

# 1271135

Registered provider: Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

This local authority children's home cares for seven children who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. Care is provided in the main house which can accommodate up to five children, and a separate smaller building which can care for up to two children.

At the time of this inspection, four children were living in the home.

The home is managed by an experienced and suitably qualified registered manager.

### Inspection dates: 3 and 4 November 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:** 18 and 19 August 2021

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement   |
|-----------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| 18/08/2021      | Full            | Good                   |
| 12/06/2019      | Full            | Good                   |
| 27/02/2019      | Interim         | Improved effectiveness |
| 04/06/2018      | Full            | Good                   |

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good**

Strong and effective decision-making about which children come to live at the home results in children living together in a harmonious and safe home environment. Children build relationships with each other and with the staff caring for them. This provides children with opportunities to make progress and have positive experiences of residential care.

Since the last inspection, a number of children have moved on from the home in line with their care plans. One child has moved to another local authority residential home and other children have moved to foster families. Some children are now fostered by staff who cared for them at the home.

The high standard of care children have received from staff has given them the skills, knowledge and increased resilience to move forward with their lives. They have developed long-lasting relationships with trusted and nurturing adults.

Children have regular opportunities to voice their views and wishes through one-to-one time with staff. Children are told about how they can raise informal 'grumbles' and formal complaints. Children spoken to during inspection told the inspector that they would be confident to raise issues of concern to them, but had not yet felt the need to do so. Children say they enjoy living at the home and have good relationships with staff.

Children are supported to maintain or rekindle relationships with their families when it is in their best interests to do so. Where appropriate, staff support children to spend time with their families in the community. Staff encourage parents to be involved in their children's lives in line with their care plans. One parent said: 'They have supported us to get an increase in family time. I don't feel like they judge me. I am made to feel like I am still part of my child's life.'

The positive and inclusive approach from staff means that children are able to retain their sense of belonging and identity. Children experience care and support from a number of adults, whether they be family members or care staff.

When children are not in school, or when children's educational settings are not meeting their needs, staff advocate for children. When staff identify there may be a need for further assessment of a child's cognitive or sensory needs, they work with the relevant services to progress this work. This contributes to children having access to learning opportunities that meet their needs.

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

Staff have a good understanding of the strengths and vulnerabilities of children. The staff team is involved in well-embedded, multi-agency information-sharing and joint working, which helps identify and reduce risks to children.

Written risk assessments, risk reduction plans and placement plans are of good quality. They provide staff with the information they need to act to safeguard the children in their care.

One child is assessed as at high risk of criminal exploitation and these risks have increased over recent months. The child has lived at the home for a lengthy period of time. Staff have worked with patience and persistence to build relationships with the child and effect some positive changes in his life.

Leaders and managers have responded to increases in risks to the child while in the community in a thoughtful and considered manner. They have a clear rationale for making the decision that they are no longer able to offer the child a reasonable level of safety. Leaders and managers are working with the child's social worker to identify a more suitable placement for him.

Children experience care in the home which, for the most part, keeps them safe. The use of physical intervention is minimal and, where used, is appropriate. Records of these incidents are detailed and there is timely oversight from the registered manager. This practice helps children build trusting relationships with staff.

Some children are allowed to keep cigarettes and e-cigarettes in their bedrooms. There is no written assessment of the potential risks associated with this practice, and therefore no clear rationale for this decision-making. One child has video games in his bedroom that are certified as unsuitable for children under the age of 18. There is a lack of recognition or acknowledgement of the impact of access to unsuitable material on children.

Room searches are undertaken when this is necessary to keep children safe. Records for these searches are clear. Children are not always being asked to sign these records. Other records contain children's electronic signatures. It is not clear if children have read or been made aware of these records. These practices result in a lack of clarity about children's knowledge of, and involvement in, the recording of their care.

When children go missing from home, staff follow the actions detailed in children's plans to ensure they return home safely. Children are provided with independent return home interviews from an independent person from the local authority. Records of these events do not always distinguish between visits to children by police to conduct safe and well checks and the visits from the local authority independent visitors. This means there is a lack of accountability for practice in this area.

## **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

Leadership and management of the home is strong. Children and staff benefit from the commitment and expertise of the registered manager and the senior staff member with responsibility for children living in the annex to the main home.

Leaders and managers are positive role models for their staff. Staff say they enjoy working at the home. Children benefit from a consistent, stable and skilled staff team, and staff feel well supported by their managers. Practice throughout the home is child-centred.

Staff receive regular, good-quality supervision and annual reviews of their practice. This provides staff with an opportunity to reflect on their practice and the contribution they make to the progress and experience of children.

The registered manager has good oversight of practice in the home. Quality of care reports are evaluative and include the views of children, families and external professionals. The registered manager has established systems in place for monitoring and review.

The records of children coming to live at and leaving the home do not contain the child's legal status, as required by regulation. This has not had any impact on children's care.

The registered manager is a strong advocate for the children in her care. She represents the residential service to a high standard in her work with other professionals, within and external to the local authority. This ensures that the voice of those staff who are involved in children's day-to-day care, and who know them well, is listened to when making decisions about children's lives.

Since the last inspection, leaders and managers have overseen the temporary closure of the main building for a number of months to allow for refurbishment. On completion of this work, children now have a lovely home environment which meets their needs, and is a welcoming and secure place to live. It helps children feel valued.

Leaders and managers have taken a well-considered approach to decision-making about children coming to live at the home since it has reopened. Currently, two children are living in the main building, which is registered to care for up to five children. This thoughtful and child-focused practice means that children have the best possible environment to make progress and have positive experiences of living at the home.

## 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         |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| <p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(b))</p> <p>Specifically, the registered person should ensure that children do not have access to electronic games and other material which is classified for adults. Also, that the rationale for decision-making in relation to children keeping smoking equipment in their bedrooms is included in their individual risk assessments.</p> | 30 November 2022 |
| <p>Schedule 4 sets out the other information that the registered person must keep in relation to a children's home.</p> <p>The registered person must—</p> <p>maintain in the home the records in Schedule 4;</p> <p>ensure that the records are kept up to date. (Regulation 37 (1) (2)(a)(b))</p> <p>Schedule 4</p> <p>A record in the form of a register showing in respect of each child—</p> <p>the date of the child's admission to the home;</p> <p>the date on which the child ceased to be accommodated in the home;</p> <p>the child's address immediately before being accommodated in the home;</p> <p>the child's address on leaving the home;</p>                                                                       | 30 November 2022 |

|                                                                                                                  |  |
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| the child's placing authority; and<br>the statutory provision (if any) under which the child is<br>accommodated. |  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|

## Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that when children's electronic signatures are being used in care records, staff record if the child has read and agreed the record. Children should be encouraged to sign records of room searches and staff should record if the child has declined to sign the record. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraphs 14.5 and 14.6)
- The registered person should ensure that missing from home records clearly distinguish between the completion of police safe and well checks and the completion of independent return home interviews. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)

## 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:** 1271135

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council

**Registered provider address:** Spend and Provider Management Hub, Upper Ground Floor, Stopford House, Piccadilly, Stockport SK1 3XE

**Responsible individual:** Laura Hopkinson

**Registered manager:** Elizabeth Vetcher

## Inspector

Dawn Parton, Social Care Inspector

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