

<b>TITLE OF REPORT:</b>	<b>Update on Gateshead Children's Homes to include Inspections by OFSTED, Regulation 44 visits and placement sufficiency</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>Andrea Houlahan, Interim Strategic Director, Children and Families</b>

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### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The report also outlines the feedback from the last Ofsted Inspection or monitoring visit and the Regulation 44 visits for the period of January and March 2022.

Members are asked to note the content of the report.

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### **POLICY CONTEXT**

1. The statutory requirements under the Care Standards Act 2000 and Children's Homes Regulations and Quality Standards 2015. Children's Homes are required to be registered with Ofsted (regulated). A children's home is a provision where children live outside of their family home where care is provided.
2. Children's Homes are inspected by Ofsted in line with the Social Care Common Inspection Framework (SCCIF) therefore for all new homes they will receive a two-day unannounced two-day inspection within their first year following registration. Thereafter, they will be inspected annually. If a home receives a requires improvement or inadequate judgement in any unannounced inspection, they will also receive an unannounced one-day monitoring visit from the inspectorate at some point prior to their next annual inspection.
3. As part of the Children's Home Regulations 2015 providers are required to ensure an independent visitor undertakes a monthly visit to the home. This is in line with Regulation 44 of the Regulations and is often referred to as a Reg 44 visit. The visitor must be independent of the home and is required to monitor the home against the regulations and quality standards, producing a report which is then shared with Ofsted following the visit. Prior to submission to Ofsted by the Independent Visitor the Registered Manager, Practice Lead and Responsible Individual record their comments in relation to the content of the report and its findings.
4. During the inspection periods Ofsted also receive Regulation 40 notifications in line with the Children Homes Regulations. A Regulation 40 is where the registered manager of the home is of the view that as incident or accident is serious enough to warrant notifying their inspectorate for example where a child goes missing for a period which is out of character for them or where they have been involved in an accident which has resulted in them having to stay in hospital overnight.

5. The Registered Manager for the home is also required to produce a report on the progress of the home every six months. This is known as a Regulation 45 Report in line with the Children's Home Regulations 2015. The registered managers provide their analysis of the homes performance as set out in the regulation 45 descriptor and submits this report to Ofsted at the end of the six-month period.
6. An Ofsted Inspector will make a judgement based on the information below,
  - 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

whether they will, make an unannounced visit, bring forward an unannounced inspection or contact the registered manager or registered individual for further information.

7. There have been no unannounced inspections or monitoring visits during the period from January 2022 to the end of March 2022 across any of Gateshead's Local Authority Children's Homes. Every three years the inspectors are rotated across different homes to ensure they remain independent. We anticipate this will be the case for our homes as we have had the same inspector for three consecutive years.

### **BLAYDON CHILDREN'S HOME**

8. Blaydon children's home is registered for up to five young aged 13-17, with complex needs who need to live in their home longer term. During the period of January – March 2022 there were five young people, three males and two females, living in their home at Blaydon.

### **BLAYDON CHILDRENS HOME OFSTED INSPECTION**

9. Blaydon Children's Home had a full inspection on 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> 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 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 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 were acted upon following the inspection in June 2021.

### **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.

### **BLAYDON CHILDREN'S HOME REGULATION 44 VISITS**

11. Three Regulation 44 reports have been completed during this period, all of which provided a robust overview of the home, the young people, and the team. There were nine recommendations made in the January report, these mainly focused on ensuring ongoing scheduled work on the building was completed, the provision of ongoing support in line with the young person's care plan and ensuring reports which are due to be completed in the next month are completed. Most of the recommendations had been met by February's visit. Where they had not been met, it was linked to ongoing work with the young people to ensure risk was reduced. In February there was 5 recommendations made. These ranged from repairs and maintenance actions which were ongoing at the time of the visit, direct work with

young people and acting upon recommendations which were to follow on from the conclusion of an ongoing investigation into an incident in the home had concluded. March's visit confirmed the previous recommendation had been met. Two new recommendations were given in the March visit, one in relation to the bedrooms checks and one in relation to young people eating tea together.

