

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 short breaks for up to six children with learning and physical disabilities. It provides short breaks at weekends and occasionally during the week in school holidays.

The manager has been registered since 2014 and is suitably skilled and experienced.

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 August 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **requires improvement to be good**

The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 11 August 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/08/2021	Full	Good
13/08/2019	Full	Good
29/05/2018	Full	Good
01/08/2017	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The home offers short breaks for up to six children at any one time. Currently 18 children access the service for short breaks. In January 2022, a child moved into the home in an emergency situation. The plan was for the child to stay for two weeks, however, the child remained here for six months and two days. This admission was outside of the home's statement of purpose. This child has now moved on from the home and all children who use the service and now able to access short breaks again.

Since their admission, the child accessing the service for a number of months made significant progress from their starting point. Managers and staff had a good knowledge and understanding of the child which enabled them to meet the child's needs effectively. They worked closely with other professional involved in the child's care to adapt their approach to support the child to progress. As a result, the child's attendance in education has improved, they have a better understanding of their health needs and they are now able to express their emotions more positively.

Staff support children's physical and emotional health needs well. Staff advocate strongly on behalf of children so that they receive the care and medical treatment that is required. As a result, children's health and wellbeing improve.

Children are actively involved in their care planning. Staff use direct work well to help children to understand and manage their feelings and emotions, particularly when children are feeling upset or distressed. This has helped children to recognise their feelings while ensuring that staff know how best to support them.

Overall, the registered manager ensures that transitions into the home are well planned. Staff liaise with parents, carers and professionals before children come to the home. Parents and professionals are positive about the care and support the staff provide to the children.

Children are relaxed, happy and enjoy themselves at the home. They are able to take part in a range of activities including board games, football, jigsaws, television nights and karaoke evenings. As a result, children are able to try new things, have fun and socialise with their peers.

Despite the challenges with some children around communication, staff know the children well and communicate and engage positively with them. Staff understand the children's needs and as a result can respond quickly and effectively to children's changing behaviours.

The home is bright and clean. However, some aspects of the environment are in need of repair to ensure that the environment is welcoming. In addition, there is a

large garden. However, the garden does not have any adapted outdoor play equipment for children with mobility issues.

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

Parents and carers confirmed that staff take good care of their children and children look forward to their visits. One child told the inspector that she loves it and the staff are nice. Staff know the children well and, as a result, children are settled and there are very few serious incidents in the home.

Staff use a range of verbal and non-verbal communication methods to meaningfully engage with children. Staff understand children and they take sensitive and supportive action to help children should they feel anxious or upset.

Managers have ensured that new staff arriving at the home are safely recruited. All relevant checks have been made before new staff start their employment. This means that staff have been suitably vetted to work with children.

Staff do not routinely use consequences to address undesirable behaviour. On one occasion, however, a consequence was issued but not documented. This had not been reviewed by the registered manager to ensure that it was appropriate or effective.

Overall, staff manage children's behaviour well and the number of incidents requiring staff intervention is low. However, on occasion, staff fail to record sufficient detail when they document physical interventions. As a result, it is not always clear how children have been held.

Staff understand the children's behaviours and vulnerabilities and use this knowledge to manage risk. However, one child's risk assessment had not been reviewed or updated since March 2022, despite there being numerous incidents, and another child did not have a written risk assessment, despite accessing the service for six months.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The registered manager has failed to ensure that the home operates in line with the home's statement of purpose, and as a result one child lived at the home for longer than permitted. Managers did not update the statement of purpose to reflect this child's care arrangements.

Prior to the new child's admission, the registered manager did not consider the impact that the child moving in would have on existing children receiving a short break service. As a result, children were not well matched with one another and this had a detrimental impact on some children's stays and some children and families missed out on vital support.

Some of the paperwork that should be in place to help staff meet the children's needs is missing. For example, children currently have no development targets in place. One child had no care plan, despite accessing their short break for six months. Targets that should support children's progress are not in place and, as a result, the progress described by staff could not always be evidenced for children. The manager has recognised the shortfall and is taking action to address this.

The registered manager has not ensured that the staff roster records planned and actual hours worked by staff and it is not always clear when staff have worked. In addition, there is no workforce development plan in place that identifies the training arrangements for the staff team.

Staff have completed mandatory training and some specialised training such as a refresher in using Makaton to enable staff to communicate more effectively with the children. However, some staff have not completed training in child development, autism and attachment which would help them in their roles.

Children continue to benefit from consistent care from a stable staff team. Staff are passionate about their work and this shows through in their child-focused interactions with children.

There is a strong feeling of teamwork at the home. Staff value one another and the management team. Staff told the inspector that they feel supported in their roles and enjoy working at the home. Staff have regular team meetings and supervision where they have opportunities to discuss children's care. As a result, staff understand the children's needs.

The registered manager and the staff team have developed strong relationships with all relevant professionals, including school staff and social workers. As a result, there is good communication between them, which promotes children's welfare.

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, 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 protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)) The registered person must ensure that risk assessments are in place for all children. These risk assessments should be up to date and accurate to provide staff with effective strategies to follow.	17 October 2022
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(h)) The registered person must ensure that staff have the necessary training to meet the needs of children they look after.	17 October 2022

In addition, this relates to ensuring that there are effective monitoring and review systems in place to review and improve the quality of care provided to children.	
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children’s home; and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home’s statement of purpose. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)) The registered person must ensure that children’s care plans are in place quickly, to provide staff with key information about the children. The registered person must also ensure that care is provided in line with the home’s statement of purpose.	17 October 2022
The registered person must— keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16 (3)(a)(b)) The registered person must ensure that they provide Ofsted with any updated statement of purpose within the required time frames.	17 October 2022
Schedule 4 sets out the other information that the registered person must keep in relation to a children’s home. The registered person must— maintain in the home the records in Schedule 4;	17 October 2022

ensure that the records are kept up to date; and retain the records for at least 15 years from the date of the last entry. (Regulation 37 (1) (2)(a)(b)(c)) The registered person must ensure that staff rosters are compliant with the regulation.	
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Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that they have a workforce development plan that meets the requirements of regulation. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)
- The registered person should ensure that consequences used to address poor behaviour are recorded and there is appropriated management oversight. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.38)
- The registered person should ensure that records of restraint provide sufficient detail of the incident. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.59)
- The registered provider should take action to address any areas requiring repair or redecoration to ensure that the home provides a nurturing environment that is welcoming. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.7)

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: Swann House, Boothten Road, Stoke-on-Trent,
Staffordshire ST4 4SY

Responsible individual: Tracey Docksey

Registered manager: Robert Snape

Inspector

Debbie Holder, Social Care Inspector

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