

2525774

Registered provider: Stepping Stones Children's Homes Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a private children's home registered for up to four children who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since May 2019.

Inspection dates: 24 to 25 September 2019

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 is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: This is the home's first inspection since registration.

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date

Inspection type

Inspection judgement

This is the home's first inspection since registration.

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
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— help each child to achieve the child's education and training targets, as recorded in the child's relevant plans; maintain regular contact with each child's education and training provider, including engaging with the provider and the placing authority to support the child's education and training and to maximise the child's achievement; raise any need for further assessment or specialist provision in relation to a child with the child's education or training provider and the child's placing authority. (Regulation 8(1),(2)(a)(i)(vi)(vii))	01/11/2019
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; help each child to understand how to keep safe; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at	01/11/2019

risk of harm; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; 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. 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)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(v)(vi)(vii)(b))	
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— 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; 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)(g)(h))	01/11/2019
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which— include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child; are kept up to date; and are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36(1)(a)(b)(c))	01/11/2019

Recommendations

- The registered person should only accept placements for children where they are satisfied that the home can respond effectively to the child's assessed needs as recorded in the child's relevant plans and where they have fully considered the impact that the placement will have on the existing group of children. The Statement of Purpose is an important document in the process of care planning as it sets out the needs of children the home is set up and equipped to care for. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 56, paragraph 11.4)
- Ensure that children can spend time away from other group members, and their privacy is respected. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards' page 16, paragraph 3.17) Specifically, that the home provides sufficient space for children to meet privately with visiting professionals.

Inspection judgements

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

This is the home's first full inspection since registration in May 2019. Young people have mixed outcomes in relation to their individual starting points. At the time of this inspection, two young people were accommodated. In August 2019, the manager served notice on one young person's placement because they were unable to manage his unsafe behaviours. Another young person has reached an age where they are asserting their independence and refusing to return to the home. The manager has served notice on this placement.

Young people spoken to say that they have good relationships with staff and feel cared for. Young people are regularly consulted about their daily routines and plans. For example, one-to-one sessions take place regularly and young people's meetings are held weekly. Placement plans, healthcare plans and education plans are in place; however, it is unclear how these are used by staff to inform their care of young people in the home. Some young people's needs are not addressed by staff and individual needs are not always well met.

Most young people have a history of poor educational attendance and engagement. Young people are receiving a few hours of tuition in the home each day; this is currently lower than 25 hours a week. There has been a delay in reviewing the educational arrangements, which means young people are not yet receiving an education that fully meets their needs.

Young people are registered with local health services and staff ensure that they have access to these services, as and when they need them. The home has made arrangements for a clinical psychologist to meet regularly with staff to provide advice and training on supporting young people's emotional needs. The impact of this on young people's emotional and psychological well-being is not yet apparent.

Staff promote and facilitate contact taking place and ensure that contact is a positive and safe experience for young people. Young people are provided with a broad range of positive activities. Consequently, they can improve their social skills and develop their interests and hobbies.

The physical environment is maintained to a good standard and has a homely feel. Young people individualise their bedrooms, reflecting their interests and personalities. However, there is not always the space for young people to meet with visitors in private. The manager said that they are considering plans to create additional rooms. A recommendation is made to ensure that these plans are progressed.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Safeguarding practice does not consistently promote the safety and welfare of young people. Staff are aware of the risks associated with young people's unsafe behaviours; however, the strategies in place to manage these have not always been sufficiently robust. For example, young people subject to Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) were able to leave the home unchecked.

On another occasion, a lapse in staff vigilance resulted in a young person removing a tablet computer from a staff member's bag in the office. The young person then accessed the staff member's Facebook account. These lapses in staff vigilance potentially compromise the welfare and safety of young people.

Incidents of young people going missing from the home are relatively low. However, missing-from-home protocols were only completed following young people going missing from the home. This is despite young people having a history of missing behaviour prior to coming to live at the home.

Individual risk assessments and crisis management plans identify young people's risks and vulnerabilities. However, they contain conflicting information, particularly in relation to the levels of staff supervision. For example, one young person's risk assessment states that they require one-to-one supervision, two-to-one and three-to-one supervision.

In other examples, evidence was found where the manager and staff failed to identify and respond effectively to a risk of self-harm. A young person was admitted to hospital following an incident of self-harm; however, no action was taken to plan for the risk of this happening again. This means that young people's welfare and safety are not consistently protected.

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

There is a suitably qualified and experienced manager in place. However, the leadership and management of the home are not yet good enough. There are a number of shortfalls that have compromised the welfare, safety and experiences of young people.

Staff retention has been an issue since registration, with several people leaving the company. Swift action is taken to recruit new staff, ensuring that staffing levels are maintained. Five new staff have started work at the home since July 2019. This has led to young people with very complex needs being cared for by staff who are not well established in the home.

Staff receive supervision regularly, enabling them to reflect on their practice and focus on their development. One new member of staff was very positive about their induction and said that the manager and staff are very supportive.

Staff have access to training designed to develop their skills and knowledge. However, training could be further improved to meet the complex needs of the young people. For example, training to help staff understand the safeguarding processes for those young people who are subject to a DoLS order.

The standard of record-keeping is not yet good enough. During the inspection, a number of shortfalls were identified, including inaccurate recording. Young people's case records do not provide a clear picture of their day-to-day lives or how their progress is being measured. This limits the manager's oversight of young people's progress from their starting points.

The manager and staff seek to build effective working relationships with partner agencies to secure positive outcomes for young people. Feedback from these stakeholders received during the inspection was overwhelmingly positive. That said, some young people's plans have drifted, and there has been a lack of sufficient challenge by the manager to formalise arrangements with partner agencies, such as education plans.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: 2525774

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Stepping Stones Children's Homes Ltd

Registered provider address: 34 Church Street, Hyde, Cheshire SK14 1JJ

Responsible individual: Ahtesham-UI Haque

Registered manager: Sonia Bennett

Inspectors

Michelle Bacon: social care inspector

Shabana Abasi: Her Majesty's Inspector

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