

together for
children
SUNDERLAND



Regulation 44 Visitor's Annual Overview

April 23 – March 24

putting
the child first

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1 Purpose of the report

To provide elective members of the Supportive Parenting Partnership with an update on the findings in relation to the regulation 44 visits undertaken to the seven Together for Children residential homes in Sunderland between April 2023 and March 2024.

2 Role of the Regulation 44 Visitor

A Regulation 44 Visitor, also known as an independent visitor, is required to visit and inspect residential children's homes at least once per month, either announced or unannounced. The visits are carried out in accordance with regulation 44 of The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015. The Visitors are independent of the organisations children's social care services and are responsible for making rigorous and impartial assessments of the home's arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children in its care. This is achieved by scrutinising all relevant documentation, talking to the children living in the home, their parents or relatives, carers from the home and relevant professionals.

The Regulation 44 Visitor produces a report following every visit which includes recommendations the visitor has identified to improve the care of the children. The report is sent to the manager of the home, the Responsible Individual for Together for Children (TfC) and Ofsted. Positive feedback has been received from Ofsted regarding the quality of the regulation 44 reports.

Within TfC there are two, permanent part-time Regulation 44 visitors and one PVH Visitor, based within the Children's Independent Reviewing Team. All are social work qualified and registered with Social Work England.

3 Summary and Headlines

 <p>Claremont House</p> <p>4 children currently living in home 17 visitor recommendations (all) 11 recommendations last visit 41 missing episodes, 3 over 24 hours 20 Critical Incidents 10 Ofsted Notifications</p>	<p>New edge of care home 22/11/23 <i>Awaiting 1st Ofsted visit</i></p>
 <p>Colombo Road</p> <p>Judged to be 'Outstanding'</p> <p>6 children currently living in home 5 visitor recommendations (all) 1 recommendation last visit 21 missing incidents, 0 over 24 hours 11 Critical Incidents 9 Ofsted Notifications</p>	<p>Ofsted Recommendation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">To ensure that for children's homes to be nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of their children, they will, in most cases, be homely, domestic environments. Children's homes must comply with relevant health and safety legislations (alarms, food hygiene etc.); however, in doing so, homes should seek as far as possible to maintain a domestic rather than 'institutional' impression.



Grasswell House

Judged to be 'Good'

5 children currently living in home
 12 visitor recommendations (all)
 2 recommendations last visit
 203 missing incidents, 8 over 24 hours
 33 Critical Incidents
 21 Ofsted Notifications

Ofsted requirements

- Regulation 24 – use of devices for the monitoring or surveillance of children.
- Regulation 6 - ensure that all children are supported to maintain clean and tidy bedrooms in line with the quality and purpose of care standard.

Ofsted recommendation

- Ensure that records are kept up to date. Specifically, behaviour support plans should contain up-to-date information.



Maple Cottage

Judged to be Good

2 children currently living in home
 15 visitor recommendations (all)
 1 recommendation last visit
 4 missing incidents, 0 over 24 hours
 15 Critical Incidents
 1 Ofsted Notification

Ofsted requirement

- Regulation 8 - children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so.

Ofsted recommendations

- Ensure that any consequences used to address poor behaviour are restorative in nature, to help children recognise the impact of their behaviour on themselves, other children, the staff caring for them and the wider community.
- Ensure that staff record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information.
- Ensure that there are systems in place so that all the staff, including the manager, receive regular supervision.



Monument View

Judged to be 'Good'

6 children currently living in home
 18 visitor recommendations (all)
 5 recommendations last visit
 5 missing incidents, 0 over 24 hours
 7 Critical Incidents
 7 Ofsted Notifications

Ofsted requirements

- Regulation 32 - recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety.
- Regulation 36 - maintain records for each child which are kept up to date - this particularly relates to children's care plans and direct work completed with the child.

Ofsted recommendation

- Ensure a child's bedroom is not generally entered without their permission, though it may be necessary to establish routines to allow for rooms to be cleaned regularly. Usually, rooms should only be searched if the child has been informed or asked for their permission.



