person must ensure that the children’s case files contain the most recent minutes from child in need reviews, the child’s most recent child in need care plan, and the most recent looked after child medical report.</p> <p>The registered person must ensure that signed consent is received from those with parental responsibility for children staying in the home, to allow the staff to administer homely medication to a child and to allow the staff to administer prescribed medication to a child.</p> <p>The registered person must ensure that they have received signed delegated authority for each child staying in the home, from the person with parental responsibility, so that</p>	<p>1 March 2023</p>



<p>the staff can access help for a child in the event of an emergency.</p> <p>The registered person must ensure that signed consent is received from those with parental responsibility for children staying in the home, whose children are subject to monitoring and surveillance techniques for the purposes of safeguarding, such as door alarms.</p> <p>The registered person must ensure that all records are legibly signed and dated, in particular body maps.</p>	
<p>The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if—</p> <p>there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(e))</p> <p>In particular, the registered person must ensure that Ofsted is notified of serious events without delay.</p>	1 March 2023
<p>The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children’s home at least once each month.</p> <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>children are effectively safeguarded; and</p> <p>the conduct of the home promotes children’s well-being.</p> <p>The independent person’s report may recommend actions that the registered person may take in relation to the home and timescales within which the registered person must consider whether or not to take those actions. (Regulation 44 (1) (4)(a)(b) (5))</p>	1 March 2023

## **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:** SC036804

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** Gateshead Local Authority

**Registered provider address:** Adults, Children and Families, Gateshead Council,  
Group Secretariat, 1st Floor, Regent Street, Gateshead NE8 1HH

**Responsible individual:** Andrea Houlahan

**Registered manager:** Laura McNeill

## Inspectors

Julia Hagan, Social Care Inspector  
Honor Hamshaw, Social Care Inspector

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