

2596897

Registered provider: Gateshead Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and managed by a local authority. It provides care for up to three children who experience social and emotional difficulties.

The manager registered with Ofsted in December 2020.

At the time of the inspection, three children were living in the home. The inspector briefly spoke to all the children.

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 June 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 12 December 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/12/2023	Full	Good
28/07/2022	Full	Good
17/08/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Staff support children to make progress during their time living in the home. They understand children's experiences and starting points. This informs the support that staff offer to children. Partner agencies, staff and family members highlight the progress that children make. For example, children develop safer ways to manage their feelings.

There is a focus on education and supporting children to overcome barriers in this area. Staff provide a morning routine and use incentives to encourage attendance. Staff celebrate children's achievements, such as completing their exams. This has led to an increase in attendance and engagement for children.

The registered manager carefully considers the needs of new children coming to live in the home, alongside the needs of the children already living in the home. The registered manager attends information-sharing discussions and utilises advice from partner agencies. This ensures that each child's transition into the home is well planned.

The registered manager advocates on behalf of children leaving the home. When children become young adults, staff provide them with the support they need to move into their new home. This includes helping to decorate. The staff remain in close communication with those who have left the home, which allows the young adults to have a continued sense of belonging and enables a supportive network around them.

Staff engage children in discussions about their life. This includes sensitive topics, worries and plans. When children have hurt themselves, they will seek out support from staff. One child who has left the home said, 'There was always someone there, if you're having a bad day. You feel able to speak to someone.'

The home is maintained to a good standard. Each child has a personalised bedroom. Staff encourage children to develop their independence skills in line with their age. Staff act as role models to show how tasks should be carried out, such as maintaining a clean bedroom.

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

The staff have a good understanding of each child's worries. The registered manager utilises the support from partner professionals to offer advice and guidance to the staff team. These professionals attend the home to facilitate reflective and informative discussions around children's new needs or risks that arise. While the risks for some children remain, professionals who know the children well highlight that there continues to be a reduction in the frequency and severity of risks that occur. One professional said, '[Name of manager] will seek us out when she thinks they need advice. But staff also do this.'

When a child goes missing, staff proactively look for them. This includes searching known locations and liaising with the police and family members. This helps to ensure that the child is located quickly and returned to the home.

Staff do not need to hold children to ensure their safety. The staff use discussion and distraction as forms of de-escalation, which is largely effective.

There is no formal plan regarding one child's mobile phone and social media use during the evening and overnight. Staff offer limited challenge or advice to promote a healthy sleep routine. It is not always known who the child is communicating with and any associated risks. A meeting is arranged to ensure that there is multi-agency oversight.

All children have a risk assessment, behaviour support plan and safety plan. These three documents detail the children's risks and observed behaviours and include strategies for staff to use. However, these also include risks that are not relevant or are no longer a concern. These multiple documents contain varying information, which makes it difficult to understand what the current and most relevant risks are for each child.

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

The registered manager should be supported by two deputy managers. One of these posts has been vacant for a substantial length of time. Furthermore, the registered manager is providing support to the other deputy manager. This means that the registered manager carries out additional work, which impacts on some of her managerial tasks.

There are continued shortfalls in respect of the management team's auditing and monitoring. The registered manager was not able to provide evidence to demonstrate that she has oversight of staff's practice and that the children's files and other paperwork are up to date and accurate. This shortfall was raised at the last inspection and has not been fully addressed.

There are significant gaps in staff recording, particularly the daily records. This makes it difficult to understand what a child's daily life is like. This means that if the registered manager needs to carry out a review or investigation retrospectively, the records would not give her the information needed. Children would also not have an accurate record of their time living in the home if they asked to see their files later in life.

Staff receive regular supervision sessions; however, the quality of these sessions varies significantly and is dependant on who provides the supervision. This means that staff do not all receive consistently good-quality and reflective supervision.

Staff speak warmly about the support they receive from the registered manager. They highlight that they are valued members of the team. Furthermore, staff say that the registered manager strongly advocates on behalf of the children. One staff member said, '[Name of manager] has always gone above and beyond for the staff and children in order to ensure that they feel listened to and valued.'

The registered manager addresses shortfalls in staff conduct. She notifies relevant partner agencies, which results in an investigation commencing. The registered manager has a good understanding of the impact these incidents can have on the children, and she offers them reassurance. She liaises with senior leaders regarding staff practice issues. Discussions are held with staff, but these are not always helpful in assisting staff to fully reflect on practice.

The manager ensures that staff receive training to support them to meet the children's needs. Additionally, partner agencies provide coaching sessions to support staff development. This helps to ensure that children are cared for by experienced and skilled staff.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards'. The registered person must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
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— 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)) This requirement has been restated.	1 August 2024

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff have the relevant skills and knowledge to be able to help children understand, and where necessary work to change, negative behaviours in key areas of health and well-being. This includes, but is not limited to, internet use and the importance of healthy sleep routines. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.18)
- The registered person should ensure that staff take reasonable precautions and make informed professional judgements based on children's individual needs and developmental stage about when to allow them to take a particular risk or follow a particular course of action. Staff should discuss the decision with the child's placing authority where appropriate. If a child makes a choice that would place them or another person at significant risk of harm, staff should assist them to understand the risks and manage their risk-taking behaviour to keep themselves and others safe. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.7)
- The registered person should have systems in place so that all staff, including the manager, receive supervision of their practice from an appropriately qualified and

experienced professional, which allows them to 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)

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: 2596897

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council, Civic Centre, Regent Street, Gateshead NE8 1HH

Responsible individual: Andrea Houlahan

Registered manager: Danielle Nicol

Inspector

Jess Elliott, Social Care Inspector

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