

TITLE OF REPORT:	Update on Gateshead Children’s Homes to include Inspections by OFSTED, Regulation 44 visits and placement sufficiency
REPORT OF:	Caroline O’Neill, Strategic Director, Children Adults and Families

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines Ofsted inspection framework, policy context and outcomes of 4 inspection visits to our Residential Children’s Homes which took place between May 2021 and August 2021.

The report notes inspection judgement, highlighting requirements and recommendations as well as some positive feedback from all 4 inspections

The report also outlines the feedback from Regulation 44 visits to all of our Children’s Homes between December 2020 and November 2021, which notes many positive areas as well as highlighting some issues and actions.

The report will also provide information about developments within the service, linked to the placement sufficiency strategy for 2018 -2021

POLICY CONTEXT

1. The statutory requirements under the Care Standards Act 2000, in particular the Children’s Homes Regulations 2001 amended with new Children’s Homes Regulations and Standards in April 2015. When the new framework of regulations and standards were introduced Ofsted also changed the inspection framework for children’s homes.
2. Children’s Homes are regulated services and inspected by Ofsted. Historically there have been at least two unannounced Ofsted inspections every 12 months, however the Social Care Common Inspection Framework (SCCIF) was introduced by Ofsted in April 2017 and one of the inspection principles is to prioritise the work where improvement is needed most. If leaders and managers have shown that they can consistently deliver services for children well, they may decide to return less often or do a more proportionate inspection.
3. They inspect children’s homes that were judged inadequate or require improvement to be good at their last full inspection at least twice in each inspection period (from 1st April – 31st march).

4. Ofsted carry out at least one full inspection of homes that were judged as outstanding or good during a year-long inspection period.
5. They carry out an initial risk assessment for every children's home judged as good or outstanding at the start of the inspection year to inform an initial decision of whether these homes will be subject to a second inspection (interim) in addition to a full inspection.

This takes into account:

- the most recent interim inspection
 - reports received under regulations 44 and 45
 - notifications received under section 40
 - information from complaints, whistle-blowers, and local authorities
 - changes to the home's management
 - any other relevant information
6. Ofsted can choose to visit unannounced at any time in addition to these inspection episodes and within Blaydon's children's home we experienced this.
 7. On a monthly basis unannounced independent visits are undertaken as required within the regulations for each children's home, the outcomes of these visits are reported to Ofsted every month.

Blaydon Children's Home

8. Blaydon children's home is a five-bed long term provision for young with complex needs. They currently have five young people in placement, consisting of three males and two females. The home has experienced a number of challenges in the last 12 months, resulting in an unannounced visit by Ofsted in February 2021. In this visit Ofsted focussed on risk and risk management, following several statutory notifications that they received from the home. They were satisfied that the home was safe and well managed, and the home went from being deemed as high risk to medium risk

Ofsted Inspection

9. Blaydon Children's Home had a full inspection on 8th and 9th June 2021. They received an overall judgement of "GOOD", with 2 requirements and 2 recommendations.

Requirements

- Provide the children living in the home the physical necessities they need in order to live there comfortably. This particularly refers to ensuring support is provided to children to help them acquire the skills to keep their bedrooms clean and tidy.
- The registered manager needs to monitor and review of children's records to ensure they are accurate, individualised and up to date.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that refurbishment and maintenance is carried out in order to help children live in the home comfortably.
 - The registered person should ensure that staff have the skills for safeguarding which enables them to record, identify and maintain dynamic risk assessments that are specific to the individual child needs
10. The requirements and recommendations have already been acted upon and progress will be evidenced when Ofsted do their next inspection.

11. Positives highlighted in the full report

- Children are making progress in all aspects of their care.
- Young people have developed strong relationships with the staff.
- Observations during the inspection and feedback from professionals and children were very positive.
- Staff advocate strongly for children to be provided with an education.
- Children who find it difficult to attend are supported to re-engage in schools or alternative forms of education. As a result, children are making progress from their starting points.
- Staff support children to maintain family relationships. Staff provide transport, supervision and emotional support when required. This helps children to feel safe and promotes their confidence and sense of identity.
- Children enjoy activities with each other and with staff.
- Children receive consistent guidance and support from the staff in keeping safe.
- Staff are proactive in managing children's challenging behaviours. Police intervention is the last resort. As a result, the home is settled, and children are developing trusting and respectful relationships with the staff.
- The staff are experienced and knowledgeable in understanding children's behaviours.
- They respond well to safeguarding concerns.
- They provide a warm and open atmosphere.
- The manager knows the children and takes time to build positive, trusting relationships with them. Children and professionals spoke about his good communication and availability to listen and support children.

