

2596897

Registered provider: Gateshead Council

Assurance inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

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

The home does not have a registered manager. There is an acting manager in post who has submitted their application to register with Ofsted.

At the time of the inspection, three children were living in the home. The inspector spoke to one child during the inspection. The acting manager was not at work at the time of the inspection but was spoken to on the phone.

Inspection date: 19 December 2024

Date of last inspection: 11 June 2024

Judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Information about this inspection

At this inspection, the inspectors evaluated:

- the care of children
- the safety of children
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers.

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children, using the social care common inspection framework. This assurance 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'.

Findings from the inspection

This inspection was carried out following concerns received by Ofsted. Ofsted did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children. However, several areas of improvement are needed.

Not all children access education consistently. Staff's approach to promoting positive routines and encouraging children to attend educational provision is poor. As a result, children spend large periods of time in their bedrooms during the day. Managers provide limited challenge to partner agencies to ensure that plans are effective for children. This demonstrates a lack of proactive action being taken to help children reach their learning potential.

Staff do not fully understand the risks relating to children. For example, they did not know why a certain address was detailed in one child's risk assessment. Risk assessments are poor in quality and do not give staff clear guidance on how to support children. This has not yet had an impact on children but limits staff's ability to take the most appropriate steps to safeguard them.

Incident reports show limited professional curiosity by staff regarding children's whereabouts when they are not in the home. This means staff and managers do not always have assurances that children are safe when out in the community.

Staff engage children in discussions about their lives. However, the children's voice is not always captured in the recordings of these discussions. Staff talk to children about risks and safety, such as in their social media use. Often these discussions are reactive in nature, demonstrating a lack of proactive safeguarding practice.

There is limited evidence of how staff are directly supporting children to make progress. However, for one child, incidents of self-injurious behaviour have reduced in frequency and severity.

Children are supported to access activities and opportunities in line with their interests. One child said that staff supported her to attend a festival. Professionals supporting the child said how this promoted the child's sense of identity. A social work team manager said, 'They listened to what [name of child] wanted. She was so thrilled and was buzzing for days.'

There is inconsistent management oversight of incident reports. Leaders do not ensure that staff understand all the documents about children. The quality of reports and daily records varies. These shortfalls have consistently been raised by the independent person during their visits, but limited improvements have been made.

Staff describe the new manager as supportive, and they say that he listens to their views. The manager and staff say they work well as a team. This means that children are cared for by staff who feel valued.

Discussions were held with the responsible individual during this inspection, regarding the shortfalls identified. The responsible individual was reflective and gave assurances through a detailed plan of action to address the concerns, some with immediate effect, such as improving the risk assessments.

The requirement under Regulation 13, which was made at the last inspection in June 2024, has been reissued, as have the three recommendations. These are in relation to: having a formal plan regarding one child's mobile phone and social media use during the evening and overnight; multiple documents contain varying information, which makes it difficult to understand what the current and most relevant risks are for each child; and staff receiving consistently good-quality and reflective supervision.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/06/2024	Full	Good
12/12/2023	Full	Good
28/07/2022	Full	Good
17/08/2021	Full	Good

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, The 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 education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— support each child's learning and development, including helping the child to develop independent study skills and, where appropriate, helping the child to complete independent study; promote opportunities for each child to learn informally; help each child who is above compulsory school age to participate in further education, training or employment and to prepare for future care, education or employment; help each child to attend education or training in accordance with the expectations in the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 8 (1) (2)(a)(ii)(v)(ix)(x))	16 February 2025
The children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who— develop positive relationships with them; engage with them; take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—	16 February 2025

ensure that staff— ascertain and consider each child’s views, wishes and feelings, and balance these against what they judge to be in the child’s best interests when making decisions about the child’s care and welfare. (Regulation 7 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i))	
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; help each child to understand how to keep safe; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; that the home’s day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm; that the effectiveness of the home’s child protection policies is monitored regularly. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(v)(b)(e))	16 February 2025
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—	16 February 2025

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 the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child;

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;

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)(e)(f)(h))

In particular, the registered person must also ensure that records completed by staff accurately reflect the children's care to support management oversight and that staff understand the purpose for completing such records so they capture all the required information.

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)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2596897

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Gateshead Council

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

Responsible individual: Lesley Thompson

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Jess Elliott, Social Care Inspector

Laura Roberts, Social Care Inspector

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