

SC032565

Registered provider: Stoke-on-Trent City Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

A local authority operates this service. The service offers short-break care for young people who have severe learning disabilities. The service is registered to accommodate up to six young people at any one time. The service is open at weekends but occasionally opens during the week in school holidays.

Inspection dates: 1 to 2 August 2017

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
---	-------------

The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
---	------

The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 3 March 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Declined in effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is outstanding because:

- Young people thrive physically, emotionally, educationally and socially because of their short-break experiences.
- Young people feel safe, protected and valued by staff that they trust and respect.
- Staff are well trained in all aspects of safeguarding young people, and are highly alert to young people's vulnerabilities.
- Staff have a strong understanding of young people's individual needs.
- Staff ensure that care planning is comprehensive, with each plan highly personalised to reflect the unique needs of each young person.
- The leadership team is ambitious, energetic and continuously looking at different ways to improve young people's experiences.
- Staff work very closely with parents to ensure that there is a consistency of care and routines for young people.
- Partnership working is commonplace, with excellent links established with health, education and social workers. Stakeholders, including parents, hold the service in high regard.
- Young people's diverse needs are met because their short breaks are carefully planned around their individual needs.
- Staff try very hard to make sure that every young person feels listened to, consulted and fully involved in everyday decisions. This extends to young people making a meaningful contribution to the recruitment of new staff.
- Managers conscientiously evaluate whether staff practice is delivering the required results to make each young person's stay memorable.
- Managers adapt staff practice from applying new research, learning from external reports and implementing recommendations made by the independent visitor.

The children's home's areas for development:

- The manager needs to ensure that he keeps a copy of his own supervision records.

- The manager needs to update the location risk assessment so that the document clearly links any potential risks in the community with young people's vulnerabilities.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
03/03/2017	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
18/11/2016	Full	Outstanding
18/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
08/01/2016	Full	Good

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

Recommendations

- A record of supervision should be kept for staff, including the manager. The record should provide evidence that supervision is being delivered in line with regulation 33(4)(b). ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.3)
- When establishing the home, the registered person must ensure that it is suitably located so that children are effectively safeguarded and can access services to meet needs identified in their relevant plans (see regulation 12(2)(c)). Under regulation 46, the registered person should review the appropriateness and suitability of the location and premises of the home at least once a year. The review should include the identification of any risks and opportunities presented by the home's location and strategies for managing these. Providers should refer to the non-statutory advice about the location assessment process: Children's homes regulation amendments 2014: Advice for children's homes providers on new duties under regulations that came into effect in January and April 2014. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.1)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Young people make exceptional progress because of their short breaks. They receive remarkable support from staff who use creative and imaginative approaches to make each young person's stay memorable. For example, staff are exceptionally skilful in ascertaining young people's views, even for those who have no verbal communication. Staff are proficient in Makaton and can use pictorial symbols effectively. These different methods allow all young people to give their views, regardless of their communication style.

Young people have developed their skills significantly in key areas, such as communication, social interaction and independence. Parents talk very positively about the impact this service has on their families. One parent told the inspector, 'It has been a lifeline for me, it gives me a break that I feel I need.' Another parent said, 'I am extremely happy with the care they give [young person]; we trust them explicitly.'

Young people benefit from the strong partnership established between the staff, parents and health professionals. This inclusive approach means that young people's complex health needs are safely met. There is a strong emphasis on parents' views as to how they wish their child to be cared for. This ensures that staff understand young people's

specific health needs. Consequently, there is a consistent approach to young people's health. Medication is stored safely; arrangements for the administration and recording of prescribed and non-prescribed medication are effective. All staff receive suitable training to support young people's health and well-being. This helps to maintain the high quality of care provided.

The policy about new admissions to the home is clearly set out. Impact risk assessments are completed to consider compatibility with the young people already receiving a short break. When young people are approaching the time to move on from the home, rigorous planning supports this transition so that it can be a natural and positive progression for the young people.

Care plans are particularly well tailored to match the individual needs of young people. Each plan outlines the support young people need during their short break. This includes assessing risks, managing behaviour and outlining health needs. Staff use their creativity and imagination to help young people to be fully involved in their care plan. This exceptional practice ensures that participation is at the heart of care.

Staff have established and maintain excellent liaison with young people's schools to ensure a consistent approach to learning. Staff travel to the different schools that young people attend to participate in child in need and education review meetings and to share relevant information and contribute to young people's individual targets.

Staff develop young people's independence skills very effectively. All young people have personalised targets that cover all areas of their development. These targets provide young people with clear goals, which help them to achieve their maximum potential. For example, some young people have improved their self-care and other young people are now able to shop for themselves. A social worker told the inspector, 'They are encouraged to be independent and plan some of their own schedules.' Apart from learning useful and essential skills, this gives young people a sense of achievement.

Young people have wide-ranging opportunities to develop personal and social skills, talents and abilities. Young people use the sensory room and other craft activities and entertainment systems. An outside play area offers young people a range of adapted specialised play equipment to enjoy. Young people are also encouraged to take part in activities in the community, such as swimming or visiting local places of interest. A social worker told the inspector, 'The boys are encouraged to take part in activities such as baking, computers, art and crafts and outdoor play.'