12. The report also detailed several positives, of which some have been extracted for this report. They are captured below:
- Young people are regularly consulted about all aspects of life in the home. 1 – 1 consultations and quality time take place regularly.
  - The home has recently had new windows and doors fitted and young people have been involved in choosing new bedding and curtains for their bedrooms.
  - Young people continue to be encouraged to engage with education and employment opportunities to meet their individual needs. Staff regularly liaise with the Virtual School and other associated education providers, who attend and provide input at LAC reviews, and care team meetings.
  - All incidents (known and suspected) of drug and alcohol misuse are recorded so staff can develop a picture of emerging patterns and trends and ensure young people are provided with appropriate levels of support. All the young people have access to support from 'Platform' (Drug and alcohol advisory service), who provide a periodic drop-in service.

### **LONGSIDE HOUSE CHILDRENS HOME**

13. Longside House is relatively new to Gateshead having only opened in 2022. Longside House is registered to care for up to 5 young people in the main part of the home and one young person in the semi –independent flat which is connected to the home. Longside house cares for young people aged 13-17, with complex needs who need to live in their home longer term. We currently care for 4 females and 2 males.

### **LONGSIDE HOUSE OFSTED INSPECTION**

14. Longside House 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.

#### **Requirement:**

This linked to the 18-year-old who is in the semi-independent flat in a staying close arrangement who went out of the side door and light a cigarette before leaving the premises which was observed by the inspector whilst they stood at a nearby window. At the time of the inspection the home had applied to Ofsted for the young person to remain living there past his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday in the semi-independent flat. This was granted by Ofsted under the 'Wholly Mainly' principle which enables, under specific circumstances homes to continue to care for their young people for a short period of time post eighteen.

### **Recommendations:**

- The registered person should ensure that all outdoor spaces are free from hazards and that areas are maintained to ensure that children live in a supportive environment. They must comply with health and safety legislation.
- The registered person should ensure that staff challenge and support children in line with their individual health plans. Staff should have the relevant skills and knowledge to be able to help children understand and, where necessary, work to change negative behaviours, particularly smoking and openly carrying tobacco in and around the premises in front of others.
- The registered person should ensure that all areas are explored to ensure that children are encouraged and supported to attend health appointments.
- The registered person should ensure that staff understand the importance of record-keeping and that careful attention is given to the accuracy of the date recorded when updating records

### **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.

16. For a first inspection this was very positive. The requirement and recommendations were addressed following the inspection.

### **LONGSIDE HOUSE REGULATION 44 VISITS**

17. Three Regulation 44 reports have been completed during this period, all of which provided a positive overview of the home, the young people, and the team. The January report found that the two recommendations made in December had been met. There were no recommendations made during January and February. There were two recommendations made in March which about areas of work which are already on going and the visitor has made a comment that they need to continue as planned.
18. The report also detailed several positives, of which some have been extracted for this report. They are captured below:
- Young people are regularly consulted about menu planning and are encouraged to add their food choices to the weekly shopping list.
  - Young people are supported to follow their own interests and hobbies and try new activities and experiences and a good range of activities have been provided.
  - Young people are encouraged to personalise their bedrooms to their individual taste and take pride in the home's appearance and they are consulted before any changes are made.
  - Staff prioritise education, training, and employment for young people and work proactively with relevant professionals and providers to ensure young people are supported to engage with education or training placement to meet their needs whilst they are living at Longside House.
  - There is evidence of good leadership, staff support, direction and mentoring by the experienced manager and assistant manager. The newly appointed assistant manager is being supported and mentored as she adapts to her new role in the team.
  - Staff work hard with families, social workers, and associated professionals to establish contact plans that help the young people to remain focussed and discourage the need to go missing.

### **KITES RISE CHILDRENS HOME**

19. Kites Rise was opened in April 2020. Kites Rise cares for three young people aged 12 to 17. Currently there are three females living in their home longer term.

### **KITES RISE OFSTED INSPECTION**

20. Kites Rise had their first full inspection on 17th and 18th August 2021. They received an Overall Judgement of GOOD with no requirements and 5 recommendations

#### **Recommendations:**

- The registered person should improve upon the home environment by ensuring 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.
- The registered person should ensure that the internal home environment is maintained to a high decorative standard and any repairs are done in a timely manner.

