

# SC035387

Registered provider: Stockton on Tees Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

This short-breaks service is operated by the local authority. It provides care and accommodation for up to five children and young people aged between six and 17 years old on admission. The service provides children and young people who are considered to be on the edge of care with time and space away from their family. This is provided with the intention of implementing intervention that will reduce the risk of family breakdown and prevent entry into care. In very specific circumstances, the service can also provide short-stay support for children and young people who are looked after by the local authority.

The manager has been in post since February 2018, and became the registered manager in November 2018.

**Inspection dates:** 11 to 12 December 2018

**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 **good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of last inspection:** 30 May 2017

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement   |
|-----------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| 30/05/2017      | Full            | Good                   |
| 31/08/2016      | Full            | Good                   |
| 12/07/2016      | Full            | Inadequate             |
| 04/03/2016      | Interim         | Improved effectiveness |

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

### Recommendations

- Staff skills for safeguarding should include being able to identify signs that children may be at risk, and support children in strategies to manage and reduce any risks. Staff should encourage children to express their views about whether they feel safe both within and outside the home. Staff should support children to understand how to ask for help to stay safe and that the home is an environment which supports this.

In particular, safeguarding should be a standard agenda in staff meetings. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 43, paragraph 9.10)

### Inspection judgements

#### Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The service is providing good-quality, well-planned support for children, young people and their families. The staff are able to make strong and caring relationships with them all quickly. Many of the children and young people have made significant progress across all aspects of their development. This has helped them to enjoy better experiences, at the home and with their families.

The children and young people who have had difficulties in attending or have been excluded from education are actively supported to re-engage in education. Some have benefited from greatly improved attainment and attendance. The staff have high aspirations for them. They encourage the children and young people to take pride in all of their achievements. All achievements, no matter how small, are celebrated. This enhances self-esteem, making the children and young people feel valued.

Prior to receiving a service, the children, young people and their families are able to develop their 'intervention plan', with support from the staff at the home. This ensures that the children and young people are able to make meaningful contributions as to how they will be supported by the staff and what they want to achieve from staying at the home. The children and young people are involved in making decisions on the day-to-day running of the home, including activities and menus. Their opinions are sought in a number of ways, including feedback forms and young people's meetings. There is a comments book, 'been there, done that', in which the children and young people can record comments for anyone new to the service. Comments include: 'Staff are lovely', 'I was made to feel great, everyone is full of happiness' and 'best time ever'. This means that the children and young people feel that their views and opinions are important, and they feel listened to.

The staff work closely with the children, young people and their families to try and prevent family breakdown. Individual support is provided in a planned and systematic way. This means that the whole family benefit from broad-ranging intervention programmes. The staff are able to help and support parents to establish routines and boundaries within their family home. The children and young people are given the skills to deal with their emotions and an understanding of consequences and boundaries. A social worker said: 'Staff have worked really well with all of the family; their work has been invaluable and has certainly helped the parents to put in place clearer boundaries for the children.'

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

The service provides much-needed support for families, children and young people in crisis. This help and support enables children, young people and their families to learn new skills to help them resolve conflict. This equips them to be able to manage conflict in a more effective way in the future. The staff work extremely hard to support the children and young people to remain with their families, thus preventing them from entering the care system.

Risk assessments are comprehensive living documents that support the children and young people's safety, both inside and outside the home. The children and young people are encouraged and supported to contribute to their risk assessments. This helps them to understand risk and how to keep themselves safe.

The children and young people say that they feel safe. The staff understand the need for the children and young people to become independent and to take appropriate risks. Staff help them to manage their behaviours and regulate their responses. They are encouraged to reflect on their behaviour. This helps to give the children and young people skills to manage their feelings and behaviour in a positive way.

There are very few incidents of children and young people going missing from the home. When missing episodes occur, staff have followed relevant protocols. Return interviews are carried out following each missing episode. Concerns around missing episodes and relevant intelligence are shared on a regular basis with the police. This is a protective factor for the children and young people.

Careful consideration is always given to the matching process to ensure that the children and young people placed together are a positive influence on one another. The home provides short breaks for a number of sibling groups, and during their stays no other children or young people are present.

Staff have had relevant training to help them carry out preventative work with the children and young people who stay at the home and access outreach services. This work includes sex education, how to stay safe and well and developing positive relationships. The home has some very effective resources on internet safety that are

effective and deliver the e-safety message in a fun way, such as 'chat lines' and 'think you know bingo'. Very successful links have been made with the educational charity the 'No Way Trust', which delivers the 'Prison Me! No Way!' programme. This programme was delivered to a group of children and young people at the home. This helps them to understand the causes, consequences, penalties and impact of crime. This has helped them to stay safe and understand the realities of breaking the law and going to prison.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

The manager is experienced and has a strong commitment to improving outcomes for the children and young people. She is well supported by two deputy managers, who share her commitment and vision for the service. The staff have high aspirations for all of the children and young people. They have a good understanding of their needs and are motivated and passionate in the support they provide. Relationships between the children, young people and staff are positive and caring.

The service provides positive experiences and a range of creative methods of support, to enable the children, young people and their families to make progress in their lives. Care planning is effective, and there is clear evidence that the children and young people are making progress in their social development and their emotional and physical health and well-being.

Regular and effective supervision enables the staff to reflect on their practice. In addition to this, a monthly meeting takes place in which the manager recognises the positive work of the staff. This makes the staff feel valued, supported and motivated. To strengthen practice in the home, safeguarding should be a standard agenda item in staff team meetings. This will give staff the opportunity to discuss the safeguarding ethos of the home on a regular basis.

The manager has clear and efficient auditing and monitoring systems in place. These enable her to identify any shortfalls and take actions to improve on practice. She advocates well for the children and young people. Well-written reports are prepared and presented at local authority meetings. The staff play a valuable role in the children and young people's care teams.

The service is innovative and is continually responsive to meeting newly emerging needs. An example of this is the planned development of staff undertaking graded care profile assessments with families. The staff have undertaken extensive training to equip them to carry out these assessments, which help to identify children and young people who are at risk of harm, as early as possible, so they can get them the right help. The staff will be able to identify what parents can do better. This helps to provide the families with the opportunity to get the right support to improve the lives of children and young people.

The majority of the staff are qualified and highly experienced. There is a good mix of skills in the staff team. The staff have experience in residential care, teaching and youth

work. The staff spoken to were all enthusiastic and felt that the mixture of skills offers great benefits that ensure that the best possible outcomes for the children, young people and their families are achieved.

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and 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.

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:** SC035387

**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:** Dawn Coyle

## Inspector

Dot McGough, social care inspector

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