Nook Lodge

Judged to be 'Requires Improvement to be Good'

2 children currently living in home
 26 visitor recommendations (all)
 2 recommendations last visit
 15 missing incidents, 2 over 24 hours
 44 Critical Incidents
 19 Ofsted Notifications

Ofsted requirements

- Regulation 12 - The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.
- Regulation 13 - The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home.
- Regulation 32 - Recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety.
- Regulation 25 - After consultation with the fire and rescue authority, provide adequate means of escape from the home in the event of fire.

Ofsted recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that, just as in a family home, children are able to access all shared areas of their home. This includes access to food and snacks, unless there are reasons why this would not meet a child's needs.



Revelstoke Road

Judged to be 'Good'

6 children currently living in home
 10 visitor recommendations (all)
 0 recommendations last visit
 97 missing incidents, 1 over 24 hours
 45 Critical Incidents
 30 Ofsted Notifications

Ofsted requirements

- Regulation 12 - The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.
- Regulation 24 – Use of devices for the monitoring or surveillance of children.
- Regulation 32 - Recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety.

- **Ofsted Visits** - Since last April 2023 two new homes have opened, Maple Cottage and Claremont House. Another home is due to open over the coming year. Apart from Claremont House, all homes have been visited by Ofsted during this reporting period.
 - Four (Grasswell House, Monument View, Revelstoke Road, and Maple Cottage) were judged as Good.
 - One (Colombo Road) was judged Outstanding including this time in the area of Help and Protect which had been Good last year. This was Colombo Road's sixth consecutive overall Outstanding judgement.
 - Nook Lodge was judged as Requires Improvement which resulted in a further Assurance Inspection from Ofsted. This outcome of this visit was that Ofsted did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children. This reflects that positive changes have been made.
- **Relationships** - When children move into a home within TfC the vast majority settle in quickly and develop close relationships with their carers which are based on mutual respect. As a result, carers gain the trust of the children which is significant.
- **Missing Episodes** - Grasswell House and Claremont House have high numbers of missing episodes, particularly Grasswell with 203. Despite the high numbers safeguarding the children has been the priority and both RCCW's and the leadership teams have responded appropriately to all missing episodes, formally addressing concerns with the children, and working in partnership with other agencies, (health, YDAP, Dr Christie, police and the Youth Offending Team), to try and disrupt the missing patterns.
- **UASC** - Several of the homes have continued to care for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, with Colombo Road carers being particularly skilled at meeting the needs of these children.
- **LGBTQIA+ Community** - Team members are incredibly supportive of those children who identify with the LGBTQIA+ community. Their knowledge, understanding, empathy and guidance is exceptional.
- **Support To Teams** - All homes continue to work closely the Consultant Clinical Psychologist for the Children and Young People Service (CYPS), who provides support and guidance to team members on a regular basis.
- **Views of adults** - The views of parents, professionals and carers have been generally positive, which has reflected the standard of care the children have received.
- **Views of Children** - The regulation 44 visitors continue to try and seek the wishes and feelings of the children however, this is not always possible due to their lack of engagement. Some of the children are of the view that too many people visit their home and ask them questions. The visitors have agreed that they will try and access the children's views via telephone if they choose not to engage on the day. A summary letter will be sent to the children every six months, when the visitor will change, thanking them for their cooperation.
- **Announced Visits** - The regulation 44 visitors have begun to introduce announced visits so that they can speak with the children's homes manager on at least a bi-monthly basis.
- **Audits** - Their annual programme of themed audits continues to be in place; this is to encourage and support the homes to consider how they meet the Children's Homes Regulations.
- **Learning & Feedback** - The regulation 44 visitors have continued to attend quarterly residential management meetings to share learning and to hear feedback regarding their visits.

- **Professional Development** - Training has been undertaken by the visitors to enable their professional development and that they have the necessary expertise and skills to complete their role to a high standard.
- **Reg 45 Reports** - Regulation 45 reports have been received from the children's homes managers within timescales. They are detailed and assist the visitor in completing the regulation 44 report.
- **Recommendations** - The regulation 44 visitors are of the opinion that all managers are receptive of the visitors, their feedback and any recommendations made are swiftly addressed. It is clear to the visitors that all managers are committed to continually improving the service they provide to the children they care for.

4 Regulation 44 Visitor Findings

4.1 Claremont House



Claremont House is managed by Andrea Dowd and opened 22.11.23. It is a large Victorian terraced house, situated just outside of Sunderland City Centre. The home awaits its first Ofsted inspection. It is decorated and furnished to a particularly high standard both internally and externally, with all children having their own bedroom with ensuite bathroom.