- The registered person should ensure that children have access to adequate storage facilities in their bedrooms for their personal items and clothing.
- The registered person should ensure that all staff receive supervision of their practice regularly and contingency plans are in place to avoid any delays.
- The registered person should ensure that electronic records kept are easily accessed by anyone with a legitimate need to view them. Information technology systems should ensure that accessibility is appropriate to the demands of the service.

**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.

21. 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.

**KITES RISE REGULATION 44 VISITS**

22. Three Regulation 44 reports have been completed during this period, all of which provided a positive overview of the home, the young people, and the team. There was one recommendation made in January which was related to the gaps in one of the young people's records. In February the visitor acknowledged January's recommendation had been met. One further recommendation was made during February's visit, this recommendation referred to ensuring the recommendations from an investigation into a medication error were undertaken once the investigation was concluded. There were two recommendations in the March both of which are areas of work which are under way where the visitor has commented on ensuring progress as planned. Marches visit identified eight recommendations, of which five

are about areas of work which are already on going and the visitor has made a comment that they need to continue as per their action plan and the with the other three are for the wider care team to consider.

- 23.** The report also detailed several positives, of which some have been extracted for this report. They are captured below:
- Information and guidance around e-safety, grooming, and the potential dangers of social media has been discussed within 1:1 and group work and staff have regular discussions the young people around CSE and keeping safe online.
  - Young people are regularly praised and issued with rewards for their achievements and following their plans. They are consulted and negotiate with staff when incentives are being decided.
  - The manager and assistant managers provide regular 1:1 supervisions and informal discussions. The manager attends daily handovers on weekdays to discuss current issues and inform decision making.
  - Staff feel they continue to provide a good standard of care for 3 young people with complex needs. All three young people are well supported by staff, and they are making good progress.

### **GROVE HOUSE CHILDREN'S HOME**

- 24.** Grove House is a short break provision for children with disabilities. It is currently providing short breaks to 62 young people. Short break is where children and young people live with their parents or carers but come to Grove house for 'respite care'. By law short break provisions are required to be registered with Ofsted in accordance with the Children's Home Regulations 2015. Within these regulations there are some different and additional requirements placed on short break providers, i.e., the total number of consecutive nights a child or young person can sleep over.
- 25.** As part of Grove House's financial sustainability, we sell short breaks to four other Local Authorities. 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 also increased.

### **GROVE HOUSE OFSTED INSPECTION**

- 26.** Grove House had their full inspection on 13th and 14th July 2021. They received an Overall Judgement of GOOD with 2 requirements and 2 recommendations.

#### **Requirements:**

- The registered person must maintain in the home the records ensuring that the records are kept up to date; and retain the records for at least 15 years from

the date of the last entry. This specifically relates to a record of all visitors to the home.

- The registered person is required to 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; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.

#### **Recommendations:**

- The registered person should ensure that systems are in place so that all staff, including the manager, receive regular supervision so that they can reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care.
- The registered provider should ensure that the independent visitor consults with children and parents on a regular basis to inform their judgement about the quality of the care offered.

#### **Positives Highlighted in the full report**

- Children are cared for by an 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 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

27. The requirements and recommendations were acted upon following the inspection.

#### **GROVE HOUSE REGULATION 44 VISITS**

28. Three Regulation 44 reports have been completed during this period, all of which provided a positive overview of the home, the young people, and the team. There was one recommendation made in January which highlighted that staff were not providing enough evidence in the praise log. In February the visitor acknowledged January's recommendation had been met. There were no recommendations in February's visit. There were two recommendations made in March's visit, one was the visitor acknowledging the need to continue with the plan for day two of the team development day, which was initially cancelled due to 10 staff having covid following day one's attendance and the second was where the visitor had noted the urgency for the manager to continue with her enquiries into moving a radiator away from a nearby window.

- 29.** The report also detailed several positives, of which some have been extracted for this report. They are captured below:
- I had telephone consultations with a child's foster carer and the parent of another child, both gave very positive feedback about the standard of care provided and describe the home as 'brilliant' and 'exemplary'.
  - The forum gives young people the opportunity to discuss topics that are important to them, and feedback is given to the manager, who is very proactive about listening to young people's views and suggestions and implementing ideas if possible.
  - Young people are encouraged to complete evaluation forms about their short breaks and the feedback is very positive.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

The board is requested to acknowledge the content of the report.

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