

1268334

Registered provider: South Tyneside Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

A local authority operates and manages this home. The home provides care for up to four children with learning disabilities. There are 41 children accessing the service, three of whom were having a short-break stay at the time of the inspection.

The home and the manager registered with Ofsted when it opened in 2017.

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.

The home was closed for extended periods between March 2020 and March 2021. The provider offered an outreach service to children and their families.

The home was closed again between June 2021 and January 2022 for a full refurbishment. During this time, no children accessed overnight stays. The provider regularly informed Ofsted of the progress of the refurbishment and the date for reopening. Ofsted visited the premises prior to the service commencing overnight care of children.

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 May 2022

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: 16 July 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
16/07/2019	Full	Good
06/11/2018	Full	Good
06/09/2018	Full	Inadequate

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children benefit from accessing the service and they really enjoy their stays.

Careful planning means that children's introductions are carried out at their pace and in accordance with their families' wishes. When possible, children are matched with their friends or other children who share similar interests. This makes the children's stays more enjoyable and helps the children to socialise and develop friendships.

Children are supported to relax and feel comfortable in the home. The staff plan and think of ways to help the child to settle when they arrive, such as preparing an activity and playing their favourite music. Inspectors observed the staff warmly welcoming the children after their busy day at school. The children were seen laughing and interacting. One child leisurely kicked off their shoes, lay on the sofa and listened to music, eventually drifting off for a nap, while the others enjoyed crafts.

Children are treated with dignity and respect. The staff promote children's rights and personalise their care throughout their stay. Information and choice feature at every opportunity. For example, children choose which bedroom they wish to use, their favourite foods, preferred activities and how they participate and contribute. This helps the children to feel good about themselves and promotes their self-esteem.

The recent refurbishment has transformed the overall appearance of the property. The home has a good range of specialist equipment so that children with complex physical and learning disabilities can experience new challenges and opportunities, which include access to a state-of-the-art sensory room and the interactive floor projection system.

Good partnership working with children's families means that they are fully involved in planning their child's care. Staff regularly consult parents at each stage of the process and provide them with information after each stay, including photos to show the child's experience and the fun that they have had. Parents speak highly of the care that their children receive. One parent said: 'The service is vital to parents and families like mine. Each and every member of the staff is phenomenal.'

The quality of the children's care plans has been improved. Child-centred case records clearly show the children's progress and their achievements, for example improved communication and increased confidence. The staff write to the child, using sensitive language and warm sentiments; for example: 'You are doing great with your independence, I am super proud of you.' A parent said that this approach to reports is 'really good', and their child 'loves looking at the pictures' and reflecting on their stay.

During the COVID-19 restrictions, overnight stays were suspended at the home. However, the provider adapted the service and offered outreach support to children and their families, including one-to-one activity sessions for children in the home. This helped families and children to continue receiving some support and reduce social isolation.

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

The staff are in tune with the children's methods of communication. The staff spend time getting to know each child, their likes, dislikes and their interests. This means that the staff recognise and respond to the children's communication, including signs that children may be unsettled or uncomfortable. This helps the children to build trusting relationships with the staff.

Physical intervention is rare. The staff use de-escalation techniques to manage children's behaviour. When an incident occurs, the staff complete a written record, which is also reviewed by the manager. However, one record was not thorough, and some information was missing. The absence of this information affects the manager's scrutiny and assurance that the restraint was proportionate and necessary.

Risks to children are well managed. The format of risk assessments has changed to have a greater focus on children's individual risks and vulnerabilities. Staff understand the risks to children, they monitor the children's welfare and know how to report any concerns. The staff complete a report after each child's stay. However, when a child is on a child protection plan, the staff do not make specific reference to the plan, or how they have worked to meet the plan's objectives.

Children receive support to use specialist equipment and take prescribed medication. The staff receive training to ensure that the children's medication is administered correctly. However, staff do not consistently follow the provider's medication procedure. Inspectors found that some records were incomplete, and in one example, a staff member administered medication without a second person present, which is against the provider's policy. This was brought to the manager's attention, and she commenced an investigation immediately.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager is experienced and focused on improving the service that children receive. She is well supported by two experienced deputy managers and together they manage the service very well.

The staff team is stable and suitably trained. When there are gaps in the rota, relief staff, the manager or deputy managers provide cover. Decisions about which staff provide cover are based on the children's individual needs and what is best for them. This helps provide the children with continuity of care.

The staff feel well supported and are positive about their work. One staff member said: 'I absolutely love working within the service and I work with a very motivated and positive team.' Staff receive regular practice-related supervision, which includes discussions about the children's progress, their records and staff development. This helps to ensure that staff are well supported in their role.

Allegations and complaints about staff practice are taken seriously. They are investigated and where appropriate, additional training is provided to staff. The manager carries out a lessons learned activity, which involves all staff and provides information to avoid reoccurrence and enhance their understanding.

Using the feedback from the last inspection, and their knowledge of the home's strengths and weaknesses, the management team has introduced new systems to monitor the quality of care that children receive, such as collaborative case file audits. However, due to the home's closure, these are new in practice, therefore it is too early to evaluate their 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 make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received into the children's home. In particular, the registered person must ensure that— a record is kept of the administration of medicine to each child. (Regulation 23 (1)(2)(c)) This refers specifically to the staff following the provider's medication policy and ensuring that records include when medication has been refused or is not required.	4 July 2022

Recommendations

- The registered provider should ensure that children's care plans highlight when a child is subject to a child protection plan, and include the strategies which staff should use to monitor the child's welfare, in particular signs of neglect. In addition, records of the child's stay should include particular reference to child protection and any concerns that have arisen. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 16, paragraph 3.15)
- The registered provider should ensure that records of restraint are thorough and include the specific method of restraint used and the duration of every restraint. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.59)
- The registered provider should ensure that children's case records are 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)

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: Shona Gallagher

Registered manager: Jacqueline Sykes

Inspectors

Catherine Heron, Social Care Inspector
Lewis Roberts, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022