The home provides emergency or short-term care for up to four children who are considered to be edge of care. This means their needs cannot be met in a family home, and that they are at risk of being cared for on a longer-term basis. The children can be male or female and are aged between 11 and 17. The maximum length of stay at Claremont House is 12 weeks during which further work is completed by the social work team to determine their longer-term needs.

Since opening, to the end of March 24, seven children have lived at the home, all for varying durations. From January to end of March, two Residential Childcare Workers (RCCW)

were on sick leave. This had an impact on the team, in that other team members agreed to undertake additional sleep-in duties, as did the registered manager.

During the visit in March 2024, the regulation 44 visitor identified some concerns around the matching of the children due to the impact this was having on their safe care. For example, there had been an escalation in drug use, missing episodes, and damage within the home. This resulted in eleven recommendations being made. The registered manager acknowledged some of the concerns identified, and the referral and matching processes have been re-visited with the Service Manager. In addition, two team development sessions about safeguarding were undertaken and attended by all carers.

The lifestyle of the children and their families can mean that they arrive with poor education attendance. Team members promote, encourage and support attendance and engagement in education however, given the short-term nature of the provision, children often leave the home without their education needs being met.

The health requirements of the children are sometimes uncertain when they arrive. As team members get to know and understand the children their needs become clearer. The registered manager has arranged for a social worker from the Youth Drug and Alcohol Project (YDAP) to visit the home and work with the children to address their risky behaviours.

Children come to live in Claremont House at what is usually a very difficult time for them, and it is often their first cared for experience. Consequently, it often takes time for them to settle, engage with and trust their carers. This affects the progress they can make during their stay.

The key strengths of this home are –

- The manager and her team have good networks with relevant services and professionals and adopt a collaborative approach with them.
- The team have ensured that the children’s care plans are progressed in a timely manner.

The areas for focus of this home are -

- For children’s assessments and safety plans to better identify how to manage risky behaviours.
- The referral and matching process to continue to be re-visited so that they meet the needs of the children who are referred to this home.

When asked if a young person enjoyed living at the home, she replied “yes, I love my bedroom, its got all of my things in it” and also referred to having posters on her wall

A social worker feedback, “I have no concerns about the care provided to the young person. He was offered a warm welcome and lots of reassurance. I have been provided with updates, excellent communication, and flexibility for my visits too. He has a link worker and lots of support from all carers too. Lots of support has been offered in terms of his medical appointments, including CYPS and GP. Also, carers are helpfully keeping in touch with his dad”.

A young person’s mother described his carers as “fabulous considering his behaviour particularly towards the end when it escalated”. Communication was always “excellent” with the care team giving her updates when he went missing and then when he returned.

His mother did however express concern that he never had any consequences for negative or risky behaviours. She felt “he controlled his carers” in this respect.

4.2 Colombo Road



Colombo Road Children's Home, which has been managed by Michael More since 2013 is situated on a large housing estate in the Hylton Castle area of Sunderland. It is decorated and furnished to a high standard both internally and externally, and all young people have their own bedroom. They share two bathrooms.

The home provides care for up to six children, male or female, aged between 11 and 17, for the duration of their needs.

The home has a history of Outstanding inspection judgements and following the Ofsted inspection on 19th and 20th March 2024 the home was judged to be Outstanding in all three areas. The area of Help and Protect had moved from Good to Outstanding and this reflected the reduction in the number of times that children had gone missing from the home. Team members are particularly skilled in building relationships with the children so that any issues can be shared. This reduces incidents within the home and those which lead to children going missing.

Over the past twelve months, nine children have lived at the home, with three of those children living there throughout that duration. Several of the children cared for are unaccompanied asylum seekers which increases their vulnerabilities. Team members are exceptionally skilled in meeting the additional needs of these children. They do this by helping them quickly settle into an area and way of living which they are unfamiliar with. They enable friendships to be made with likeminded peers and ensure their religious and dietary preferences are observed, catered for, and recognised throughout the home.

The RCCW's are supported by an experienced and highly skilled registered manager and deputy both of whom are passionate and strong leaders. The children have benefitted from carers who get to know them, understand them, and help them to progress in all areas. One child received the Sunderland Young Achiever of the Year Award, and another will be Head Boy at school in September. These and other achievements no matter how big or small are recognised and celebrated by the whole team which helps the children feel important and valued. They have been rewarded for their achievements and positive behaviours eighty-nine times during the reporting period.

