

# 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 home is operated by a local authority. It provides care and support for children with physical and learning disabilities. The home offers short-break care for up to five children, and one longer-term placement.

The manager registered with Ofsted in July 2022.

### Inspection dates: 31 October and 1 November 2023

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|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| <b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,</b> taking into account | <b>requires improvement to be good</b> |
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|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| How well children and young people are helped and protected | requires improvement to be good |
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|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| The effectiveness of leaders and managers | requires improvement to be good |
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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:** 8 February 2023

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement |
|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| 08/02/2023      | Full            | Good                 |
| 01/02/2022      | Full            | Good                 |
| 26/02/2020      | Full            | Good                 |
| 12/11/2018      | Full            | Outstanding          |

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good**

The shortfalls in practice related to the leadership and management of the home and how children are helped and protected have impacted on the children's overall experiences of living in, and visiting, the home.

The home provides short-break care for children and has provided longer-term care for one child. Children's access to short breaks was disrupted when the home provided longer-term care for a child. The child has now moved out, increasing the home's capacity for short breaks. Furthermore, the restrictions in place for that child had impacted on other children's access to shared areas of the home.

The property is furnished and equipped to meet the needs of children who stay in the home. Children have access to a large soft-play area, games room and a large garden. However, parts of the garden are not safe for children to use, and bathrooms need some repairs. These repairs form part of the manager's development plan.

The home provides a valuable service to children and their families. One parent stated, 'It has been brilliant for us as a family.' Staff welcome children and support them to feel comfortable before an overnight stay takes place. Children and their families benefit from the support staff provide.

Staff support children, including those who communicate nonverbally, to share their views and wishes. Children choose the bedroom they would like to sleep in, what they would like to eat and activities they would like to do. Children are helped to contribute to their care by staff who communicate with them in a way they can understand.

Staff take photographs to capture children's experiences and their time in the home well. Staff share these photos with parents so they can see what their child has been achieving. This supports families to understand how their child is cared for and supported when they stay at the home.

Staff develop positive relationships with parents so they can feel confident leaving their child for their stay. Staff translate information for families when English is not their first language. This helps all families to understand how their child is being cared for.

Children's transition from the home is managed well by staff. One child was supported through a planned move to a home that better met their changing needs. This means that children have positive endings to their time in the home. This helps children feel valued.

## **How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good**

Children's risk assessments provide information about their behaviours and vulnerabilities. Managers do not ensure that risk assessments set out consistent actions staff should take to help manage risks. This means that some children's plans lack accurate details about how staff will safeguard children from harm.

Not all staff have completed all the mandatory training required to meet the needs of the children. On one occasion, there were no staff with a first-aid qualification working in the home. Some children have complex health needs and medical conditions, and this places children at risk of harm.

Staff sometimes hold children, but only when this is intended to keep them and others safe. Not all records capture the voice of children or document that they have been seen following being held. This does not give children the opportunity to share their views or raise concerns about their care.

All staff have completed the necessary training to administer medicine to the children. Staff keep accurate records and ensure safe practice in the management of children's medication.

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

The manager did not challenge the local authority effectively when a child's court order was allowed to expire. This resulted in the child's liberty continuing to be restricted for two months without the authorisation of the court. This was later addressed, and the order was restored by the court. In this instance, managers failed to advocate for the child or help them to access an independent advocate.

The manager has not followed the organisation's policy for the use of monitoring and surveillance in the home. Bedroom door alarms, audio monitors and cameras are in use in some children's bedrooms because of their complex needs. However, the children's care plans do not document why these practices are necessary to safeguard children. This does not ensure that the use of monitoring or surveillance practices has been properly assessed or that the necessary consents are in place.

The manager and her team are dedicated to improving the care to children, and the feedback from both professionals and family has been positive. The manager maintains those positive relationships and enables parents to feel involved in the service.

Managers and staff receive regular and reflective supervision. Staff said that they feel well supported and enjoy working in the home. Managers focus on individuals' strengths, and this helps staff develop their practice. Staff are named 'champions' in their area of expertise, for example in communicating with children. They share their

knowledge with colleagues and this helps improve how the staff understand children's needs.

## 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         |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| <p>In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff—</p> <p>seek to involve each child's placing authority effectively in the child's care, in accordance with the child's relevant plans;</p> <p>if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 5 (a)(c))</p> | 13 December 2023 |
| <p>The registered person must ensure that—</p> <p>at all times, at least one person on duty at the home has a suitable first aid qualification. (Regulation 31 (2)(a))</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 13 December 2023 |
| <p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>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))</p>                                                                                                                       | 13 December 2023 |
| <p>Restraint in relation to a child must be necessary and proportionate.</p> <p>These Regulations do not prevent a child from being deprived of liberty where that deprivation is authorised in accordance with a court order. (Regulation 20 (2) (3))</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 13 December 2023 |

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| <p>In particular, the manager must ensure that any deprivation of a child's liberty has the authorisation and oversight of the court.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                         |
| <p>The registered person may only use devices for the monitoring or surveillance of children if—</p> <p>the monitoring or surveillance is for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child concerned, or other children;</p> <p>the child's placing authority consents in writing to the monitoring or surveillance;</p> <p>so far as reasonably practicable in the light of the child's age and understanding, the child is informed in advance of the intention to do the monitoring or surveillance; and</p> <p>the monitoring or surveillance is no more intrusive than necessary, having regard to the child's need for privacy. (Regulation 24 (1)(a)(b)(c)(d))</p> | <p>13 December 2023</p> |

## Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that any child who has been restrained should be given the opportunity express their feelings about their experience of the restraint as soon as is practicable. Children should be encouraged to add their views and comments to the record of restraint. Children should be offered the opportunity to access advocacy support to help them with this. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 50, paragraph 9.60)

## **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:** Louise Carling

**Registered manager:** Dawn Coyle

## Inspectors

Joanne Wallis, Social Care Inspector  
Jessica Elliott, Social Care Inspector

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