

SC065059

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 and registered to provide care for up to two children with emotional and social difficulties because of early childhood trauma.

The registered manager left the service in July 2023. The current manager has been in post since August 2023 and has not yet applied to register with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 08 and 09 November 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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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: 29 November 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
29/11/2022	Full	Good
03/08/2021	Full	Good
28/01/2020	Full	Outstanding
17/07/2018	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

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

At the time of the inspection, two children were living in the home. One of the children has lived in the home for over a year and the other child moved in six weeks before the inspection. The manager ensured that the child had a positive experience moving into the home, despite this being an urgent move for them.

One child has left the home since the last inspection. The child was supported by staff to move on in a positive way. While the transition plan supported the child to have a positive experience leaving the home, the child did not receive well-planned care while living in the home.

As a result of the care received, the child was not supported to engage in education, therefore, made limited educational progress. The child had additional health and psychological needs which were not supported effectively. Medication was not administered consistently and health appointments were not attended. This prevented the child achieving positive outcomes and their welfare was not prioritised.

Although regular health and safety checks take place, the manager and staff have not identified hazards in children's bedrooms. For example, electrical items were not stored safely in one child's bedroom. Other items were scattered across the child's bedroom floor, which posed a safety hazard. These situations leave children at risk of physical harm.

Children have developed positive relationships with staff. One child said that their relationships with staff have helped them to feel settled. There are positive relationships between children and staff. The relationships between children and staff have enabled staff to better support children when they are experiencing a crisis.

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

The response to children at risk of harm has been varied. Children's risk assessments provide clear guidance to staff. However, managers and staff have not always followed children's risk assessments, therefore, risks are not always well managed.

One child spent considerable time away from the home, including overnights, at addresses which were considered unsafe. The manager failed to escalate and take effective action to address these concerns.

Staff did not follow one child's risk assessment when the child told staff they had self-harmed. The risk assessment was updated with the incident. However, the risk level was not reviewed, despite this being an action identified following the incident. Consequently, the risk assessment did not appropriately reflect the child's current situation or risk. This practice does not keep children safe or promote their welfare.

Children said they know how to make a complaint and they feel supported by staff if they have concerns or worries. One child made a complaint about staff conduct. Managers took appropriate action to share the concerns with the local authority designated officer and social worker. However, the child was not given the opportunity to speak to someone independent. The staff member the child had complained about returned to work in the home before the complaint had been fully investigated. This practice could cause children to feel that staff, including the manager, do not take their concerns seriously, resulting in them feeling unsafe.

The use of consequences has increased during this inspection period. When consequences are used, they are appropriate to children's age and their behaviours. However, these have not been effective in supporting children to reflect on the impact of their behaviours on themselves and others. Additionally, systems to reward positive and kind behaviours lack creativity. This is a missed opportunity to help children to reflect on their behaviours and to encourage positive behaviours.

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

The manager has the appropriate qualification for the role and has high aspirations for the children and the staff team.

The manager has established positive relationships with staff and children. Staff are positive about the support and systems implemented by the current manager. They say this has helped with staff morale and the home is a more positive place to work.

Internal monitoring systems used by managers are not always effective. For example, self-harm incidents have not been reviewed by the manager. The manager has lacked professional curiosity in reviewing and evaluating incidents, to identify shortfalls in staff practice. This prevents effective oversight and monitoring of the quality of care provided to children. This limits managers' and staff's abilities to develop strategies to prevent similar incidents reoccurring.

The children are supported by a qualified staff team. Managers and staff have monthly consultations with a clinical psychologist, when reflective discussions take place about children's progress. This helps staff to develop skills and strategies to respond to the needs of individual children. This allows staff to understand the reasons behind children's behaviours, to provide child-centred care.

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
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; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies; that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(v)(vii)(d)) This specifically relates to: the provider ensuring that staff follow children's risk assessments, and risk assessments are reviewed and updated when children's circumstances change; that the home environment and children's bedrooms are free from hazards, to ensure children's safety.	28 January 2024

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. lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(c)(h)) This specifically relates to the provider ensuring that the care provided to children is consistent with the home's statement of purpose and children's plans. Also, to the provider ensuring the monitoring and review systems used are effective in ensuring oversight of all incidents in the home.	28 January 2024
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and that the child's placing authority is contacted, and a review of that child's relevant plans is requested, if— the registered person considers that the child is at risk of harm or has concerns that the care provided for the child is inadequate to meet the child's needs the child is, or has been, persistently absent from the home without permission (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(e)(i)(ii)) This specifically relates to the provider escalating concerns with the placing authority when children have been away from home for extended period and this is not in line with the child's plan.	28 January 2024

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that staff understand and use a system for rewarding and celebrating positive behaviour and recognising when children have managed situations well. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 47, paragraph 9.39)

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: SC065059

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Stoke-on-Trent City Council

Registered provider address: City of Stoke-on-Trent, Swann House, Boothem Road, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST4 4SY

Responsible individual: Tracey Docksey

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Nateisha Cardoza-Evans, Social Care Inspector

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