

2588593

Registered provider: Stepping Stones Care Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately owned home provides care for up to four children who experience social and emotional difficulties.

The manager registered with Ofsted in January 2024.

There were two children living in the home at the time of this inspection. One child had left in August 2024.

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 October 2024

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: 27 February 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
27/02/2024	Full	Good
06/12/2022	Full	Good
28/06/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Since the last inspection, one child has moved out, and there are two children living in the home. One child was spoken to during the inspection, and both children were observed interacting with staff and each other.

Children are made to feel welcome. Staff create a warm and homely environment where children feel comfortable to express their worries and share laughter in their home. Staff show and tell the children that they are loved, allowing children to build trusting and secure relationships with the staff, who come to know the children well.

When children do not wish to engage with formal community mental health services, they are consistently supported to engage positively in therapeutic support in an informal and relaxed way with an in-house therapist. Staff also benefit from reflective discussions with an in-house therapeutic lead to help them to better understand how to build relationships and support the children they care for.

Staff support children to make progress in line with their personal goals. For example, one child has started going to college and is now attending college without being prompted. However, leaders and managers are not always proactive in engaging some external agencies in seeking solutions when individual children experience personal barriers, and this can slow progress for some children in engaging in education.

Children are supported to participate in varied and individualised activities in and out of the home. The activities take into account the children's views, personalities and interests, allowing them to create positive memories with staff.

Staff support children to take age-appropriate risks as part of their development towards living independently. One child built the confidence to make a long journey alone on public transport to have quality time with their family.

Leaders and managers continue to make improvements to make the home more child-friendly and relaxed. The managers have a three-month redevelopment plan to improve the home. Children are supported in nurturing their personalities and understanding who they are. One child has a pet rabbit, and one child has decorated their room to reflect their personality.

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

Staff respond appropriately when children go missing. They follow the necessary policies and procedures and notify all relevant professionals. Since the last inspection, there has been an increase in episodes of going missing relating to one child. Staff have well-coordinated and protective responses to ensure children are safeguarded. At a time when the child was missing more regularly, staff took the necessary steps to locate them

and encourage them to return to the home. Staff regularly travelled long distances to the child's local authority to seek them out and try and bring them home.

When reviewing restraint records, the responsible individual identifies inaccuracies and areas of improvement, which leads to learning for all staff and improved communication about the focus of individual support for each child.

Leaders and managers take allegations seriously and take the necessary action to support individual children and the person subject to the allegation. Leaders and managers carry out investigations objectively and fairly, noting that staff implement any lessons learned from the investigations to improve their practice.

Staff have not ensured that they are consistently vigilant, resulting in three incidents where a child has been able to access sensitive information and documents from the staff office. Once aware of the incidents, leaders and managers take the necessary actions to reduce the risk of this happening again.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

In July 2024, a new responsible individual joined the organisation and is making a difference in overseeing the home.

Leaders and managers have made progress in improving their oversight and share a clear understanding of the areas of practice that need their attention. The registered manager and the responsible individual work well together and are putting measures in place to improve staff's practice to ensure that children continue to be well protected and cared for.

Children feel comfortable expressing their views and making complaints in creative ways. One child created a digital presentation of her complaint and was encouraged to present her concerns to staff. Leaders and managers respond to each complaint through a sensitive and loving letter acknowledging the children's feelings and informing them of the actions to address their complaint.

Leaders and managers ensure that all staff members complete or are enrolled onto relevant qualifications.

Leaders and managers ensure that children's risk assessments are regularly updated. The managers provide regular updates to social workers and other social care professionals involved with the children. Generally, the managers have good oversight of staff record-keeping, which is often child-friendly and sensitive. However, in some written records, managers and staff used stigmatising and insensitive language to record the child's actions.

Leaders and managers hold regular informative team meetings and supervision sessions with staff. Staff report feeling supported by the registered manager, the deputy manager

and the responsible individual. A staff member said that working in the home was 'like a home from home'.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- Leaders and managers should work with the child's placing authority to support the child's access to any specialist support required and engage with the wider system to ensure that children overcome barriers. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 34, paragraph 7.10)
- Leaders and managers should ensure that staff remain continually vigilant and actively assess risks around children to minimise the risk of children accessing sensitive information or documents. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)
- Leaders and managers should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Children's missing and incident reports should be written in a child-friendly and non-stigmatising way, to reflect the care staff have for the children. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

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: 2588593

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Stepping Stones Care Limited

Registered provider address: Camomile House, 6 Embassy Drive, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 1TP

Responsible individual: Lucy Mitchell

Registered manager: Catherine Neal

Inspector

Josephine Onwubiko, Social Care Inspector

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