The home is wonderfully presented and has an extensive range of equipment and adaptations to meet the diverse needs of all young people. Young people's bedrooms are themed, bright and colourful. Young people are encouraged to bring items from home to add personalisation to their bedrooms during their stay.

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

Staff ensure that young people's welfare is always the most important consideration in day-to-day care. Young people say that they are safe and feel safe. One young person told the inspector, 'I feel safe here because of the staff.' Similarly, parents and social workers express confidence that young people are cared for safely. For example, one parent said, 'The quality of care they receive is to a high standard and they are safe in the home.'

Staff understand young people are vulnerable due to their age, disability and limited understanding of danger. The staff are highly alert to the risks that young people can face in the community, especially from people who are prepared to exploit their additional vulnerability.

Despite young people's complex needs, staff work very hard to make sure that young people have a fulfilling life. Staff manage risks safely so that vulnerability does not inhibit young people from the opportunity to enjoy a wide range of activities and events. Comprehensive risk assessments outline measures needed to support the young people in their environment, community and during activities. A member of staff said, 'We all want the young people to have a really good time and do exciting things, nothing should stop that happening.'

Staff write and regularly update effective behaviour support plans in consultation with parents and other professionals. This enables staff to implement effective strategies that are consistent, to support young people manage challenging behaviour. Staff offer encouragement and reassurance to reduce young people's anxieties and use positive distraction techniques to help young people to become calm. These carefully implemented strategies mean that staff have not needed to use physical interventions to manage young people's behaviour.

Young people do not leave the home without staff. This reduces the risks of young people going missing from care and of other risks, such as child sexual exploitation. However, the manager and staff are not complacent about the risks that all young people can face. The manager ensures that all members of staff are alert to the risks of young people going missing from care. The manager makes sure that staff stay familiar with the missing from care procedures that link with the locally agreed protocols, and that staff receive training around safeguarding young people.

The manager ensures that young people live in a home that provides the highest level of physical safety and security. Health and safety checks are regularly undertaken. Records show that young people and staff regularly practise evacuation of the building so that they know how to respond in an emergency. The manager has established systems and structures to maintain safe practices and meet health and safety obligations.

The staff recruitment and selection process is exceptionally thorough and requires a full assessment and checks of all applicants for work. Of particular note is that young people contribute to the selection of new staff, using their preferred communication methods to

ask questions. This excellent practice allows young people to have influence over who will be caring for them.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is appropriately qualified. He has been in post since October 2013 and holds a level 4 national vocational qualification in leadership, health and social care.

Staff retention is excellent and morale is high, with staff reporting that they feel well supported. Staff receive regular training so that they have the skills and competencies necessary to meet the diverse needs of the young people whom they look after. Systems ensure that important training is regularly updated or refreshed. Most staff are qualified in their role, and those who are not are within regulatory timescales. The manager and staff receive regular supervision and confirm that their supervision supports and challenges their performance to improve. Staff receive a record of their supervisions to enable them to reflect on practice. However, the manager is not given a copy of his supervision records. This creates a missed opportunity to enable the manager to reflect on his performance between supervisions.

The manager has ensured that the home meets the aims and objectives of the statement of purpose. This document is available to placing authorities, families and other stakeholders and accurately reflects the current staffing arrangements and the services provided by the home.

An independent visitor visits the home once a month to monitor the standard of care. The independent visitor reviews the home's performance and young people's progress and identifies areas for improvement. Regular consultations with young people and other professionals influence the progress of the home and contribute to the monitoring of the quality of care provided.

The staff team works effectively with parents, professionals and other agencies. This provides a consistent approach to young people's care. Professionals speak very positively about the communication they receive. A reviewing officer reported, 'The home send me weekly written reports covering every day of the week, including education, social time and behaviour. The communication is excellent.'

Staff develop effective partnerships with all those involved in the young people's lives. Communication between staff, young people and their families, social workers and other professionals is excellent. One parent told the inspector, 'I get a letter after each stay highlighting what they have done, how he has been or any issues. They're really good; on top of that I can speak to the staff at any time.' Because of this collaborative approach, there is clear and well-coordinated support to meet young people's needs.

The manager has carried out a risk assessment of the home's locality to identify any risks to young people in the immediate area. However, the record does not show how

highlighted potential risks link directly to the young people in the home. This creates a slight weakness in the manager's scrutiny of risk. The impact of this shortfall is minimised by the high level of staff awareness of young people's vulnerabilities.

The registered manager is aware of the importance of research. He uses research to help to improve practice and young people's life. This includes staying in touch with research related to health and communication.

The manager has taken rapid action to meet the requirements and recommendations from the last inspection. For example, the manager now has a clear system in place to capture any serious concerns about young people's welfare.

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 difference 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 who 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: SC032565

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: City Of Stoke-on-Trent, Civic Centre, Glebe Street,
Stoke On Trent ST4 1HH

Responsible individual: Susan Hammersley

Registered manager: Robert Snape

Inspector

Dave Carrigan, social care inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence>, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

© Crown copyright 2017