

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	18/11/2016
Unique reference number	SC032565
Type of inspection	Full
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	18/11/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home	Outstanding
The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the home contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help, protection and care.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC032565

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is outstanding because:

- Young people receive highly personalised care and have very strong relationships with staff.
- Young people make exceptional progress.
- Young people who are new to the home receive outstanding support to help them to feel comfortable.
- Staff work effectively to make sure that young people are kept safe.
- The registered manager and staff team prioritise young people's needs and keep them at the centre of all that they do.
- Staff have excellent relationships with parents, carers and a range of other professionals.
- The registered manager's leadership of the team is inspirational.

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 the registered person assesses what would be safe, achievable and reasonable for each child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 32, paragraph 6.10)
- Ensure that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11)
- Ensure that recruitment safeguards children and minimises potential risks to them. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)
- Ensure that a record of supervision is kept for staff. The record should provide evidence that supervision is being delivered in line with regulation. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.3)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This service is operated by a local authority. The service offers short-break care for children and young people who have severe learning 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
18/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
08/01/2016	Full	Good
01/03/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
26/08/2014	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home	Outstanding
Staff have excellent relationships with young people. They understand young people's needs extremely well and use this knowledge to provide highly personalised, consistent care. Young people are positive about their stays and the support that staff offer. Parents echo these views and talk enthusiastically about the service. One parent highlighted, 'The standard of care is as good as he gets at home. He loves it.' Another stated, 'I trust the staff implicitly.' A third added, 'The service is excellent. I love how enthusiastic staff are.' Staff are aspirational for young people. They focus on young people's achievements and the progress that they make. This focused approach is informed by research and the exploration of practice in other services across the region. Staff help young people to develop a range of skills by setting highly effective targets. They agree these targets with young people, parents and carers and review them each time a young person visits. These regular reviews help young people to make exceptional, sustained progress. For some young people, these steps are small but highly significant. For example, some young people learn how to push their arm through the sleeve of their jumper while getting dressed. Others develop their independence skills further, for example by completing household tasks or going to the shops to buy ingredients and then making dinner. Young people also make outstanding progress socially. A parent explains, 'He makes friends more easily now. I am happy that he is interacting more and learning to play safely.' Staff support this progress through a wide range of positive activities. Staff consult with young people about all aspects of their care, including what they would like to do. Staff and young people meet at the end of each stay to plan what will happen the next time the young people visit. Favourite activities include arts and crafts, sports (particularly football), cooking and baking and trips to local areas of interest. On occasion, talent shows and karaoke are enthusiastically undertaken. Staff are also planning the annual visit to the pantomime with young people. These activities help young people to enjoy their stays. They also help to develop their skills and confidence. Staff highlight and celebrate young people's progress. Certificates are regularly awarded, and young people's achievements are added as 'blossoms' to the 'achievements tree'. Staff and the registered manager designed this as an innovative way to represent the progress that young people make. This builds young people's self-esteem. New young people are welcomed into the service and experience careful, comprehensively planned support at this time. The registered manager and staff	

continually assess how young people are settling, and what support they need. There is a strong focus on making sure that young people are well 'matched'. This helps them to stay safe, develop friendships and feel secure during their stays.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding
Young people are safe and they feel safe. Staff understand, identify and manage risk exceptionally well. Highly effective planning minimises risks and helps to keep young people safe. Young people do not go missing. This reduces other risks including the risk of exploitation. Staff are very knowledgeable about these issues and the additional vulnerabilities that young people who have learning disabilities may have. Staff have excellent relationships with young people's social workers, school staff, health professionals, parents and carers. Staff share information appropriately, which helps to build 'pictures' of young people's lives and identifies any concerning patterns or potential safeguarding issues. Staff challenge social workers when they feel that their response is not adequate – particularly in relation to managing risk. For example, the registered manager challenged a social worker about the level of care that a child was receiving at home. This makes sure that young people's safety and well-being remain everyone's primary concern. Staff skilfully support young people when they become anxious or aggressive. Staff also manage incidents well when young people hurt themselves. The proactive approach of staff who anticipate and avoid potential issues results in improvements in young people's behaviour and a reduction in young people's levels of anxiety. One parent commented, 'The staff are friendly and understand him, how he expresses himself and what to do if he does have a meltdown.' Another explained, 'Every member of staff makes me feel like I am leaving my precious son in a totally safe and caring setting. They are truly unique.' Sanctions are not used. Staff choose to reinforce and build on positive behaviour rather than focus on negative behaviour. No young people have been physically restrained since the last inspection. Staff consider issues of restriction carefully and think about the effect that this could have on young people. For example, extra staff are brought in to supervise young people when required. This means that young people can move around freely, should they wish, but are kept safe. The registered manager does not consider other options to use, such as high bed sides, as these may restrict young people's freedom of movement. The registered	

