

2596897

Registered provider: Gateshead Local Authority

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and managed by the local authority. It provides care for up to three children who have emotional and/or social difficulties.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since December 2020.

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 July 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: 17 August 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
17/08/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children are happy and settled in the home. The children say they feel supported by the staff team. One child said she knows that the staff care about her, because they help to keep her safe. One professional said that the staff do a 'fantastic job' of caring for the children. Another professional said that [child's name] is the most stable that they have ever been, and this is due to the level of care and support provided by the staff. The children have a sense of belonging in the home, with one child saying she would like to live in a flat at the bottom of the garden when she reaches 18 years old.

Children are supported well with their education. The manager recognises the importance of accessing education and has high aspirations for the children to achieve. The manager advocates strongly on behalf of the children to ensure that their educational needs are met. This support has ensured that one child accessed an alternative education provision.

Those children who are no longer in school are supported well in identifying further education, training and employment. The staff support the children to apply for jobs. When a child is successful in securing employment, the staff support the child to attend work on time.

The children are encouraged to share their views about how their home is being managed. They share their feelings with staff and notes are made of the children's requests and how these are responded to. The children are informed of the outcome of any request they make, such as new furniture for their bedrooms. This makes them feel valued and listened to.

Children are encouraged to develop positive relationships with each other. The staff support the children well to manage and develop safe friendships out of the home environment.

Following two recommendations made at the previous inspection, the home is decorated, furnished and maintained to a good standard. In addition, the children now have a safe space to store their personal belongings in their bedroom. Children's bedrooms are personalised as they are involved in choosing the decoration and furnishings. Externally, there is a large garden to the rear of the property. However, no improvements have been made to the bottom of the garden since the previous inspection. This remains largely inaccessible, and some of the paintwork on the garden furniture looks tired.

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

Children say they feel safe in the home. The staff regularly review risks to the children. The staff understand the risks that the children face and respond quickly

to improve the children's safety. The staff are curious, and they notice changes in the children's moods and behaviour, particularly when the children spend time in the community. The staff create intervention plans, which result in a consistent approach to supporting the children. This helps to reduce both the risks and the frequency of incidents that the children may be exposed to.

Situations when a child is not at home and needs to be found are managed well. The staff take effective action to locate the child and inform all of the relevant agencies who assist in any searches. When a child returns home, having been away without permission, the staff support the child to talk about the reasons why they were missing, and what happened when they were away from the home. This allows the staff to implement strategies to locate the child more quickly in future, and also helps to reduce the children's missing-from-home incidents.

The staff use a restorative approach towards the children. Children's positive behaviour is reinforced using rewards and praise, and incentives are used to encourage good behaviours. This has proved beneficial, as the use of 'outcomes' to help children understand the consequences of their behaviour has reduced.

Children have access to a children's rights officer and know how to make a complaint. When a child makes a complaint, this is taken seriously and investigated fully. The child is informed of the outcome of the investigation. This helps build the trusting relationships that the children enjoy with the staff, and helps the children feel listened to and believed.

Children are supported to improve their emotional health. The staff provide a nurturing approach, which helps the children to trust that staff will help them. When a child experiences high levels of emotional distress, the staff support the child well by following the child's individualised plan. These plans are developed and reviewed with the input of health professionals. This provides consistent care and support across agencies. One mental health professional said that the children's mental health has significantly improved as a result of the care that they receive from the staff.

Children attend routine medical appointments. They are supported to stay fit and healthy. The staff work well with health professionals, which ensures that the children receive the appropriate support. This support has helped some children to reduce their cigarette and drug misuse.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager has a good understanding of the children's progress, and of the home's strengths and weaknesses. Her effective leadership supports the progress that the children make. She is supported well by her deputy manager.

Communication between the staff and professionals is good. Professionals compliment the staff on their nurturing approach and the difference that this

makes to the children's lives. One professional said, 'The staff include me in regular email updates about how [child's name] is doing, not just alerting me to the difficult times, but letting me know about the activities that [child's name] enjoys.'

Staff now receive practice-related supervision following a recommendation made at the previous inspection. While the provider's supervision policy does not stipulate the frequency of supervision, the manager ensures that it is regular. Supervision discussions include safeguarding matters, the children's needs, staff welfare and staff training. While a written record of the discussion is completed, the quality of these vary and some are not signed by staff. This oversight creates uncertainty about whether supervision records are a true and accurate account of the discussion held and may result in staff providing differing standards of care.

The manager is confident to challenge poor practice and supports the staff to reflect and make improvements to their work. Through audits and discussions with staff, the manager identifies shortfalls and carries out investigations, when appropriate. She recognises that the staff need to make improvements in record-keeping and is committed to addressing this. Progress has been made in improving the contents of the children's safety plans. This helps to raise the standards of the children's care within the home.

Children who access their records may feel stigmatised, or struggle to understand some of the information held about them in its current format. Some of the language used by the staff in the written documents does not reflect the child-friendly language, which is used in the home on a day-to-day basis. The manager recognises this, and she is addressing the poor record-keeping with the staff.

The manager uses feedback from a variety of sources to complete the six-monthly quality care review report, and to revise the home's statement of purpose. However, she does not send these documents to Ofsted as required. This oversight prevents Ofsted from being kept up to date about the operation of the home.

Staff vacancies throughout the home and management team mean that there are staffing pressures. Staff cover additional shifts when required, which helps to reduce the need for relief and agency staff. A recruitment campaign is ongoing, and new staff have been appointed. However, in one example, the staff recruitment file did not contain the required information to meet regulations, such as copies of relevant qualifications and written references. References had been verified, but this was a gap in the manager's record-keeping.

While there remains some difficulty in accessing electronic records, this has been adequately addressed by the manager and the technology is being improved. As an interim measure, the manager has paper files containing the most significant documents for the children, which can be easily accessed.

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— 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 (3)(a)(b))	12 August 2022
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children's home; or if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that— full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3)(d))	12 August 2022
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality of care review") at least once every 6 months. The registered person must— supply to HMCI a copy of the quality of care review report within 28 days of the date on which the quality of care review is completed. (Regulation 45 (1) (4)(a))	12 August 2022

--	--

Recommendations

- The registered person should improve the home environment by ensuring that the garden areas in the grounds of the home are maintained to a good standard and are used to enhance the overall living experience for the children. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that the staff record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way. 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)
- The registered provider should ensure that a record of supervision is kept for staff, including the manager. The record should be of good quality and provide evidence of discussion. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.3)

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: 2596897

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Gateshead Local Authority

Registered provider address: Adults, Children and Families, Gateshead Council,
Group Secretariat, 1st Floor, Regent Street, Gateshead NE8 1HH

Responsible individual: Andrea Houlahan

Registered manager: Danielle Nicol

Inspectors

Julia Hagan, Social Care Inspector

Catherine Heron, 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