Over the past twelve months only five recommendations have been made by the regulation 44 visitors, none of which related to the protection of the children. This reflects the quality of care which is provided and how safe the children are living in this home. As does the eight compliments the home has received.

The care team understand the importance of education. This filters through to the children who attend and engage in their respective placements. From the moment a child moves in team members work hard to ensure they are either maintained within their education provision or identify a suitable provision which is then swiftly secured. Team members are proactive and will arrange meetings with education when the children are having difficulties within their provision. They then advocate on behalf of the child which results in appropriate adjustments and/or support being put in place for the child. This helps prevent lost learning.

The key strengths of this home are –

- Children are particularly well cared for and appreciated by adults who know them and protect them.
- The manager has high expectations, and his inspirational nature means that team members share this ethos and respond to it positively.

The areas for focus of this home are -

- To help some children maintain their bedrooms to the same high standard as their peers.
- To help children understand the impact of using inappropriate language.

A young person said "I am very happy here. I go to the gym with M and I have been to watch Sunderland FC. S is getting me a bible and finding me a church I can go to. I speak to my family every day which makes me happy. The food is very good, and I like my bedroom".

A young person's social worker said, "I believe that the level of care and support that continues to be offered by team members and accepted by him is meeting his needs successfully. The team and link workers have worked tirelessly to provide him with the support and guidance that he needs to promote all areas of his care, making him feel valued and respected."

A young person's mum said "I am happy with the standard of care provided; he has thrived since he moved in."

4.3 Grasswell House



Grasswell House Children's Home, which has been managed by Barry Hall since 2019 is located within Sunderland West. The home provides care for up to six children, male or female, aged between 11 and 17, for the duration of their needs.

Grasswell House is decorated and furnished to a high standard both internally and externally, with all children having their own bedroom with a newly updated ensuite bathroom. The vast, safe, well-maintained gardens wrap around the home, providing the children ample space to enjoy activities with carers, their peers and/or friends.

During this reviewing period six young people resided at the home for eight of the months and five for the remaining four. The last Ofsted inspection, undertaken on 9th and 10th August 2023, rated the home as Good in all three areas.

The home's mixed workforce is stable, and guided by an established senior team, all of whom are appropriately qualified to manage the team and care for the children. The registered manager recently returned to work following a period of sick leave however, his absence did not impact upon

the running of the home as the deputy manager and senior residential childcare workers oversaw the home exceptionally well. All, of whom, have the skills, knowledge and experience required of a senior team.

Currently there is one RCCW vacancy however, the team has its full complement of Relief Residential Childcare Workers (RRCCW's), therefore the home is adequately supervised. The stability of the workforce has enabled team members to engage in trusting and meaningful relationships with the children and other professionals. The manager and the leadership team work hard to achieve best outcomes for all cared for children, evidenced from feedback received from them, their family and professionals involved with them.

During this reporting period, announced and unannounced visits highlighted few worries and twelve recommendations were made, all of which were responded to appropriately. Despite the many recorded missing from care episodes (203), during this reporting period, safeguarding the children is the team's priority. RCCW's and the leadership team responded appropriately to all missing episodes by formally addressing concerns with the children and working in partnership with other agencies, (health, YDAP, Dr Christie, police and the Youth Offending Team), to try and disrupt the missing patterns, resulting in a more positive outcome, recently.

The physical and emotional well-being of the children, their education and social needs have been consistently met, to a high standard, despite the difficulties carers have experienced in terms of encouraging them to attend their education provision. However, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that support has been consistently provided, by the team and education personnel, to support the children to achieve their best outcomes.

There have been few moves in/out of Grasswell House this reviewing period, therefore the children have predominantly enjoyed a settled period in a stable environment, with familiar and safe adults. All have developed positive relationships with most carers, some of whom refer to a particular RCCW as 'nana', which evidences a nurturing, homely provision. Despite some worries about the missing from care episodes and children not engaging in education as expected, their home life has been positive in many respects.

The strengths of this home are –

- The stable, experienced leadership team have successfully supervised and guided carers to provide a good standard of care to all children, consistently, throughout this recording period.
- The team have developed meaningful relationships with the children, their family and professionals involved, all of whom work together to safeguard the children.

