

## Children's homes inspection - Full

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|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Inspection date</b>           | <b>08/01/2016</b>                                                                  |
| <b>Unique reference number</b>   | <b>SC032565</b>                                                                    |
| <b>Type of inspection</b>        | <b>Full</b>                                                                        |
| <b>Provision subtype</b>         | <b>Children's home</b>                                                             |
| <b>Registered person</b>         | <b>Stoke on Trent City Council</b>                                                 |
| <b>Registered person address</b> | <b>City of Stoke-on-Trent, Civic Centre, Glebe Street, STOKE-ON-TRENT, ST4 1HH</b> |

|                               |                         |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Responsible individual</b> | <b>Susan Hammersley</b> |
| <b>Registered manager</b>     | <b>Robert Snape</b>     |
| <b>Inspector</b>              | <b>Rachel Britten</b>   |

|                                                                                                 |                               |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>Inspection date</b>                                                                          | <b>08/01/2016</b>             |
| <b>Previous inspection judgement</b>                                                            | <b>Improved effectiveness</b> |
| <b>Enforcement action since last inspection</b>                                                 | <b>None</b>                   |
| <b>This inspection</b>                                                                          |                               |
| <b>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</b> | <b>Good</b>                   |
| The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.            |                               |
| <b>how well children and young people are helped and protected</b>                              | <b>Good</b>                   |
| <b>the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers</b>                                     | <b>Good</b>                   |

**SC032565**

## **Summary of findings**

### **The children's home provision is good because:**

- Children have a really enjoyable and stimulating time with their group of peers.
- Staff love their work with children and show great skill, commitment and kindness to each one of them.
- Staff organise children's stays well and understand that children need to understand what is happening now and next.
- Staff prioritise gaining and acting on each child's views and choices so that each one feels listened to.
- Staff and managers safeguard children well and minimise unsafe behaviour with skill, patience and insight.
- Children make good progress and their social experiences are widened. This is because staff devise the right individual targets for each one and work tirelessly to help children achieve them.
- Each child's enjoyment and achievements are celebrated by the group in ways that increase their enjoyment and confidence even more.
- Staff are experienced and well trained in communicating with children who have learning and physical disabilities. They are patient, skilled, warm and able to work very well as a team.
- A stable staff team have the complete confidence of parents, social workers and other professionals. Staff communicate well with them all.
- There are a few minor shortfalls. The symbols version of the children's guide is too difficult for children to understand. Staff sometimes drop medication on the floor because there is too little work surface in the room where staff prepare and administer it. Some records are too generalised.

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

### **Recommendations**

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendations:

Ensure that all versions of the children's guide help children to understand:

- what the day to day routines of the home are ('what happens in the home')
- the Statement of Purpose of the home (the care they can expect to receive while living there);
- how to make a complaint in line with the home's complaints procedure;
- how they can access advocacy support or independent advocacy if eligible; and-
- how to contact the Office of the Children's Commissioner.

(The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 24, paragraph 4.22)

Ensure that there are suitable arrangements to manage, administer and dispose of medication. These are fundamentally the same sorts of arrangements as a good parent would make but are subject to additional safeguards. This is with particular respect to practical arrangements to minimise the likelihood of dropping medication on the floor and dealing safely with the situation if medication is dropped.

(The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 35, paragraph 7.15)

Extend the work with families and professionals to ensure that outcomes identified and progress made by children in building relationships and achieving socially acceptable behaviours is more clearly recorded and measured. This specifically relates to giving clearer information about children's progress, and the staff practice that enabled it, in all the documents that are used to convey information to children, parents, and professionals. Such documents include: six monthly reports, letters home, placement plans, risk assessments and certificates of achievement.

(The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 38, paragraph 8.4)

## Full report

### Information about this children's home

This home is operated by a local authority. The home offers short break care for children and young people with severe learning and/or physical disabilities. It is registered to accommodate up to six young people at any one time. The service is generally only open at weekends but opens occasionally during the week in school holidays.

### Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement   |
|-----------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| 01/03/2015      | CH - Interim    | Improved effectiveness |
| 26/08/2014      | CH - Full       | Good                   |
| 10/02/2014      | CH - Interim    | Good Progress          |
| 21/08/2013      | CH - Full       | Good                   |

## Inspection Judgements

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| <b>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <b>good</b>     |
| <p>Approximately 24 children with severe learning and/or physical disabilities enjoy high quality individualised weekend care. They attend in groups of up to six children. Staff and managers match each child well into one consistent group which comes together for short breaks care one weekend in every four. Children have a lovely time. They play, relax, make music and crafts, take part in outdoor play and enjoy a number of trips out. They go bowling and to the library. They go to a local pantomime each year. Staff devote themselves completely to meeting each child's individual and personal needs. They also make time for fun, new experiences and help each child progress towards their own targets.</p> <p>Staff make good quality relationships with children. Staff are mostly a long-standing and stable group. They lavish unconditional positive regard on each child, regardless of their ability to respond. Children's smiles, efforts, participation and individual signs of contentment, enjoyment or success are everything that staff work for. Staff create a warm, stimulating yet calm, organised atmosphere. Staff organise hugely enjoyed games of hide and seek. They create music and light shows where everyone has a part. They all come together for meals but enjoy relaxing individual bedtime and getting up routines. Staff love their work and show great skill, commitment and kindness to each child.</p> <p>Children make good progress in many areas of their physical, social and emotional development. They are working on their motor control, for example, using their walking frame in the corridor; finger pointing to pictures in order to make a choice; or replacing their building blocks into a storage box. They are working on their social development, learning to take turns on simple table games or learning to wait to start their meals and meetings when everyone is ready. They are learning to limit and manage aggressive and self-harming behaviours through quiet time in their room or seeing picture prompts of what is happening now and next. They are becoming independent by helping with clearing and cleaning the meal table and taking their bed sheets off and putting them in the wash.</p> <p>Children exercise plenty of choice and control throughout their short break stay. They celebrate one another's successes with group cheers and table thumping clapping. Every child receives a certificate of progress each time they come. They always have a Sunday meeting to talk about what they have enjoyed and what they want to do next time. A young person said, 'I liked hide n seek' 'no one could find me.' Children make many choices including meals, activities and which themed bedroom they want. A child chose a cooked breakfast using their picture exchange</p> |                 |

cards and a young person put their thumbs up to playing the triangle and the xylophone again. Children choose treats like a chocolate fountain and a film night, or a takeaway meal. They choose new toys games and equipment. They are also helped to complain if they don't like something. The manager always answers the requests they put in the post box. For example, children complained that the towels were too hard, so new ones were purchased and towels are not dried outside in the sun any more.

Staff are very skilled in gaining and acting on each child's views and choices so that each one feels listened to. They do this in ways that empower children to have as much control as possible. For example, staff help a child to chair the Sunday morning planning meeting. Children also take part in interviews for new staff. Children can see that staff take notice of their wishes and feelings because the things they ask for happen. For example, a child's choice of camper van décor in their bedroom. This was completed next time she came to stay.

The stable staff team have the complete confidence of parents, social workers and other professionals. Staff communicate well with parents, giving them full and positive verbal feedback about their child or young person's stay when they come to collect them. Staff have worked hard to ensure that review reports show children's progress towards their targets and general development. However, staff sometimes duplication information and some records are too generalised for parents and professionals to fully understand them. For example, staff write that children have enjoyed doing arts and crafts or music, but do not say enough about what the child actually did for themselves and how staff enabled this to happen. Staff do not write enough detail about what foods, films and activities have been enjoyed or the extent of this enjoyment. Similarly, children's weekend achievement certificates sometimes do not describe in enough detail what they have actually done or achieved. For example, children's certificates say they have worked on their independence well, or used beautiful manners, but do not say what independence skills, or what manners. Nevertheless, staff strive to improve the clarity and usefulness of their reports and have already made some good progress in this.

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Judgement grade |
| <b>How well children and young people are helped and protected</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <b>good</b>     |
| Staff and managers are safely recruited, including the follow up of references and checks of all gaps in employment history. All staff have a robust and practical knowledge of what is required to safeguard children with severe and complex disabilities. They are skilled at doing this in such a way that the purpose built |                 |

centre still feels homely and comfortable to spend time in. All staff have a good understanding of what to do in the event of fire or medical emergency and most of them are first aid trained. They all provide sensitive and dignified personal care to children and safely move and transfer children with limited mobility. Staff ensure that all appliances, equipment and utilities are serviced within proper timescales. Staff maintain safe working practices around food handling and special diets. However, staff sometimes drop medication on the floor because there is too little work surface in the room where staff prepare and administer medication. This poses a hazard to children's safety.