Longside House

12. Longside House has been open since 27th January 2020. It is a 6 bedded Children's Home, with one of the beds being a semi –independent flat
13. The young people living in Longside house are aged 13 -18, with 3 females and 3 males currently living there

Ofsted Inspection

14. Longside House received a monitoring visit from Ofsted in February 2021, and they had their first full inspection on 23rd and 24th August 2021.
15. The overall judgement for Longside House was one of “**Good**” with 1 requirement and 4 Recommendations.

The Requirement is under reg 12 and links to smoking/health and safety. This linked to the 18-year-old who is in the staying put flat going out of the side door and lighting a cigarette before leaving the premises and inspector was in the conservatory and saw this.

16. Recommendations –

- Record keeping – needs to show where updates have been made as not all records have these.
- Staff to ensure young people attend their appointments – good evidence of them making appointment but not that is being done when they refuse to attend.
- Health – specifically smoking and educating young people.
- Record keeping in general -some excellent examples but not all of the same standard

17. Positives highlighted in the full report include:

- Children receive a warm welcome when they move into the home and are supported through well planned inductions where their voice is heard and acted on.
- The home is well presented, and children have individualised their rooms which gives them a sense belonging and pride in the home.
- Staff understand the needs of the young people well, and young people receive an individual approach in meeting their needs.
- Children and parents speak positively about the staff and the quality of care being provided. One parent said “communication is amazing, we are working as a team and that is what I like”.
- Risk assessments and concise safety plans are in place, are targeted and proactive, supporting both emotional and physical needs and as a result children become increasingly safe.
- Protocols for Missing from care were clear and demonstrated collaborative, multi-agency working.
- Managers model good practice in their positive approach to the young people
- Professionals were positive about the home, with one professional commenting “They are really professional, and it is clear children are at the centre of decision making. Care is of a high standard”.
- The manager consistently reflects on her own practice and that of her team to ensure that overall performance and quality of care provided to children improves.

18. For a first inspection this was very positive, and the recommendations have already been progressed

Kites Rise

19. Kites Rise was opened in April 2020 and was registered with Ofsted under the COVID amendments in July 2020
20. This home was identified to be opened under the Service/Councils medium term financial strategy / 5-year plan to increase our in house provision, however it needed to be opened earlier than planned due to service need
21. Kites Rise is a 3 bedded therapeutic Children's home in Chopwell and currently looks after 3 females aged between 12 and 17
22. They received a monitoring visit from Ofsted in February 2021, which was positive
23. **Inspection** - and had their first full inspection on 17th and 18th August 2021. They received an Overall Judgement of **GOOD** with no requirements and 5 recommendations
24. **Recommendations**
- Garden area – could be better utilised.
 - Storage in young people's rooms – need more.
 - Some areas in the house need refurbishing – carpets and painting and more personal touches are needed.
 - Supervisions – ensure they are frequent and meaningful.
 - IT – issue with IT crashing and the inspector not being able to access records
25. **Positives highlighted in the full report include:**
- Well planned introductions happen before admission.
 - Staff are attentive and nurturing in their approach.
 - Support to young people is tailored to meet their needs.
 - Staff work well with other professionals to achieve best outcomes for the young people and proactively take part in care team meetings.
 - Risk assessments and behaviour support plans are thorough, resulting in children feeling safe and secure within the home.
 - Protocols for Missing from care were clear and the home has good working relationships with the police and missing from care co-ordinator.
 - Staff celebrate children's achievements and as a result, children are excelling.
 - Family time is managed and supported by staff.
 - Children are actively involved in planning activities and outings, developing confidence in their social interactions.
 - The management team have aspirations for the children, which are evident in the work undertaken within the home.
 - A range of professionals commented on the high level of care and attention to detail the manager and the staff apply to the care of the children, which supports the progress children make.

26. For a first inspection this was very positive and most of the recommendations were already in hand. The only thing we might need support with from the Council is the IT issues, which have been an issue since we took on the property.

Grove House Children's Home

27. Grove House is a short break provision for children with disabilities. It is currently providing short breaks to 62 young people. In previous inspections Grove House was judged to be "outstanding" in all areas with no requirements or recommendation

28. **Inspection** - in this inspection Grove House, were downgraded to **GOOD**, which was very disappointing for everyone.

29. The home received **2 requirements and 2 recommendations**

30. **Requirements:**

- The manager is not addressing the infrequency of supervision across the staff team.
- Record keeping to be consistent (regulation 37) – the inspector was not logged into the daily log book on the first day of inspection (was signed into visitors book). Also 2 parents who upon collecting children's belongings agreed to have a quick chat with the inspector and they were not logged in.

31. **Recommendations:**

- Reg 44 visits – not enough opportunity for children to express their own views, wishes and feelings due to a number of visits when children have been at school. Also, there is not enough consultation with parents/carers and professionals.
- Supervisions – there is inconsistency in how frequently staff are supervised. This relates to care assistants and waking night staff.