The areas of focus for this home are -

- For all team members to complete their Level 4 apprenticeship in residential childcare.
- Further work, in terms of the teams understanding and development of therapeutic re-parenting, should be progressed, to support the children's emotional well-being.

A young person's nana stated, "She is happy and settled living at this home". and reported that she has a good relationship with the team who provide regular updates about her granddaughter and that she is proud of her granddaughter's achievements.

A young person's Independent Reviewing Officer reported, "I am impressed by the commitment, energy, and attitude of the team. I believe carers provide him with support, advice and make all efforts to continue to find ways to help him take advantage of all opportunities and give him a clear message that they genuinely care about his welfare".

“A young person’s social worker made several positive comments about his progress, relationship with carers and her transition from the home to supported living. The social worker stated, “the relationship has been a strength and positive in her life, she feels safe living at the home, the care team are excellent advocates for her and carers have remained positive in terms of their communication with the social worker, providing regular updates”.

4.4 Maple Cottage



Maple Cottage, which is managed by Mark Cryer, opened on 16.08.23. It is a large detached double fronted house situated in a residential area of South Hylton, with an appearance in keeping with the neighbouring properties.

Internally the condition of the property is very good. It is pleasantly decorated with nice furnishings which creates a homely feel throughout. There is one bathroom for the children to share. Carers have their own shower room. Externally there is a good-sized garden, however this requires work to be undertaken so that the children can enjoy this outdoor space. The

home provides care for up to two children, male or female, aged between 8 to 17 years, for the duration of their needs.

Shortly after opening two boys moved into the home within a couple of weeks of each other and remain there, to date.

The home had its first Ofsted inspection on 31st January and 1st February 2024. It was judged to be Good in all areas with the report recently received. One requirement was made regarding the poor education attendance of one child. Three recommendations were made relating to sanctions not always being restorative in nature, supervision not always taking place, and blaming language found in some of the children’s records. The registered manager has begun to act upon these issues.

Since the home opened seven and a half months ago, fifteen recommendations have been made by the regulation 44 visitors. Some have related to ongoing concerns around the management structure. The registered manager also manages another children’s home within TfC, as does the deputy manager. Vacancies and sickness have resulted in carers, including those who are senior, working across both homes. This has meant the children have not had consistent carers which can affect how these important relationships develop. In addition, the manager has been required to undertake several sleep-in duties due to gaps in the rota which has taken him away from his management duties. For example, supervision has not always taken place as frequently as it should have, as identified by Ofsted during their inspection. It is, however, positive to note that recently improvements have been made with some restructuring undertaken and additional capacity provided.

Some recommendations have related to safeguarding concerns. For example, one of the boys accessing online platforms. The level of his use of electronic devices has also had an impact upon

his behaviour within the home and his education attendance which has declined since his move into the home, also noted by Ofsted. The manager and team members have acknowledged this and dedicated themselves to addressing this issue, with their hard work beginning to pay off. Education attendance has improved and boundaries within the home are being adhered to more successfully. It is important to acknowledge that the other boy's education attendance is 100% and his engagement is fantastic.

When incidents do take place within the home carers use a recognised approach called PACE which stands for playfulness, acceptance, curiosity, and empathy. They are highly skilled in doing so and have undoubtedly made the children safer with their interactions. Through this the children also learn that some adults can and do care for them and will not give up on them.

The manager has acknowledged some concerns in the relationship between the boys. He has maintained excellent oversight of all incidents and through this has identified that there has been an episode of bullying. He has responded swiftly and robustly with a plan of action and has sought support from a specialist agency to help the team develop strategies.

The key strengths of this home are –

- The approaches and techniques used by team members helps to de-escalate the children.
- The excellent oversight the manager has of incidents within the home, how he reflects on these, and the action he takes to address them.

The areas for focus of this home are -

- To provide consistent carers for the children and management availability which meets the needs of the children and team members.
- To make improvements to the back garden as this will encourage the children to spend more time outside and away from their electronic devices.

“A young person said “I don’t like living here, I love it! I love my carers and they love me. When I get homework, they help me, and they read to me at bedtime”.”

“A young person’s mum said “I have no concerns about his day-to-day care. However, I am worried that he isn’t going to school and that this is partly because he can do what he wants like having free reign of his x-box”.”

