

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 home is run by the local authority. It provides care for up to two children who have experienced early childhood instability that has led to trauma and/or associated complex behaviours.

Two children were living at the home at the time of the inspection. Both were present and one child talked with the inspector.

The manager registered with Ofsted in June 2024. The manager is also registered for another of the local authority's children's homes.

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 February 2025

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: 12 March 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/03/2024	Full	Good
21/03/2023	Full	Good
14/09/2021	Full	Good
21/05/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Since the last inspection, five children have moved into the home and five children have moved out. The approach of managers and staff when children move into and on from the home contributes to all children having positive experiences. Children's needs are carefully assessed before they move into the home. Managers consider the needs of each child alongside the needs of any other child living in the home. When possible, children meet staff and visit the home before they move in, and staff receive additional training when required to meet children's needs. This approach helps children to feel less anxious about the move and staff to be clear about the complexity of children's needs and how they should meet them when they move in.

Children have carefully planned moves from the home, in line with their local authority care plans. Managers advocate well for children to ensure appropriate placements are identified before children move on. When necessary, managers challenge decisions for children that may not be in their best interests. Managers also agree to extend children's time in the home to ensure they are adequately prepared for moving on. Managers and staff keep in touch with children who have moved on. This child-centred approach to care planning has contributed to children making progress and achieving stability and positive outcomes.

Children's culture and diversity needs are promoted. Staff ensure they acquire the appropriate knowledge and skills to be able to understand children's family history, religion, ethnicity and culture. Collaborative working with families takes place to ensure these needs are appropriately understood and met. This practice has contributed to one child successfully repairing their relationship with their family, which resulted in a successful return home. Professionals comment on the progress children make when they move into the home because of the commitment from staff to promote their culture and address their diversity needs.

Staff are committed to promoting children's education. When children do not want to attend school, staff and managers explore the barriers and take effective action to reduce these barriers. Managers advocate for children to ensure they attend the most appropriate education setting, and provide opportunities for children to learn in the home or in the community. Staff take children to provisions outside the area if their needs require this. The support from managers and staff has contributed to all children making progress with their education from their starting points.

Children's health and well-being needs are met effectively. Their health needs are understood by staff and they have access to all the relevant services they require. Specialist help is available according to the individual needs of the child. This includes support for children who communicate non-verbally. Managers ensure that appropriate training and support are available to staff to ensure they can support children to communicate their views, irrespective of their age. This support ensures children are in

good health and their right to have their views heard is respected. Consequently, children thrive and have positive experiences.

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

Children develop safe, stable and secure relationships with staff. These actively support positive behaviours and provide the foundations to manage unwanted behaviours. As a result, children say they feel safe. One child said the biggest change they have noticed since moving into the home is they feel safer and happier. Children name staff who support them and help them feel safe. This contributes to children settling in the home and feeling increasingly safe.

Staff have a good understanding of children's individual needs and risks. Any risks are known and understood by staff. Individual risk assessments identify children's current situations and set out clear guidance for staff to follow if children are in crisis. Staff ensure that children have access to external agencies to support them to experience better emotional well-being and develop positive coping strategies when they are in crisis. When children self-harm, staff take prompt and appropriate action to ensure their immediate safety. This support has contributed to a significant reduction in incidents where children harm themselves.

Physical intervention is only used as a last resort to safeguard children. Managers review incidents and comment on the appropriateness of each intervention. There has been one incident when shortfalls in staff practice were missed by the manager. This prevented learning and development to improve the quality of care staff provide to children. The manager also failed to be aware that a member of staff involved in a restraint discussed this with the child. This practice prevents the child from sharing their views of the incident with an independent person. This could leave children being harmed and not reporting it.

