

1183826

Registered provider: Sunderland Care and Support Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is registered to provide care for up to seven children under short-break arrangements and one named child for an extended period.

There is one child currently living in the home. Two children were on short-break stays during the inspection. The inspector was able to observe interactions with all three children.

The manager registered with Ofsted in October 2018.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 February 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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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: 3 September 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
03/09/2019	Full	Good
27/11/2018	Full	Good
10/10/2017	Full	Good
23/09/2016	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

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

Children are settled in the home, but the progress that they make is variable. While some children make good progress, the progress of others is less clear. At the last inspection, an inconsistent approach to the setting of targets was identified. This shortfall remains. Not all children have targets in place and for those that do, some do not clearly identify how the staff will support the children to achieve these. This means that the children are not consistently helped to progress and achieve their targets during their short-break stays.

Some children and their families have experienced disruption to their routines as the children have been unable to stay. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the staffing levels when the staff have needed to self-isolate. Children have been affected by this as some short-break stays have been cancelled, and others have experienced significant delays in their transition plans. The registered manager and senior leaders acknowledge this and there is a plan in place to address this.

The home is welcoming and is furnished and decorated to a good standard. There are photos and canvases of the children displayed throughout the home. Colourful noticeboards highlight the activities that the children have participated in with the staff. While the home provides the children with a sense of belonging, there are some maintenance tasks that need to be undertaken in the home, including repairs to two of the damaged ceilings, which would allow these bedrooms to be used again, and work on the overgrown vegetable garden.

The registered manager and her staff are not proactive in challenging organisations that have not provided the required documents, such as personal education plans, education, health and care plans and 'cared for review' documents, or have not provided the most up-to-date records. This means that the staff do not have the most recent information about the children to ensure that they can provide care to the children in line with their up-to-date plans.

Children attend school and make good progress. The staff communicate well with the children's schools when they are receiving their short break, to ensure that any relevant information about the child is passed on. One education professional described the communication from the home as being 'excellent' and said that this assists the school in planning for the children when they arrive. This approach to working collaboratively supports the children with their continued educational progression.

The registered manager ensures that the children's introductions to the home are carefully and sensitively planned in partnership with their parents and health and education professionals. The introductions consider each child's individual needs as well as friendship groups. Prior to each visit, the staff contact the child's parents to ensure that there have been no changes to the child's routine or medication. Reports

are produced after each child's stay that include photos and information about their visit. The attention to detail in planning introductions and getting to know each child's specific needs ensures that the children have a happy and settled stay.

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

Parents say that their children are safe and are cared for well by staff who understand their children's complex needs. This is a view shared by key professionals in the children's lives. Staff understand the triggers for the children's behaviours and are able to de-escalate situations effectively, resulting in minimal physical interventions being used in the home. This means that the staff are able to use the positive relationships that they develop with the children to keep the children safe.

The registered manager completes an impact risk assessment prior to the children coming for their first short-break stay. The presenting needs of the children are clearly highlighted. However, the registered manager has failed to assess the potential impact of the risks on either the child coming into the home or on the children already enjoying their short breaks. The manager has also failed to make it clear whether she feels that the home would meet the child's needs and therefore whether she is offering short-break stays or not. This shortfall means that the staff are not provided with the information to help them to understand the children's needs or the potential risks that the children face.

Children's risk assessments do not always contain all the current risks for the children. This means that the staff do not always have up to-date information about the children in their care. On one occasion, the staff needed to perform a restraint on a child which could have been avoided if they had read the child's risk assessment. This means that the staff do not have a clear understanding of all the risks, which potentially places the children at risk.

Recording of restraints is poor. There is a lack of consistency in debriefs being undertaken with the staff and the children. When they do take place, the timescale for this is not clear as records are not signed and dated, and there is a lack of robust analysis in the management oversight of the documents. This means that there is insufficient scrutiny by the registered manager of the staff's practice, which exposes the children to the potential risk of harm.

The inspector's review of safeguarding records shows that there is one serious incident that has not been notified to the regulator. This failure means that Ofsted is unable to scrutinise information to ensure that children are kept safe.

Safer recruitment processes are followed when staff are appointed. This provides assurance that they are suitably vetted to provide care.

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

The registered manager is suitably qualified and experienced, but she is failing to provide effective leadership. The structure of the organisation is unusual in that the home is the only children's service within an adult services provision. As such, there are currently no arrangements in place for the registered manager to be offered supervision or guidance by a line manager with the necessary knowledge and experience of children's services and children's homes regulations.