“A young person’s social worker said “He is doing really well. He has been accepted by CYPS ad we have a draft EHCP with an identified education provision. He is really happy, and his carers are supporting his family time well. There have been no concerns”.”

4.5 Monument View



Monument View Children's Home, which has been managed by Paul Rudd since May 2021 is a large purpose-built detached home located near to Shiney Row at Penshaw. It has been constructed in a style that ensures it does not differ significantly from the other houses within the vicinity. It has been designed to offer the children sufficient space both inside and outside to engage in a wide variety of activities without disturbing other residents or neighbouring properties. It is decorated and furnished to a high standard both internally and externally, and all young people have their own bedroom and ensuite. The garden space is extensive and with a vast array of activities and

equipment for the children to engage in and use.

The home provides care for up to six children, male or female, aged between 12 and 18, for the duration of their needs. Over the past 12 months, nine children have lived at the home, with three of those children living there throughout that duration.

The home was last inspected by Ofsted on 3rd and 4th May 2023 and was judged to be Good in all areas. There were two requirements regarding the need for all carers to have the necessary qualification by the required date, and that records should be completed with better accuracy and in a timelier fashion. The one recommendation related to the need to record why a child has not been made aware of their bedroom being searched. All were actioned following the inspection.

The registered manager has been on extended sickness absence for the latter part of the reporting period with the deputy manager filling this role. As is the requirement by Ofsted, she has submitted her application to become the registered manager. She awaits her fit person interview with the home's Ofsted inspector. Her role as deputy manager has not been filled and as such, she has been effectively fulfilling two roles. While she has managed this remarkably well, it has inevitably had an impact in certain areas. Most notably, and the subject of several discussion and recommendations from the regulation 44 visitors, is how and where they store their records about the children. They have been difficult to find, sometimes confusing to read and not in keeping with the other TfC homes. The acting manager acknowledges this, and it is something she is keen to address when time permits.

Over the past twelve months eighteen recommendations have been made. None of these have raised concerns over the safety of the children. Rather they have involved issues such as the need to strengthen and update the homes documentation, obtain missing cared for documentation, communicate with family members, and speed up repairs to the property. Notably both managers have responded swiftly and effectively to the recommendations made.

Despite the number of children living in the home and the presenting risk issues, there have been few incidents of significant concern (7), and even less missing episodes (5). This is testament to the skill set which team members possess alongside the genuine care they have for the children. As a result, the children talk openly and honestly to their carers. The latter part of the reporting period has seen the use of cannabis from two of the young people which has increased. The acting manager is fully aware of this issue and is dealing with it proactively and creatively so that the relationships she and the team have with the children is not damaged.

The key strengths of this home are –

- The relationships the children have with their carers which are based on mutual respect and trust.
- The manager's commitment to her role, and that she works creatively to disrupt unsafe behaviours.

The areas of focus for this home are -

- To continue addressing the children's drug use.
- To improve the location and maintenance of the children's records and to ensure important documents about the children are regularly reviewed and updated by team members to maintain their accuracy.

"A young person who was due to move out of the home said "I have mixed feelings about moving back in with my mum. I will miss the staff, especially P. They have really helped me, and I know they will continue to help me when I leave".

"A young person's father said "he is doing very well, he is supported and cared for. All of his needs are met. He has a positive relationship with all staff and they welcome me when I visit. He likes living there; he much prefers it to foster care".

"A young person's IRO said "I have no concerns with the care that the home provides him with. They regularly keep in touch and report any issues regarding his behaviour and missing episodes. They are really supportive of his family time and any issues regarding fall outs for him. He has stated during reviews that he does feel he is listened to by carers and is able to report concerns. Carers know him well and he does seek out support from them. They will make themselves available to him".

4.6 Nook Lodge



Nook Lodge Children's Home, managed by Mark Cryer, is situated on the outskirts of a housing estate in Sunderland. The home provides care for up to three children, male or female, aged between 10 and 17 years old, for the duration of their needs.

