

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 operated and managed by a local authority. The home provides short-break care for up to six children with learning disabilities and physical disabilities.

The manager registered with Ofsted in January 2017.

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

Inspection dates: 30 and 31 May 2023

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers good

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 4 January 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
04/01/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
13/07/2021	Full	Good
03/12/2019	Full	Outstanding
04/12/2018	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The home is well equipped with resources to support the children's needs. The home has benefited from some areas being recently decorated. Children's bedrooms are bright and cheerful. The manager has sought the input of the children to improve the playroom. This helps to give children a sense of belonging. Parents and carers and professionals describe the service as a 'home from home' for children who stay there.

The manager plans the stays for the children well. She considers the compatibility of the children's individual needs as well as the children's friendship groups. The manager creates opportunities for situations similar to 'sleepovers', which the children may not otherwise experience. This helps the children to develop and maintain friendships outside of their home and school environment.

The staff know the children well. As a result, staff confidently meet the children's complex needs. One child's social worker said: '[Name of home]'s strength is the staff's depth of knowledge and understanding of the children's needs.' This was echoed by the children's parents.

The staff help the children to make progress with their development. However, the manager and staff fail to record important information consistently in the children's care plans and progress trackers. This includes targets that are set by external professionals, such as in the child's education, health and care (EHC) plan. This shortfall limits the staff's ability to help children to make progress in the areas that they need help with.

Children have regular meetings to discuss their views. However, the staff fail to inform the manager of these requests, such as one child wanting to go to a local football club, or another wanting to have a pool table at the home. The children are therefore left without being given any feedback about their request. This does not help children to feel listened to.

Children who visit the home are offered activities such as going to the local park, going to the beach or visiting a farm. However, the staff do not support the children to try out new opportunities or experiences during their stay at the home.

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

The staff have a good knowledge of the home's safeguarding processes. One staff member said that they now have a greater understanding about their own role, and the role of others. This is as a result of the additional measures that the manager has put in place.

When errors or unexpected incidents occur, such as with medication, the manager and staff work to identify shortfalls in their practice. Additionally, there is external scrutiny through the involvement of professionals. This helps to improve staff's practice in respect of children's safety.

Children's health needs are managed well. Intimate care is provided sensitively by the staff. The manager uses a monitoring system to review and update children's healthcare needs before each stay. Staff are creative when producing children's healthcare plans. They use photos to detail the children's individual healthcare arrangements. This helps to make sure that staff know how to safely care for the children.

Children have individualised behaviour support plans. These help the staff to be responsive to early warning signs that a child is becoming distressed. As a result, staff appropriately support children's emotional well-being during their stay. However, care plans do not consistently reflect all of the children's known needs, such as their preferred communication methods. This impacts on how the children can actively participate in day-to-day decisions and results in inconsistent care being provided.

Not all the children have EHC plans which outline whether low-level holds such as guides are routinely needed to keep the children safe. The staff record incidents that involve the children, but fail to consistently identify and record when a low-level hold or guide has been used. This means that the manager and staff do not evaluate the appropriateness, effectiveness and safety of such holds. Additionally, the manager does not gain the children's views about the use of the restraint.

Staff use surveillance devices, such as visual and mattress monitors, to check children's physical well-being during the night. However, the manager has not consistently sought consent from those with parental responsibility for these monitoring devices to be used.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager is committed to making sure that staff provide the children with individualised care during their stay. She has made connections with similar providers in the region to help her to develop safer practices in the home.

The manager has made some improvements to the monitoring and auditing systems. The deputy managers now audit the children's records. This provides the manager with a greater oversight of the quality of care that children receive.

The staff team has made progress in their recording of incidents involving the children. However, there continue to be some shortfalls in the recording in children's records. This is due to the managers needing to cover for staff shortages, which has been to the detriment of management oversight in this area. Staff do not always sign and date children's documents. This prevents the manager from being assured that staff are completing tasks in a timely manner, that staff have read and

understood documents, and that staff are aware that documents have been revised, such as children's risk assessments.

The staff team uses some stigmatising language in children's documents. For example, records categorise children as 'violent' when they are distressed, and children's consultation forms refer to children as 'service-users'. This is not child-friendly language.

Staff have regular supervision sessions. However, the quality of these supervision sessions is not consistent for all staff. For example, care assistants do not receive reflective supervision to the same standard as the residential childcare officers. As a result, the manager misses opportunities to develop the whole staff 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>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>understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home;</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)(f)(h))</p> <p>In particular, the registered provider must ensure that staff record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way. Case records should also be kept up to date and signed and dated by the author of each entry.</p>	<p>2 August 2023</p>

Recommendations

- The registered person must gain consent to the use of any monitoring or surveillance by the placing authority, or person with parental responsibility, in writing at the time of placement. (‘Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards’, page 16, paragraph 3.16)
- The registered person should ensure that restrictions of liberty of movement are recorded as restraint. (‘Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards’, page 47, paragraph 9.42)
- The registered manager should ensure that children are offered a wide range of activities outside of the home and are encouraged to participate in those activities. In particular, children should be supported to enjoy a greater variety of

experiences that may not ordinarily be available to them. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 31, paragraph 6.5)

- The registered person should ensure that the children are able to see the results of their views being listened to and acted upon. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.11)

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: Claire Morris

Registered manager: Laura McNeill

Inspectors

Julia Hagan, Social Care Inspector

Beth Forster, Social Care Inspector

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