The response by managers and staff to allegations varies. Managers generally share information with the relevant people without delay. Managers ask social workers to visit children and gain their views of the concerns. Managers also ensure that children and staff are safeguarded, by ensuring that staff who are the subject of allegations do not work in the home with children when investigations are under way. On one occasion, a child said they were not happy with the way they were handled during a physical intervention. This was not explored or shared with relevant professionals. This practice leaves children vulnerable to harm and could make them feel their concerns are not taken seriously.

When children are missing from home, staff take prompt action to search for them. There was one incident when staff did not follow children's missing-from-home protocols when the children did not respond to welfare checks when they were out in the community. Although children did not suffer harm, this could leave children vulnerable to harm.

Staff and managers ensure that the home is a safe place for children by carrying out all required health and safety checks. Managers and staff ensure that stair gates and other age-appropriate safety mechanisms are in place when young children live in the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

A suitably qualified and experienced manager and a deputy manager lead the team. The managers are child centred and have an ambitious vision for the children and the staff. The managers know children well and are present and involved in children's lives.

Professionals and parents are very complimentary of the care staff and managers provide to children. One parent whose child has neurodiverse needs said the staff 'go above and beyond' for their child. As a result, the child has made the most progress they have made since being moving into the home, having had eight previous placements.

The managers ensure that children are supported by a motivated team of staff who have completed the relevant training to meet children's individual and neurodiverse needs. Team meetings and monthly consultations with the home's clinical psychologists provide opportunities for staff to better understand children's needs, to improve the care they provide. This has enabled staff to provide individualised care to children, which has supported them to settle and make progress from their starting points.

Staff receive monthly practice-related supervision. This gives them an opportunity to reflect on their well-being, development and any practice issues they may have. Staff are positive about the quality of the supervision and the support they receive from the managers. Staff say that despite the staffing issues, they feel supported and equipped to care for children.

Leaders and managers are open about the challenges they face with staffing and the impact this has on the consistency and quality of care to children. Two staff have left the home since the last inspection and two new staff have started work. Managers rely on temporary staff to provide consistency for children. Managers ensure that when they use agency staff, they are safely recruited. However, managers have missed an opportunity to ensure that agency staff have the relevant training to physically intervene and support children. Managers have reflected on this and acknowledged this is not effective care planning.

The managers use a variety of reviewing and monitoring systems to ensure they have oversight of all areas of the home. These systems have, on the whole, been effective in providing the managers with insight into the progress of children. However, there have been some missed opportunities when managers reviewed incidents but did not identify shortfalls in practice. This could leave children vulnerable to harm.

Managers have ensured that the independent person visits the home monthly and actively seeks the views of professionals, children and all relevant people. However, the regulator has not received some of the reports. This was explored with the manager

during the inspection and the manager identified an issue with the administrative team. This issue was resolved during the inspection.

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
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(vi)(vii)) This specifically relates to the registered manager ensuring that when children share concerns about staff practice, their concerns are explored appropriately and that when children go missing from home, staff follow children's missing-from-home protocols.	30 April 2025
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—	30 April 2025

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;

ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child;

understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home

use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(c)(h))

This specifically relates to the manager ensuring that children are cared for by staff who are appropriately trained to support them if they are in crisis. Also, when incident reviews highlight shortfalls in practice, that action plans are promptly implemented to address them.

Recommendations

- The registered person should have robust oversight of the independent person's monthly visits, and ensure the regulator receives the reports promptly. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)
- The registered person should ensure that any child who has been restrained should be given the opportunity to express their feelings about their experience of the restraint as soon as is practicable, ideally within 24 hours of the restraint incident. In any case where restraint is used, it must comply with the requirements of regulation. This specifically relates to the registered person ensuring that children can talk about the incident to a member of staff who was not involved in the restraint. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 50, paragraph 9.60)

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: Civic Centre, Glebe Street, Floor 2, Stoke-on-Trent ST4 1HH

Responsible individual: Tracey Docksey

Registered manager: Lee Davies

Inspector

Nateisha Cardoza-Evans, Social Care Inspector

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