manager has developed his understanding of these issues, using research papers and relevant guidance. Parents and carers are consulted and agree with these measures.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
A suitably qualified, experienced registered manager leads the staff team. He was registered with Ofsted in 2013. Parents, carers, professionals, staff and young people hold him in high regard. He puts young people's needs at the heart of all that he does. He is inspiring, and this culture disseminates throughout the staff team. Monitoring and review systems are generally strong. They help the registered manager to understand most of the service's strengths and weaknesses. Most importantly, they also help him to track the progress that young people make. Consequently, he has rectified all of the shortfalls identified at the last inspection. An independent person visits the service each month. She produces high-quality reports and offers rigorous challenge, which the registered manager welcomes. These reports and challenge help to drive improvement. They also make sure that the service continues to meet the aims and objectives outlined in the statement of purpose. The registered manager provides good support to staff. This helps staff to develop their practice and to reflect on young people's needs. Team meetings and supervision sessions are effective. However, some records of supervision sessions are not up to date. As a result, records do not always show whether supervision is being delivered in line with regulation. This particularly applies to casual staff and staff that work at night. This is partly due to the reduced number of hours that these staff work. This is primarily a recording issue and has not had a negative effect on staff, who confirm that they feel very well supported. The vast majority of staff are suitably qualified and hold the level 3 diploma in residential childcare or an equivalent. The registered manager has clear plans to make sure that the small number of other staff complete this within the required timescales. Staff training is generally very good. This helps to make sure that staff have the underpinning knowledge that they need to care for the young people. In addition to mandatory training, senior managers commissioned a clinical psychologist to deliver training to the staff team. This training focused on issues relating to young people's needs and learning disabilities. This has been beneficial	

for staff and has improved their knowledge. In contrast to this, the registered manager has been slow to provide a small number of staff with access to appropriate facilities, resources or training in epilepsy. Other staff also require training in how to support young people who may use ligatures. Other safeguards, such as risk assessments and staff relationships with young people, have ensured that these omissions have not had any adverse effect on young people or the care that they receive.

The staff team is very stable. This stability provides young people with excellent consistency and the ability to build trusting relationships. Staff recruitment procedures are generally effective. In contrast, on one occasion, there was some confusion about who had checked an applicant's identification. However, this was resolved prior to the member of staff starting their employment. Additionally, there was one anomaly in the date of an applicant's employment with one previous employer. The registered manager had sought a reference and verified the information. However, he had not clearly recorded this on the applicant's file. On these occasions, these shortfalls did not have a negative impact on young people. However, this is an area of possible risk in the future. Due to this, a recommendation has been made.

Record-keeping is generally good. Young people's plans are highly individualised and they provide clear guidance for staff to follow. Generally, staff review them regularly and keep them up to date. On two occasions, staff practice did not match what was written in young people's plans. The first instance related to a young person who was not using a specific piece of cutlery during one meal. In the second instance, staff were unclear as to whether they had to lock the 'sleeping-in room' door when another young person came to stay. On both occasions, staff took sensible and appropriate action and made sure that young people were safe and well supported. However, the registered manager did not recognise the discrepancy in young people's written plans. As a result, he had not formally assessed whether this practice was safe and reasonable for each young person.

The registered manager seeks feedback from parents, carers, staff, young people and other professionals. He uses this information to develop the quality of care provided by the service. A recent review of social care staff undertaken by a social care manager was extremely positive. She concluded, 'To sum up, I will leave that to a member of my team who simply said, "I would happily let my own child go there."'

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 children looked after 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 that 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 that 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 whom 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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