There has been a significant turnover of staff, and the manager continues to experience difficulties in recruitment. The manager and her two deputy managers cover shifts regularly to ensure that a safe level of care is provided to the children. This is affecting the management of the home.

The manager has failed to ensure that there are effective and consistent internal auditing processes in place to monitor the performance of the staff and how the home functions. The lack of management oversight means that the manager has been unable to identify shortfalls in the quality of care provided, and to understand the impact that this has on the children's progress.

The children's guide is not up to date and does not include information on how the children or their parents can contact the Office of the Children's Commissioner. This shortfall means that the children and their families do not have all the necessary information about the external agencies that can be used to support them when the children arrive at the home.

The statement of purpose is not up to date. Both the staffing structure and the qualifications of the staff are not correct. This shortfall means that when reviewing the document, it is not clear who is caring for the children and whether they have the appropriate skills, experience and qualifications.

The quality of supervision that is provided to the staff by the registered manager and her two deputy managers varies considerably. Some supervision sessions follow the organisation's agreed agenda; however, others do not. There is also no opportunity for reflection on practice within the supervision sessions. This means that the staff are not offered a consistent approach to their supervision, and they are not given the opportunity to develop their practice by reflecting on their experiences of caring for the children.

Training records are kept up to date and identify when training needs to be renewed. However, not all the staff have received the organisation's mandatory training and training specific to the individual needs of the children, in particular supporting children who have epilepsy and children with learning difficulties and disabilities. This means that not all the staff are appropriately trained to care for the children that use the service.

Previously identified shortfalls with regard to record-keeping continue. The inspector identified a lack of attention to detail identified in many of the children's records. A

key information sheet contains incorrect details about a child, children's plans have not been updated and documents, including an epilepsy care plan and pre-assessment document, have not been signed or dated. The inspector identified examples of children's records including unhelpful language that is not child-friendly. In addition, accident records have been added to after the record has been signed off. This means that the children's records are not helpful for them to read and understand their experiences and progress, as some of the records are not credible and others do not accurately reflect their current needs.

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 protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(v)(vii)) This specifically relates to impact risk assessments, risk assessments and pre-assessment documents.	9 March 2022
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose; ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate;	9 March 2022

ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child; demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— research and developments in relation to the ways in which the needs of children are best met; and feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received; and use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(d)(e)(g)(i)(ii)(h))	
The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ("the statement of purpose") which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1. The registered person must— keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16 (1) (3)(a)(b))	9 March 2022
The registered person must prepare and implement a policy ("the behaviour management policy") which sets out— how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the children's home; and the measures of control, discipline and restraint which may be used in relation to children in the home. The registered person must keep the behaviour management policy under review and, where appropriate, revise it. The registered person must ensure that— within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")—	9 March 2022

has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (1)(a)(b) (2) (3)(b)(i)(ii)(c)) This specifically relates to restraint records.	
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation; an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious; there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; a child protection enquiry involving a child — is instigated; or concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry); or there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(a)(b)(c)(d)(i)(ii)(e))	9 March 2022

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that where the placing authority or another relevant person does not provide the input and services needed to meet a child's needs during their time in the home, the home must challenge them to meet the child's needs. Staff should act as champions for their children, expecting nothing less than a good parent would. In particular, the registered provider should ensure that they have all the required children's documentation. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 12, paragraph 2.8)
- The registered person should ensure that the home is maintained to a good standard. This specifically relates to the repair work to the damaged ceilings in the bedrooms and the upkeep of the garden. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 15, paragraph 3.9)

- The registered person should ensure that the children's guide helps children to understand how to contact the Office of the Children's Commissioner. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 24, paragraph 4.22)
- The registered person should ensure that the staff's training records are kept up to date and the staff receive training specific to the individual needs of the children. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 53, paragraph 10.8)
- The registered person should ensure that there are systems in place so that all staff, including the manager, receive regular supervision so that they can reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 61, paragraph 13.2)
- The registered person should ensure that all of the children's case records are kept up to date and signed and dated by the author of each entry. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 62, paragraph 14.3)
- The registered person should ensure that the staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 62, paragraph 14.4)

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: 1183826

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Sunderland Care and Support Limited

Registered provider address: Civic Centre, Burdon Road, Sunderland, Tyne & Wear SR2 7DN

Responsible individual: Graham King

Registered manager: Emma Charlton

Inspector

Paula Shepherd, Social Care Inspector

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