32. **Positives Highlighted in the full report**

There were a number of positives highlighted in the full report, which include:

- Children are cared for by and experienced and knowledgeable staff team.
- Feedback from parents was very positive.
- Parents and young people have positive and meaningful relationships with the staff team, with young people are valued and listened to.
- Staff communicate well with families, young people and other professionals.
- The home is bright and welcoming and decorated to a high standard, taking into consideration the sensory needs of the young people.
- Young people feel safe and secure.
- Risk assessments are detailed and easy to read.
- Introductions to the home are managed well.
- The manager is passionate and has a clear vision for the service.

- Staff team are stable and staff recruitment, induction and training is well evidenced Whilst this judgement is disappointing and feels rather harsh, as the report highlights the positives in relation to experiences children have and the excellent care they receive,

The requirements and recommendations have been acted upon and I am confident the home will return to Outstanding at the next inspection

33. Grove House Sustainability

As part of Grove House's sustainability, traded beds are essential, and we were in a position where we 4 local authorities were using the resource. This has been exceptionally difficult during Covid and the service needs to be credited with how it has managed as it is one of the only short break services that has remained open during the pandemic. Numbers of young people staying at Grove House had to be reduced from 6 per night to 3 per night, in line with a comprehensive risk assessment. All families that required a short break received one, able it on a reduced number of nights. Families have told us how important this was for them and the manager and the team worked hard to accommodate all requests. The number of young people allowed to stay every night has increase and the manager is trying to accommodate all external requests as she understands how important it is to generate income for sustainability of Grove House. We are however now in a position where we cannot accept all external referrals as this would result in some of our young people/families not getting a service they require as the needs for short breaks for our Gateshead families has increased.

34. Regulation 44 Reports

All of the children's homes are visited at least once a month by an independent person, who completes a comprehensive report which is signed and agreed by the registered manager, the service manager and the Assistant Director. These reports are then sent to Ofsted and form part of their oversight on how the homes are running, what issues have been raised and what the service and managers are doing about these

- 35.** There have been changes in all of the Children's home over the last 12 months with young people moving in and a new staff joining the teams, as well as a new home opening.
- 36.** The Reg 44 reports demonstrate that this has not had an impact on the running of the homes and that there are improved outcomes for the young people in terms of engagement with staff, spending more time in the homes and engaging positively with each other. There has also been an improvement in attendance at education, training and employment and for most young people missing episodes have reduced.
- 37.** The Reg 44 reports have been very positive, however there are themes that come out across our 3 full time provisions, which include
- Paperwork for new admissions needing chasing up
 - monitor emerging patterns of missing
 - Support young people to understand risks and lifestyle choices

- Encourage young people to accept support from external agencies – e.g., platform, CYPS
 - Matching of placements when there is a vacancy
 - Proactively support specific young people to engage in education, employment, or training
 - Monitor dynamics between specific young people
- 38.** The recommendations have all been acted upon and risks managed well and are reviewed at each Reg 44 visit
- 39.** There are still some challenges especially in relation to missing episodes, drug and alcohol use and group dynamics, however this is the nature of residential homes and staff have implemented appropriate multiagency disruption plans and are working on different incentives with the young people to help improve their outcomes.
- 40.** In Grove House, the themes are lightly different, as the young people do not have the same needs and risk-taking behaviours. The reg 44 recommendations have been around
- Paperwork not being in place in a timely manner – i.e. updated CIN assessments.
 - Rewards not always being recorded in rewards book.
 - Compliments not always being recorded.
 - Evaluation forms not always being completed by young people.
- 41.** Following inspections of all 4 homes the Regulation 44 visitor is ensuring she is visiting when children are around so that their voices are clearly recorded in her reports

5 Year Plan

- 42.** A 5-year plan was proposed and accepted by Cabinet in 2019 to increase our internal residential and fostering provision as it was recognised placement sufficiency and placement stability were an issue. This included
- Two 2/3 bedded children's home. One of these was originally going to be an assessment unit, however after further research it is recognised that both of these need to be long term homes
 - A three bedded children's home for children with autism/complex needs
 - Specialist team specifically for our residential provisions to promote Trauma informed practice and promote placement stability
 - increase our in-house fostering resources, to include:
 - single placements for complex young people
 - placements for sibling groups
 - Implement the Mockingbird model

43. Progress has been made on the following

- Kites Rise – 3 bedded therapeutic Home has been opened
- A property has been identified for either another therapeutic home or the home for children with autism/complex needs. Planning permission is currently in
- The specialist team have been appointed and will start in January 2022
- Recruitment of foster carers is ongoing
- We are part of the regional Mockingbird pilot, which has just been announced.

RECOMMENDATION – The Board is asked to note the information contained in the report and agree the timescale for future reports

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