During this reviewing period, three children have lived at the home for the first eight months (April to November) and two thereafter. Given the complex needs in respect of one of the girls, senior managers agreed that no further moves into the home would take place. The home has been in a state of disrepair for several months due to the girl's behaviour. Management made an informed choice to delay work until they had a grip on the behaviour

and a solution that would likely see a reduction in further damage. Maintenance issues have since been reported and the costing agreed however, despite the many requests made by the registered manager, the work remains outstanding. The disrepair of the home makes it an unpleasant environment for the children to live in, and this should be progressed as soon as possible.

The management structure at Nook Lodge replicates that of Maple Cottage's, as the registered and deputy manager oversee both homes. The two managers have a positive, professional working relationship with each other and have established a committed team in both homes, following a period of unsettlement due seniors covering both homes, vacancies, and sick leave. A restructure has taken place which is benefitting both homes, all of whom have a similar skill base, in terms of knowledge and experienced.

The last Ofsted inspection was undertaken on 11/12th October 2023, with an outcome of requires improvement to be good in all three areas. Whilst inspectors reported 'the home was not delivering good help and care to the children and young people', they stated, 'there were no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted'. Four requirements were made relating to planning, training, and recruitment. One recommendation was made in relation to allowing the children access to all shared areas of the home. This was in response to the children's main supply of snacks being locked away, although they had access to their daily supply. The action of storing snacks separately was agreed to support one of the children who was unable to manage her snacks appropriately which resulted in her consuming large amounts of chocolate. The registered manager addressed all issues and during the Assurance Visit undertaken on 19th March 2024, a more positive response was shared by the inspectors.

The October 2023 inspection happened soon after one child, with complex behavioural issues, moved out and two children moved in, (September 23) both of whom presented similarly, with complex behavioural needs. After a short period of time, it was clear the dynamics of the group were unmanageable, resulting in an alternative provision being identified for one of the children.

The moves and the disrepair of the home impacted upon the child who has lived at the home throughout the changes. She continues to express concerns, formally to her social worker, and via her Mind of My Own app, however, feels her social worker is not listening to her. Support and regular meetings continue to take place to explore her wishes and feelings, and the registered manager has raised the issues with senior personnel and further discussions are taking place about a potential move for the child who is presenting difficulties. The regulation 44 visitors continue to monitor this issue.

During this reporting period, announced and unannounced visits were generally positive although highlighted some concerns, primarily in relation to the demands on the senior team in both homes, as this issue impacted upon their management and oversight of day-to-day issues. This issue is now resolved.

The physical and emotional well-being of the children, their education and social needs have been supported, at this home, despite some concerns raised throughout this analysis. Carers worked hard to identify the correct education provision for the children, and attendance for one has consistently been reported as 100%, the other child is also making progress. No concerns were noted regarding the children's health needs, and both had access to a variety of opportunities and hobbies they are interested in.

In short, despite the negative outcome of the Ofsted inspection and the issues relating to senior cover and the behaviour of some of the children, carers at this home endeavoured to ensure that the children were safe, supported and cared for.

The strengths of this home are –

- Team members have the skills, knowledge, and experience to care for the children and consistently seek advice/support from the psychologist for cared for children, to support the children's emotional well-being.

- There are only two children living at this home as senior managers recognise that the dynamics of the children would not lend to a third child moving in, currently. This is positive as it enables the team to work more closely and intensively with each child.

The areas of focus for this home are -

- The home is in a state of disrepair, issues need to be progressed, as soon as possible, to provide the children a comfortable, aesthetically pleasing home to live in.
- The rear garden would also benefit from updating to enable the children to use the garden more.

“A young person’s SW stated, “I have no concerns about the quality of care afforded to her. All of her needs are met in this home, and she continues to make progress. She is more settled now that the other young person has moved out and she is spending more time with the carer”.”

“A young person said “she likes her bedroom and enjoys many of the activities on offer, particularly rock wall climbing, cycling, swimming, and going to the fair”. She also enjoys going to cadets and the Change Council.

She feels listened to and said carers respond kindly to her. She referred to the fact that she does not like some of the meals made, however, is able to choose her favourites, to include beans on white toast.”

“A young person’s gran was very complimentary of the team’s care of her granddaughter and is of the opinion that she is making progress at the home, and she feels she has settled down significantly following the move of another young person.”

4.7 Revelstoke Road



Revelstoke Road Children’s Home, managed by Mark Christie, is located within Sunderland North-West. It is decorated to an acceptable standard; however, all rooms are currently being updated. Externally, the gardens are maintained to a good standard, and accommodate a large summer house for the children to enjoy together, with their friends or as an area to ‘chill out’. All children have their own bedroom but share bathroom/toilet facilities.

