

Children's homes - interim inspection

Inspection date	18/03/2016
Unique reference number	SC032565
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Stoke on Trent City Council
Registered person address	City of Stoke-on-Trent, Civic Centre, Glebe Street, Stoke-On-Trent ST4 1HH

Responsible individual	Susan Hammersley
Registered manager	Robert Snape
Inspector	Matt Hedges

Inspection date	18/03/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Good
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection This home was judged good at the full inspection. At this interim inspection, Ofsted judges that it has sustained effectiveness. The service continues to offer high quality care to young people, and good support to their families. Parents confirm this, one explaining, 'he gets really excited when his bag is packed before his stay...this is the sign that tells him he is going to stay there and he wants to go'. A young person's sibling explains, 'his stays are really good for him, he has really progressed'. Consistent, motivated and knowledgeable staff provide highly individualised support to young people and develop strong relationships with them. This helps young people to make progress, building relationships and developing socially acceptable behaviours. However, records of their progress, and the staff practice that enables it, lack detail. For example, some records simply refer to developing 'independence', rather than describing the exact task and how staff are supporting this. This limits the information available to families and other professionals and does not allow them to measure young people's progress accurately. Serious incidents continue to be extremely rare. Staff offer sensitive, measured support to young people and help them to manage their anxieties and behaviour effectively. The use of physical restraint is minimal – there has been none since the last inspection. However, staff awareness and the processes in place to record and monitor restraint lack rigour in one aspect. Specifically, guidance fails to underline that restrictions (such as changes to the physical environment) or the removal of physical aids (such as turning off a young person's electric wheelchair) are forms of restraint. This has the potential to cause confusion for staff. This could result in young people being subject to restraint, without staff recording this. This would prevent effective oversight and would not afford young people the safeguards to which they are entitled. The relationships staff have with young people, limit the likelihood of this occurring, and subsequently, reduce the impact of this shortfall. Staff are increasingly involved in supporting young people's transitions to other services. Typically, this is when they reach adulthood. This ensures that young people receive the support they need and helps to reduce anxieties for families at	

a stressful time. A social worker confirms the value of this and adds, 'this is a very good service'.

The registered manager is highly effective and keeps the needs of young people at the forefront of all he does. Partnership working with families, and other professionals is strong and contributes to the personalised nature of the service young people receive. The registered manager's oversight and monitoring continues to be robust. As such, he is aware of the service's strengths and weaknesses and strives for improvement. In addition, a recently recruited independent visitor has improved the value of these visits and the quality of the subsequent reports. In contrast, there is now a delay before the registered manager receives the report. This does not always allow him to make best use of the information provided.

The registered manager has addressed the majority of shortfalls highlighted at the last inspection. This includes developing a safer area to administer medication. This benefits staff and young people and reduces the likelihood of possible medication errors.

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
08/01/2016	CH - Full	Good
01/03/2015	CH - Interim	Improved effectiveness
26/08/2014	CH - Full	Good
10/02/2014	CH - Interim	Good progress

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 recommendation(s):

- 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)
- Ensure that restrictions such as changes to the physical environment of the home (such as using high door handles) and removal of physical aids (such as turning off a child's electric wheelchair) and all other restrictions of liberty of movement, are recorded as restraint. Some children, perhaps due to impairment or disability, may not offer any resistance, but such measures should still constitute a restraint. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 47, paragraph 9.42)
- Ensure that the registered person actively seeks independent scrutiny of the home and makes best use of information from independent monitoring (including under regulation 44). (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 55, paragraph 10.24)

What the inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspection we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

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 focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

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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