

SC032565

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 operated by a local authority. It provides residential short breaks for children with learning and/or physical disabilities. Children attend for short breaks in small groups of up to six children. There are currently 40 children accessing short breaks at this home.

There is a permanent registered manager who is suitably experienced and qualified.

At the time of the inspection, there was one child having a short break who was present and spoke with the inspector.

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 September 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 30 August 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
30/08/2023	Full	Good
24/08/2022	Full	Good
11/08/2021	Full	Good
13/08/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children enjoy coming to the home for their short breaks. Overall, they receive well-planned and high-quality care to meet their individual needs.

Staff help children to enjoy a range of activities. The manager has taken action to increase the frequency and variety of activities for children. Examples of enriching experiences enjoyed by children include a trip to the seaside and taking part in a talent show at the home.

Areas of the home environment have undergone improvements, while some areas continue to be worn and dated. The renovation work is in progress and is scheduled for completion in phases. The home has several beautiful display boards that make the home welcoming and reflects the children who stay there. There are photos of activities, outings, themes and projects. Children take great pride in their contributions to the displays.

Staff know children well. Children have trusted relationships with staff. Parents are confident in entrusting the care of their children to the staff.

Children are helped to develop their independence skills during their short breaks. Children have targets in line with their needs and abilities. As a result, children are making progress that extends beyond the short-break setting. For example, a parent said that their child now sleeps in a bed rather than on the sofa at home, and another child now accepts showering with greater ease following staff support with this. Staff delight in celebrating and sharing children's progress and achievements.

Children are consulted with during each short break. This helps children reflect on their short break and make choices for their next stay. However, managers do not always fully acknowledge or respond to children's wishes and feelings. Furthermore, managers are not always curious about children's cultural and identity needs when planning their care.

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

Staff have good knowledge of children's needs. Children are supervised in line with their plans. This includes increasing staff for specific tasks, such as medication administration and moving and handling to ensure children's safety.

Staff are attentive to children and responsive to changes in their presentation. They use effective strategies to help to reduce children's anxieties. Staff only physically intervene with children's behaviours of concern when necessary. Managers review all incidents when staff have physically intervened, and staff receive monthly refresher training to enhance their competence.

Staff know what action to take in the event of children going missing from home or making an allegation. When an allegation was made, the manager was diligent in their response. This included visits to the child at home and well-planned support to successfully repair the child's relationship with the staff member involved.

Children are helped by staff to learn about keeping themselves safe. They are also encouraged to be part of their own safety planning, for example in developing strategies to manage the risks of self-harm. Managers have effective working relationships with partner agencies for the purpose of safeguarding children. For example, the manager devised a plan to aid the police to understand a child's needs. This can be used in the event of their assistance being required in any setting, to safeguard the child or those around them.

Specialist equipment at the home is well maintained, and staff receive training for using this. Children's medication is well managed in terms of storage, administration and record-keeping. Staff communicate with parents to receive updates regarding children's medical and care needs.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager has developed the service since being appointed to the home. This has led to an increase in the number of children accessing short breaks. The manager has a comprehensive and well-considered approach to deciding which children access their short breaks together. This is continually reviewed to ensure that it optimises children's enjoyment and safety.

The registered manager is highly organised and is an excellent role model for the staff team. He is effective in his oversight of the home and is driving improvements, for example, to children's records. The manager sets high expectations for the quality of care for children. When there have been concerns about staff practice, these have been addressed promptly, and appropriate action has been taken.

The manager has a strong focus on the development of the staff team. Staff receive training that covers a breadth of topics. Furthermore, staff receive bespoke training relating to children's specific needs. This equips them well for their roles. The manager uses team meetings for staff development, and this includes introduction of research-based practice. Staff also receive supervision that is supportive of their well-being and development.

Staff are subject to safer recruitment checks. However, there is a disorganised approach to this. This results in managers not fully understanding some processes or having oversight of the checks. There is a lack of clarity about overseas checks. The organisation does not have a policy for this, and employment history is not consistently understood. This could result in employing people not suitable to work with children.

The manager strives for continual development and improvement. Children are safe and have thoroughly enjoyable experiences during their short breaks.

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 registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children's home; or if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). 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) (2)(a)(b) (3)(d)) This specifically relates to managers ensuring that full employment history is declared to ensure that gaps are identified and explored. This also relates to managers ensuring that they fully understand and adhere to the requirements for criminal record certificates.	27 December 2024

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children are able to see the results of their views being listened to and acted on. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.11)
- The registered person should ensure that children maintain and develop their cultural or religious beliefs as far as practicable and where appropriate. This includes managers being proactive in planning children's care to meet their cultural needs. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 17, paragraph 3.22)

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: SC032565

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Stoke on Trent City Council

Registered provider address: Civic Centre glebe Street, Floor 2, Stoke on Trent ST4 1HH

Responsible individual: Tracey Docksey

Registered manager: Christopher Whalley

Inspector

Alison Snell, Social Care Inspector

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