The home provides therapeutic care for up to six children, male or female, aged between 10 and 17 years old, for the duration of their needs. Currently there are two 17-year-old children, two 14-year-old

children and two 11-year-old children, therefore a real mixture in ages, strengths, and needs.

The last Ofsted inspection, undertaken on 23th and 24th May 2023 rated the home Good, however Requires Improvement in the area of Help and Protect. The inspector identified that children’s risk assessments did not contain all of the necessary information. In addition, on one occasion the

missing from home protocol was not followed. The management team responded swiftly to address these concerns.

This home has an established, experienced senior team, all of whom are appropriately qualified to manage the team and provide therapeutic care to all children. The team's ethos is, 'to use the "Therapeutic Reparenting" model to help young people be the best they can be and reach their potential by repairing developmental trauma. Children will experience the unconditional love, care, and attention that a 'good enough' parent would provide'.

Certainly, from observations and through discussion with professionals involved with the children, the team support the children exactly as their ethos describes. An example of this relates to one of the children who moved to live at the home in December 22, whilst he was born a female he identifies as a male. This child had also experienced familial trauma whilst at home, therefore arrived with very complex behaviour and emotional needs, hence, initially, the many recorded critical incidents, missing from care episodes, self-harming injuries, and reports to Ofsted. With the therapeutic intervention and support provided by the team, and external agencies, it has been with great pleasure to engage with a much calmer, happier child, who rarely engages in the concerning behaviour highlighted above. This is without doubt a credit to the team.

During this reporting period, announced and unannounced visits highlighted that whilst the team were managing difficult and complex behaviour, particularly in relation to one child, all children were provided with one-to-one time and many celebrations were recorded. From April 23 to August 23, three children were cared for. The reason for this was due to the presenting behaviour of one of the children, whose behaviour was impacting upon the children and the team's management of them. The team were of the view that no further moves should be agreed until the child's behaviour improved however, he returned to live with his family, following which more moves to the home were supported.

Despite the concerns noted, missing from care episodes, (97), critical incidents (45), Ofsted notifications (30), only ten recommendations were made throughout the reporting period. This would suggest that the team responded appropriately to all issues they were faced with, and safeguarded the children, using their therapeutic re-parenting response and by working in partnership with other agencies.

The physical and emotional well-being of the children, their education and social needs have been consistently met, to a good standard. Most of the children had access to an education placement and were supported to attend and achieve, all had access to a variety of opportunities to include activities (cinema trips, trampoline parks, walks, park visits and beach trips) and hobbies (swimming lessons) they are interested in, and their emotional well-being needs, were met.

The strengths of this home are –

- All team members have the skills, experience, and knowledge, to provide the children with a therapeutic re-parenting response which is positively impacting upon them. All young children have therapeutic plans that are reviewed, by the team and the psychologist linked to the home.
- The team have managed to adapt their parenting of the varying ages of children, to meet their individual needs. They have also supported the older children to be more accepting of the younger ones more childlike (silly) behaviour, which has been a challenge, at times.

The areas of focus for this home are -

- The home needs to be updated and decorated throughout. Timescales for the work would enable the children to know when their home will be refurbished to a more acceptable standard.
- To help those children who choose not to go to school to complete homework tasks at home.

A young person reported that he felt welcomed by the team when he moved in, was shown around the home and all rules were explained to him. He felt cared for, relaxed, and enjoyed the activities on offer and that he likes his bedroom.

A young person's social worker stated, she has settled in well and has received lots of support from the staff. I am kept updated with any worries and communication between myself and staff is excellent. Her bedroom has been decorated to suit her own taste, she is in a routine and responds well to the boundaries in place. Communication is also very good between previous carers -who still care for her twin sister – and they support her with emotions around family time. All meetings are attended to share information with the care team'.

A young person's independent reviewing officer reported "she has only recently moved into the home and so far, she has settled in well and I have observed lots of emotional warmth shown to her by carers at the home, something that she hasn't had in her previous home. Carers have been very engaging with myself and attended her care review meeting and provided me with updates and explained about the therapeutic parenting that they can offer her whilst living there. She will be moving schools, and they will support her with this".