

2484441

Registered provider: Stoke-on-Trent City Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is operated by the local authority and offers care for two children who have experienced early childhood instability and trauma that have led to associated complex behaviours.

The manager has applied to register with Ofsted. The manager is suitably qualified.

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 March 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 21 March 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/03/2023	Full	Good
14/09/2021	Full	Good
21/05/2019	Full	Good
11/12/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Since the last inspection, four children have moved into the home and three children have moved out. At the time of inspection, there were two children living in the home. They said they were happy and that they liked the staff.

Staff ensure that children's health needs are met. Children are supported to attend all their routine health appointments. Staff promote children's fitness and well-being by assisting them to attend activities such as going on nature walks, swimming and going to the gym. The provider's clinical team helps staff to provide care which supports children's emotional health. Additionally, staff seek specialist help when necessary.

Children's education is promoted by the manager and staff. When a child found it difficult to access education, the manager and education professionals quickly identified an alternative education provision to meet their needs. Staff and education providers work in partnership to maximise children's opportunities for academic success.

Children have developed positive and trusting relationships with staff. One child made a card for a staff member, with a message expressing gratitude and admiration for the support they were receiving. Staff and children have positive interactions. Children's views, wishes and feelings are sought through daily conversations, key-work sessions and children's meetings. This helps children to influence the care they receive, as well as helping them to understand that their opinions are important. This helps to increase children's self-esteem.

The manager and staff understand the importance of promoting children's relationships with people who are important to them. They ensure that safe and meaningful family time takes place for children when appropriate. One parent said, '[Name of child] is a lot happier at contact. This is because [name of child] is happier and feels more supported by the home's staff.' This practice supports children to maintain their identity, as well as their relationships with people who are significant in their lives.

Children are supported well by staff when they move out of the home. One child enjoyed a farewell party. Staff decorated the home, creating a festive atmosphere for the child to say goodbye to everyone. Furthermore, children are presented with memory books filled with pictures capturing their time at the home and staff give them cards and gifts when they leave.

The home requires some internal maintenance. The children's bathroom has signs of wear and tear, with damaged plaster on the walls. Cleanliness is lacking throughout the home and the paintwork needs refreshing. These conditions undermine the comfort of the environment.

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

Staff keep children safe through prioritising their safety and welfare. Children's risk assessments are detailed and include clear guidance for staff to follow. When concerns have been highlighted, staff and the manager have responded promptly, taking appropriate action to ensure that children are kept safe, and issues are investigated. Children say staff keep them safe.

There have been very few safeguarding incidents in the home. When incidents do occur, staff manage them appropriately and follow the correct safeguarding procedures to ensure that children are kept safe.

Staff respond quickly when children go missing from home. They follow missing-from-home procedures, search for the children and work with the local police until children are found. When children return to the home, staff spend time with them, giving them the opportunity to share any worries they have and to discuss their reasons for going missing. Staff use their professional curiosity to understand children's emerging risks, so that they can provide the right support and reduce the likelihood of children going missing.

Health and safety procedures, including fire safety arrangements, are safe. Regular checks and tests are conducted on fire equipment, and staff and children practise fire evacuations. These measures ensure the safety of everyone in the home in the event of a fire.

Staff know how to use physical intervention when necessary, and use it only as a last resort to keep children and others safe from harm. Following all incidents, children and staff review and reflect on what has happened and identify any lessons to be learned.

There has been one incident when staff called the police unnecessarily to address a child's behaviour. This practice could cause children to be criminalised unnecessarily.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is managed by a qualified, experienced and competent manager, who has applied to register with Ofsted. The manager is supported by an organised deputy manager who is keen to learn and develop. Both managers know the children well and are child-centred in their approach. This approach is shared with the staff team in a way that motivates them. Staff respect and value the leadership team. One member of staff said, 'The home is managed well, the manager is very supportive, and he listens to the kids, and the deputy manager is just brilliant.' The home operates with a full permanent staff team, which provides children with continuity of care.

Staff are supported through regular supervision and annual appraisals. They say this helps them to reflect on their practice and encourages their professional

development. The manager conducts effective team meetings where the needs of children and safeguarding are central topics of discussion. The in-house clinical team offers additional insight into the home's model of care and supports the implementation of research in practice. This guidance aids staff in supporting children to overcome difficulties and emotional barriers that they may encounter. In addition to this, the clinical team provides welfare support for staff, helping staff to be more resilient.

The manager and staff maintain effective partnerships with external agencies to ensure that children's care is well coordinated. Feedback from external professionals was good. One social worker said, 'Communication is really good. I have daily updates from staff.'

In general, staff have the necessary training to meet the children's needs. However, they lack training in dealing with incidents involving children going missing. However, this gap in training has not had an impact on the good support and care provided to children on the occasions that they have gone missing from home.

On one occasion, the manager failed to challenge external professionals when the minutes of a child's review meeting were not received within a suitable timeframe. Although this has not had a detrimental effect on the child, having up-to-date records is necessary to ensure that care is being delivered in line with the local authority's plan for the child.

While the manager's internal monitoring systems are generally good, occasionally, they fail to identify weaknesses. For example, the home's independent visitor has not consistently spoken to the children during their visits. This had not been identified and addressed by the manager. The absence of this feedback hinders the opportunities for enhancing the home's care and services and prevents children from having the opportunity to share their views about their care with an independent person.

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, The 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
In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— seek to involve each child's placing authority effectively in the child's care, in accordance with the child's relevant plans; seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child's needs; if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 5 (a)(b)(c)) The registered person should actively challenge external professionals when records of children's statutory reviews are delayed.	12 April 2024
The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child; and	12 April 2024

enable each child to participate in the daily life of the home.
(Regulation 6(1)(a)(b)(2)(c)(i)(ii))

This specifically relates to the registered person ensuring that the home is kept clean and well maintained and any necessary repairs are carried out.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that when children make choices that could endanger themselves or others, that staff assist the children in understanding the risks associated with their behaviour. This specifically relates to staff only calling the police out to manage children's behaviours when all other options, such as de-escalation, have been exhausted. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.7)
- The registered person should ensure that staff have the necessary training and skills to safeguard children. This specifically relates to staff being trained to deal with incidents involving children going missing. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 43, paragraph 9.12)
- The registered person should actively seek internal monitoring and independent scrutiny of the home, including under regulation 44, to ensure continuous improvement. This specifically relates to the registered manager having robust oversight of the independent person's monthly visits, including ensuring that the visitor seeks the views of children living in the home. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)

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: 2484441

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Stoke-on-Trent City Council

Registered provider address: City of Stoke-on-Trent, Swann House, Boothem Road, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST4 4SY

Responsible individual: Tracey Docksey

Registered manager: Post Vacant

Inspector

Jas Nahar, Social Care Inspector

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