

SC035380

Registered provider: Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The children's home provides short-break care and accommodation for up to six children and/or young people who have physical and/or learning disabilities. It is operated by the local authority.

The manager has been in post since August 2019 and is currently awaiting registration.

Inspection dates: 26 to 27 February 2020

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: 12 November 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/11/2018	Full	Outstanding
01/08/2017	Full	Outstanding
17/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
18/10/2016	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The children and young people enjoy their short breaks. They receive individualised care that meets their needs. Assessments prior to coming to stay at the home are thorough. The children and young people's progress through to independence is monitored and supported, from their first experiences through to moving into adult services. Transitions to and from the home are managed well. The children and young people are given an individually created goodbye and good luck book, covering their stay at the home, including words, pictures and photographs when they move on. This helps them to have lovely memories of their time at the home.

The children and young people are making progress as a direct result of their short breaks. Key workers have a good knowledge of the children and young people who they support. The care plans, detailing how this support is provided, are of a good standard. The About Me plans are child-focused and consider the communication needs of individual children and young people. They include smart steps to independence, which incorporate goals and targets, including those from other relevant professionals involved in the care of the children and young people. This thorough approach to care planning ensures that the children and young people's needs are well understood and met by the staff.

The staff regularly consult with the children and young people. Their individual needs and abilities are taken into account to enable them to take part in decision-making. A wide range of resources including Makaton and PECS (picture exchange communications system) enables children and young people with communication difficulties to make meaningful contributions. The well-established post box is used by the children and young people to make suggestions or requests. Recently, a young person suggested that the rewards system be updated. The staff have acted upon this and the suggestions have been implemented. This makes the children and young people feel valued and listened to. The staff team understands the children and young people's indicators of positive well-being and other ways that they can communicate, such as body language, behaviour, facial expressions and gestures. This caring approach respects and values the views of the children and young people.

The standard of accommodation is good. The home is a large period property set in extensive grounds. An enclosed garden provides an area for the children and young people to enjoy outdoor play. Raised allotment beds are designed to be easy to use by all, including wheelchair users. The children and young people enjoy using the beds to grow a variety of vegetables and like to eat what they have grown. This encourages them to take exercise and to eat more fresh vegetables.

The children and young people are fully accepted within their local community. Engagement with the community is a strength of the home. Events take place that include families, other professionals and neighbours. This helps children and young people to understand others and to feel that they are making a meaningful contribution to their community.

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

The staff plan the stays of children and young people effectively to ensure that they have the right mix of children and young people on each short break. They plan day-to-day care in detail to ensure that each child or young person has the level of individual care and support that they need to become increasingly safe. The staff regularly talk to them about how to stay safe and treat others in the group kindly.

The staff are attentive to the needs of the children and young people. They develop relationships that are based on genuine affection and trust. They are trained in a range of techniques to manage challenging behaviours, and incidents of concern are rare. The staff seldom use any form of physical restraint but are trained to do this safely, if necessary, to prevent harm occurring. Positive rewards are favoured over sanctions. The star reward system is monitored and when eight stars are achieved a sticker is given as a reward. A certificate is then placed on the achievement tree in the hall. This enables children and young people to have a visual record of the progress that they are making.

The staff talk to parents on a regular basis to ensure that they are fully aware of any concerns in relation to health or changes in medications. They also monitor the children and young people to make sure that any accidental injuries are accounted for and parents and professionals are informed. This provides effective checks and balances for children and young people who may not be able to communicate concerns themselves.

The staff team members are trained in relevant areas of child protection. They have all completed specialist training to safeguard children and young people with complex and additional needs. Dignity in care training and awareness raising has also been undertaken. This ensures that the staff have a good knowledge of the added vulnerability of the children and young people. It enables them to provide sensitive care to a consistently high level.

Each child and young person have a detailed risk assessment. This includes any vulnerabilities and outlines a plan for intervention to help them to stay protected.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

A significant amount of time has been invested in team building and providing staff training. Workshops are provided to improve areas of practice and raise staff awareness. As a result, the staff are becoming more confident and share the same ethos and commitment to improve the lives of the children and young people.

The staff are supported through monthly team meetings and supervision, which offer the opportunity to discuss the needs of the children and young people and provide for reflective practice. However, annual appraisals are not taking place. This means that there is not a consistent evaluation of practice within the home.

The staff describe the home as a 'great' place to work. They feel that they are able to share concerns and speak their minds in team meetings. Constructive challenge helps to

ensure that high standards of care are maintained. The manager encourages an open and honest culture within the team. This values the staff and empowers them to take improvements forward.

A longer-term placement is currently being offered to one child. This means that the home is operating outside its statement of purpose.

Managers and staff work in close partnership with parents and other professionals. Communication with schools' social workers and families take place on a regular basis. All professionals consulted spoke positively of the staff, of the high quality of care and of the commitment they show to all of the children and young people. A parent said, 'The staff are caring. They are really flexible. When we needed some extra support, they helped us out at very short notice. It was amazing.'

The manager has improved the audit process for the home. He uses advice from the independent visitor to improve the service further. Regulation 44 visits are undertaken monthly and reports are submitted to the regulator within timescale. However, these reports do not routinely include the views of the children and young people. This means that they are not able to have the opportunity to share the experiences of their care at the home with the independent person.

The manager has good insight into the home's strengths and weaknesses. He has recently undertaken a comprehensive review of the service. This has helped him and the senior team to put in place plans to take the service forward and strengthen practice. They are dedicated and committed to ensuring that the home provides a secure and happy environment in which the children and young people can achieve and have fun.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person 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 must comply within the given timescale.

Requirements	Due Date
The care planning standard is that children— receive effective planned care in and through the children's home; and have positive experiences arriving and moving on from the home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that arrangements are in place to— manage and review placement of each child in the home; and 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)(2)(a))	01/05/2020

Recommendations

- The registered person should actively seek independent scrutiny of the home and make best use of information from independent and internal monitoring (including under Regulations 44 and 45) to ensure continuous improvement. They should be skilled in anticipating difficulties and reviewing incidents, such as learning from disruptions and placement breakdowns. They are responsible for proactively implementing lessons learned and sustaining good practice. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)

In particular, the independent person should seek the views of the children who have short breaks at the home.

- All staff must have their performance and fitness to carry out their role formally appraised at least once annually. This appraisal should take into account, where reasonable and practical, the views of other professionals who have worked with the staff member over the year and children in the home's care. As part of the performance management process, poor performance should be addressed by a

timely plan to bring about improvement. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph13.5)

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: SC035380

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

Registered provider address: Municipal Buildings, Church Road, Stockton-on-Tees, Cleveland TS18 1LD

Responsible individual: Rhona Bollands

Registered manager: post vacant

Inspector

Dot McGough, Ofsted Inspector

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