Children do not go missing and their behaviour is settled. Exit doors to the centre open freely in an emergency, but are usually kept locked due to each child's vulnerability and lack of age-related understanding about keeping themselves safe. Parents and placing social workers agree with these measures and consent to them. Staff are trained in, and sensitive about, the use of physical intervention. They use only minimal approved guides when absolutely required to protect children and/or adults from serious harm. Staff have only used two physical interventions on one occasion in the last twelve months. This was required to help a child get away from a noisy, crowded environment that unexpectedly caused intense distress and an outburst of physical aggression that could have seriously harmed others.

Staff have a good understanding of the signs and symptoms of possible abuse. They are vigilant about this and are sensitive to subtle changes in children's presentation. They practice openly with one another and know about their responsibilities to report any concerns about the practice of others. Their handover meetings and logs show how child-centred and committed they are to protecting and helping each child.

Children feel safe and settled. Each child's behaviours are understood well by staff. For example, staff understand the likely triggers for self-injurious behaviour and aggressive outbursts. They risk assess intelligently from the start of children's placements. They plan their care to minimise the likelihood of these behaviours and they ensure that no children feel confused, isolated, bullied or threatened. They are very successful in helping and protecting children because they are skilled, insightful, well organised, and genuinely caring.

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|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
|                                                                                                                                                                     | Judgement grade |
| <b>The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers</b>                                                                                                         | <b>good</b>     |
| The manager is qualified to level four in leadership and management for social care. He prioritises the needs of children with the same skill and value base as his |                 |



staff team. Staff find him supportive, communicative and available, even though the service operates usually at weekends. His leadership style makes staff feel valued for the passion and commitment they bring to their work. He endorses the emphasis staff give to recognising children's small successes and celebrating them. He enthuses about his staff's promotion of children's social progress through: 'intensive interaction; gentle running commentary; games that include turn taking and celebration of taking part and sharing.'

The manager knows that children continually make progress because he ensures that their targets are well chosen and that their placement plans are up to date. He has a clear overview of the success of all four groups of children and also knows in detail the needs of each one. He consults well with children, parents and social workers and ensures that the centre continuously adapts and improves and does not work in isolation from other services helping these children.

Staff are well trained and feel well supported to do their jobs. They are trusted to adapt their practice according to the individual needs of each child. They are guided to be competent in communicating with children using a variety of methods, such as Makaton, visual cues and picture exchange.

The manager and staff use their limited hours to the full. They ensure that preparation, planning, checks, communication with parents, recording and support sessions are all completed between Friday afternoon and Sunday afternoon because most staff have other part time jobs. The 'task book' helps ensure that all aspects of each short break are well planned. For example, the book prompts staff to allocate the fire warden for the weekend; identify who will be doing medication; specify what the targets for each child are; note any issues regarding the personal care of the children in the group; ensure that children's choices on 'planning my care' sheets are ready; allocate all the cleaning duties and ensure that every child's file is read. However, some time is wasted because night staff write letters home to parents based on records already made by day staff in the child's log.

The manager understands the strengths and weaknesses of the centre. Long standing, skilled staff, most of whom can lead a shift, are a huge asset. The manager successfully minimised the impact of being two staff down for most of 2015 through use of a small group of equally long standing and skilled bank staff. The manager identified a weakness in the arrangements for young people's transition into adult services short breaks provision. He addressed this through professional liaison and planning. As a result, a young person who recently moved on was well prepared and well matched. He has been able to enjoy his short breaks in an adult setting right from the start. The manager found external monitoring visits unhelpful. He has started to use a new monthly independent visitor who provides better challenge and consults more fully with children, staff and parents. The manager has ensured that all staff and children have practiced emergency escape as recommended at the last inspection. Staff take this seriously and plan carefully on every shift how they will evacuate or make safe each child in different possible scenarios.

The centre achieves the aims and objectives set out in its statement of purpose. It also has a written children's guide, illustrated with photos. Staff use this to help children understand what short breaks will be like. However, the guide for children who use widget symbols talks about a 'council run establishment providing respite care staff with specialist skills; promoting anti-discriminatory practice and embracing equality and diversity. This is too difficult for children with severe learning and communication difficulties to fully understand.

## What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place, however, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, 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.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service 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*.

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