

# 1268334

Registered provider: South Tyneside Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

This home is owned and managed by a local authority. It provides short-break services for up to four children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The home currently supports 41 children.

At the time of inspection, three children were using the service.

The manager registered with Ofsted in November 2023.

### Inspection dates: 27 and 28 November 2024

**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:** 3 January 2024

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
03/01/2024	Full	Good
03/05/2022	Full	Good
16/07/2019	Full	Good
06/11/2018	Full	Good

## Inspection judgements

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

Children are exceptionally well cared for by a dedicated and highly skilled team of staff. Their excellent knowledge of the children's individual needs, risks and vulnerabilities helps children to make significant and sustained progress from their starting points.

Staff's practice is child-centred and aspirational for children. The home is specially adapted to support each child's preferred method of communication. This approach helps children to develop and broaden their verbal and non-verbal vocabulary. As a result, some children have made considerable progress. For example, one child now communicates better with both family and other professionals, making a significant difference to all areas of their life and their ability to make their opinions heard.

The children's voices influence the care they experience at this short-break service. A good example of this is the sensory garden development. Children chose their favourite design from the options available. Once built, there was a formal opening to the new area. Children and families were invited so that they could enjoy the celebration together, helping children to see the influence their voice has.

Staff are heavily invested in all areas of children's lives, helping children reach their potential. They have a positive influence on the children's learning journeys both in and outside of the home. They attend all professional and school meetings to have the most up-to-date information about the children's needs and share the children's progress. Furthermore, staff work collaboratively with education professionals to regularly share their practice. This ensures that staff are flexible and responsive to the children's changing needs.

Staff provide children with a wide range of positive life experiences to make friends and enjoy fun activities. Staff are skilled in using the resources in the home and wider community to create these opportunities, some of which would not be possible for children at home with their families. Examples include supporting children to learn how to use public transport, increasing their independence skills and being involved in everyday experiences. For some children, this is exceptional.

Relationships with families are excellent, and some parents have described the short-break service as a 'home from home'. Staff go above and beyond to provide support to families when needed. One parent described staff going to get medicine for them when they were ill at home and unable to go to the pharmacy. The parent said, 'There was no one else we could ask.' This helped the family in a time of great difficulty.

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

Children who come for short breaks have complex needs; some have health conditions or diagnoses that need special care. Skilled staff ensure that all their needs are met.

They advocate on behalf of children to ensure that they receive specialist services to support their physical health and emotional well-being. Staff are attuned to the children's presentation and use curiosity when behaviours are out of character. Staff see this as children communicating that they are in pain or unwell. This ensures that children receive appropriate and proportionate help.

Children are not defined by their behaviour and the challenges that they might face. Incidents are called 'blips' and are exceedingly rare. Staff understand each child's individual support plans and how best to help children be calm. They strongly advocate that children's behaviour is their communication and adults need to understand what is being said. This ensures that the children remain at the centre of everyone's focus.

Staff help children manage their feelings in a highly effective and positive way whether they are happy, sad or frustrated. As a result, staff have not had to intervene with physical holds or guides. A member of staff was clear that it is unnecessary to guide a child when talking and redirecting helps in a better way.

Medication is well organised. Staff link in with parents and carers, ensuring that each child has the right medication, and it is given as it would be at their home. This provides consistency for the children. Children can refuse their medication, preserving their right to choose. If this happens, advice is sought from a medical professional and followed. Accurate records prevent these events becoming a concern.

Complaints and allegations are taken seriously. The manager ensures that the internal processes are followed. Investigations are completed involving the local authority designated officer and human resources when necessary. Complaints are resolved at the earliest opportunity. Any issues around allegations are appropriately managed, ensuring the children remain safe and well cared for.

There has been one safeguarding incident where a bruise was seen on a child. It was not known how this happened. Appropriate action was taken, and the information was sent to the social worker via the local authority children's services electronic information system. However, the follow-up telephone call was not done in a timely fashion, slightly delaying the action taken by the social work team.

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

The manager is highly motivated and committed to ensuring that children have the care, support and attention they deserve. She leads by example. Her child-centred ethos filters throughout the team. The manager knows the children exceptionally well. She consistently finds the time to maintain her trusting relationships with the children and inspire the team to continually make progress.

Admissions into home are well thought out and planned. This allows children to settle and get used to their surroundings. This was particularly important for one child who had never slept overnight away from their family or in another bed. Due to the extra level of

attention and care, this child settled exceptionally well, is having regular overnight stays and enjoying experiences they would otherwise not have had.

The leadership team is highly creative and has developed several areas of the practice in the home. Its innovation around communication is a standout feature and worthy of being shared. The manager has worked with professionals to create new communication packs for each child. Children use their preferred symbols, in and outside of the home, to tell staff, family members and relevant others what they want. Also, staff have created a new board in a shared space that empowers children to tell staff how they feel, if anything is wrong or simply what they want for tea. This has increased the opportunities for non-verbal children, ensuring that their voice is heard frequently during their stay.

Staff are completely invested in the home's approach to care. They help children to build resilience, enjoy learning and feel valued. They take immense pride in the children's progress and achievements and treat each child with positive regard. The smallest achievements are celebrated with every child for every stay, with lots of praise being given. One staff member said, 'I love working here; I love the children.'

There is excellent support for the staff team. This starts with a wide variety of training that gives staff the skills and knowledge to meet the children's complex needs. Reflective practice is actively encouraged through team meetings and supervision. The focus is the children, ensuring that learning opportunities are capitalised on and not missed. For example, the whole team worked on identifying words that would be helpful to the children so that written documents would be more accessible.

The manager and staff work collaboratively with children's services, schools and other professionals around the children. Other professionals often visit the short-breaks service to see what is being provided for the children and how they are being cared for during their stays. Staff create an environment that is nurturing, inspirational and full of positivity, allowing children to be who they are and celebrating their differences.

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

### **Recommendations**

- The registered person should seek to involve, without delay, the local authority and other relevant persons whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare. ('Guide to the Children's Home Regulations, including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.4)

### **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:** 1268334

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

**Registered provider:** South Tyneside Council

**Registered provider address:** Town Hall, Westoe Road, South Shields NE33 2RL

**Responsible individual:** Darren Bird

**Registered manager:** Lora Charlton

## Inspector

Miriam Dolman, Social Care Inspector

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