

2484586

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 and registered to provide care for up to two children with emotional and social difficulties because of early childhood trauma.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since September 2020.

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 September 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account

Requires improvement to be good

How well children and young people are helped and protected

Requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

Requires improvement to be good

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 13 December 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
13/12/2022	Full	Good
06/07/2021	Full	Good
10/12/2019	Full	Good
15/01/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: Requires improvement to be good

At the time of the inspection, one child was living in the home. Two children have left the home since the last inspection. Both children had positive experiences leaving the home. One child was supported to return to live with their family. The other child was supported to move to a placement that could better meet their needs. The inspector spoke with the child living in the home and spoke with a child who recently moved out as part of the inspection. Shortfalls in help and protection and the leadership and management of the home have impacted on the overall progress and experiences for children.

The staff support children to maintain meaningful relationships with people who are important to them and speak positively about the manager and some staff. However, some new friendships made by children have resulted in incidents taking place, including significant damage to the home and increased risk for children. Repairs and redecoration have taken place. However, there are some minor repairs outstanding.

The manager and staff have not been able to promote children's engagement with attending school or accessing education. Therefore, children have not achieved educational outcomes or made progress with their learning since the last inspection. The manager and staff have tried different strategies to encourage children to engage with education. When these have not been successful, there has been no effective review of their plans. Therefore, children spend most of their day out of the home without a clear, structured routine in place.

The child living at the home has been there for several years, and she has made some progress from her starting points. Since the last inspection, the manager and staff have supported the child to understand and promote her cultural needs. For example, the manager and staff have supported the child with caring for her hair and exploring food and other cultural practices in line with her ethnicity. This support has assisted the child to experience better self-esteem, improved physical presentation and positive emotional well-being. The manager and staff also advocated on behalf of the child to receive further support to explore her family history to contribute to her life story and promote her identity development. As a result, a requirement made at the last inspection has been met.

Staff and managers support children to improve their physical and emotional health and well-being. Staff support children to overcome barriers to attending health appointments. Children enjoy a varied and balanced diet. Managers and staff have monthly consultations with a clinical psychologist. This is used to improve care planning and has been effective in improving the care that staff provide to children. This allows staff to understand the reasons behind children's behaviours to provide child-centred care.

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

Risk has not always been well managed. Children have developed friendships with other children from the community who were not identified as a positive peer influence. These associations resulted in a significant increase in the children going missing from home and engaging in antisocial behaviours, causing damage to the home and other homes in the community. The manager and staff have worked with other agencies to reduce this risk and disrupt this behaviour.

One child who was at risk of exploitation online was given a new device that increased the risk she was exposed to. Despite this, the child's risk assessment was not updated, and no strategies were put in place to ensure her online safety.

Incidents of self-harm are rare. When there have been incidents of self-injurious behaviour, staff actions have been appropriate and support for the child has been sought. However, the manager did not ensure that one child's self-harm risk assessment was updated after incidents took place. Consequently, the risk assessment did not appropriately reflect the child's current situation or risk. This practice does not keep children safe or promote their welfare.

Children's missing-from-home protocols do not provide clear and consistent guidance to staff when children go missing. Records when children go missing are not well recorded, including what actions staff took to locate them. There have been several occasions when staff did not follow plans when children went missing. While children were not harmed on these occasions, this practice places children at risk of being harmed.

During one incident, a child's family member was aggressive to staff. Despite this incident being upsetting for children who witnessed what took place, and a risk to staff, the manager failed to make a notification to Ofsted. This prevents the regulator's oversight of incidents.

The manager and staff take allegations seriously, and children are at the centre of their investigations. This practice prioritises children's safety and makes children feel safe and valued by staff and the manager.

Physical interventions are rare and used as a last resort. When staff intervene to manage children's behaviours or to keep them safe, the manager has debriefed with children and staff. This response ensures that children's behaviours are managed safely, and any practice issues are identified and addressed promptly.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

A suitably qualified and experienced manager leads the team. The manager has a good knowledge of children's starting points and what they have accomplished since living at the home.

Internal monitoring has not identified some of the shortfalls identified at the inspection. External monitoring is poor. The quality of the monthly reports by the independent visitor varies and occasionally does not meet the statutory requirement. The visitor rarely comments on whether children are safeguarded effectively, and if their welfare is promoted. The manager and responsible individual have plans in place to address this concern.

Recruitment practice is not sufficiently robust. This is because managers are not professionally curious about gaps in staff employment records or ensure that sufficient checks are undertaken and obtained before new staff commence employment in the home. Weaknesses in safe recruitment of staff mean managers cannot be sure they only recruit suitable staff to care for children.

Following a period of instability in the home, there have been a number of bank staff used to support the permanent staff team. One member of staff said that staff morale was low.

Staff are qualified and have up-to-date appraisals. Staff are suitably trained to manage the children's identified and diverse needs. Team meetings and supervision sessions take place monthly and are now used as a place for reflection and learning. Important issues are tracked and discussed, and children are at the centre of these discussions.

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 education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— support each child's learning and development, including helping the child to develop independent study skills and, where appropriate, helping the child to complete independent study; understand the barriers to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child to overcome any such barriers; promote opportunities for each child to learn informally. (Regulation 8 (1) (2)(a)(ii)(iii)(v)) This particularly refers to the registered manager and staff ensuring that children are supported to overcome barriers to attending education, and engage with their learning.	1 December 2023
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;	1 December 2023

take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(vi)) This particularly relates to the registered manager and staff ensuring that children have up-to-date risk assessments which appropriately reflect their current risk and strategies to reduce risk. It also relates to the registered manager and staff taking action to safeguard children as set out in children's plans.	
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— 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) (2)(f)(h)) In particular, that the manager uses internal and external monitoring to identify priorities for improvement to the quality of care for children.	1 December 2023
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The requirements are that— full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1) (3)(d))	1 December 2023
The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month.	1 December 2023

The independent person must produce a report about a visit ("the independent person's report") which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether—

children are effectively safeguarded; and

the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being.
(Regulation 44 (1) (4)(a)(b))

This specifically relates to managers ensuring that the independent person sets out clearly in their report whether children are safeguarded effectively and their well-being is promoted.

Recommendations

- The registered person should notify Ofsted and other relevant persons if there is an incident relating to the protection, safeguarding or welfare of a child living in the home which the registered person considers to be serious. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 63, paragraph 14.1)
- The registered person should ensure that the home is well maintained, with any repairs undertaken as soon as possible. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

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: 2484586

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: City of Stoke-on-Trent

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

Responsible individual: Tracey Docksey

Registered manager: Medan Case-Peart

Inspector

Nateisha Cardoza-Evans, Social Care Inspector

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