

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	23/09/2015
Unique reference number	SC035387
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Stockton on Tees Borough Council
Registered person address	Stockton on Tees Borough Council, 6 Alma Street, STOCKTON-ON-TEES, Cleveland, TS18 2AP

Responsible individual	Mr Shaun McLurg
Registered manager	Mr Alan Powles
Inspector	Ms Julie Rimington

Inspection date	23/09/2015
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 are	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
how well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC035387

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- The home has a unique education project which supports young people to improve attendance at school, education or work. Young people are supported to attend their placements and are assisted to complete tasks and homework. Keyworkers regularly attend parents evening and presentations.
- The manager and staff team know the young people very well. The home is an initial assessment home therefore staff have to learn about the young people quickly. The staff are excellent communicators and spend time listening to young people and getting to know them. The keyworkers also build relationships with families as many of the young people return home.
- The manager and staff team respond robustly to concerns relating to child sexual exploitation. They understand the complex nature of exploitative relationships and work hard to ensure young people are safer.
- Many young people who live at the home have a care plan to help them move into independence. The home has excellent facilities to assist in this process. There is also a programme of skills based activities which assist young people to learn more about living independently.
- The manager and staff have built trusting secure relationships with the young people which help them to start to unravel some of the issues from the past. Young people start to have an understanding of how past experience can affect current relationships and situations.
- The staff team are well supported through supervision. They are a well-established and stable staff team. They work together well ensuring they are consistent in the approaches to the young people.

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):

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. Specifically there needs to be more scrutiny of quality assurance process by the registered manager to ensure he is confident that the work that is being done in the home is having positive impact of the lives of young people (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 55 paragraph 10.24)

Ensure staff are familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child.

In particular, recording in daily logs, handover sheets etc. must allow young people to have access to these records without breaching other young people's confidentiality. Placement plans and risk assessments need to be easier for young people to understand and access.

(The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 62 paragraph 14.4).

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is provided by the Local Authority and provides accommodation for up to 6 young people who have emotional or behavioural difficulties. The homes particular remit is to provide short to medium term care, often to young people who are admitted in an emergency.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25/02/2015	Interim	sustained effectiveness

30/10/2014	Full	Good
11/03/2014	Interim	Satisfactory Progress

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	good
The manager and staff team fully support the Young Inspectors scheme. This involves young people who are living in local authority children's homes in the area carrying out inspections and preparing reports. Young people spoke of how this made them feel involved in how the children's homes look after their peers and said they felt listened too and valued. Concerns raised from these inspections are discussed in staff meetings and where appropriate changes are made. This is an excellent project allowing young people to learn about decision making and promotes citizenship. The home often provides short term care for young people in crisis. The manager and staff team have developed excellent communication and assessment skills to allow them to build relationships with the young people based on respect. The staff team create a nurturing safe environment which allow young people to explore what they want their future to look like. Many of the young people find it difficult to trust adults because of the things that have happened to them. The staff team recognise this and show empathy and acceptance to the young people. One young person said 'I really like my keyworker, she knows me so well, she has taken time to get to know things I like and don't like, she knows when I'm upset just to leave me alone and not get in my face'. The home has a unique approach to improving school attendance and achievements when at school or college. A dedicated member of staff works with young people to work out the barriers to attending school and devises plans which help them to improve attendance. Young people are encouraged to be aspirational about their future careers and the members of staff work hard at identifying routes that will support the young people. Homework and extra support sessions are supported in an informal way with a room being dedicated to education including creative and academic studies. Each young person has a clear and robust health plan. Staff work closely with the Looked after Children Nurse to ensure all their health needs are met. Young people who smoke are helped to stop and healthy choices are promoted by staff. Young people are also encouraged to become more responsible for their own health.	

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
Young people say they feel happier and safer living at the home. They say this is because of how the staff look after them. In particular, the relationships with the young people's key workers are seen as a strength by the young people. Young people are confident that they can talk to staff about anything that is worrying them. They had a good understanding of the complaints procedures and most young people have an independent advocate. When young people make disclosures about previous abuse and trauma, staff respond sensitively and adhere to the homes safeguarding policies. All staff were confident of what they would do if they had concerns about a young person. The manager and staff have a very detailed understanding of the risks associated with exploitative relationships and its links to when young people go missing. Each young person has a detailed risk assessment which is regularly reviewed. The manager maintains links in the wider safeguarding professional's network and attends meetings to share information. When young people return from being missing, information from the return interviews help to understand the reasons why the young person went missing and assesses any new risks. Information from these return interviews is also used in proactive work with the young people in trying to reduce the number and length of missing episodes. The relationships the manager and staff have with other professionals also helps to ensure the young people stay safer. The proactive approach of the management team ensures professionals working with the young person are aware of any concerns. One social care professional said 'the team at (the home) are exceptionally good at communicating. They make sure I am kept up to date and always consult with me. They are really good at being the voice for the young people. The manager and staff team ensure they have up to date information about the emerging safeguarding concerns, particularly around drug and alcohol use and exploitation. Keyworker sessions enable staff to provide accurate and reliable information to the young people about things that matter to them. A young person said 'my keyworker warned me about these guys who pretend to be someone else on the internet, it really made me think about who I was talking too'.	

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
The manager is suitably qualified and has extensive experience working with young people who are Looked After Children. He is supported by his deputy manager. In previous inspections, shortfalls in practice were identified. The requirements and recommendations are all fully met. The measures the manager put in place following the inspections have made a positive impact. The staff team appear happier and are working more consistently with the young people. It is also evident that the manager is dealing with any performance issues in a fair and robust way. Staff say they are supported through regular and planned supervision. This is recorded and is used to support yearly appraisals. Each member of staff has a well-defined action plan to support their development. Some staff are working towards qualifications and others are exploring particular interests which will benefit the work they hope to do with young people. The management team are advocates for young people. They work well within the multi-agency teams working with young people. When there are delays to the progress of young people the manager and staff team are confident to challenge other professionals on behalf of the young person. They also take a supportive approach supporting other professionals where they can. Each young person has a thorough risk assessment and placement plan. Young people's case records are well structured and up to date. However, the amount of recording staff do seems to be impacting on the time they spend with the young people. Some young people stated they felt that staff spent too long in the office. There is a current review of case recording which is addressing the concerns of what is recorded and how young people can access what is recorded about them. The manager has improved the monitoring that is done to ensure the home is meeting standards and regulations. He needs however to ensure there is a more thorough management scrutiny of the files including supervision, consultation, complaints and independent audits. This management oversight is required to enhance his understanding of how well the home is meeting the needs of the young people.	

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 looked after children 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 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 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 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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