

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 run by the local authority and registered to provide care for up to two children with emotional and social difficulties because of early childhood trauma.

At the time of the inspection, one child was living at the home. The child talked briefly with the inspector.

The manager registered with Ofsted in June 2024.

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 September 2024

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: 8 November 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
08/11/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
29/11/2022	Full	Good
03/08/2021	Full	Good
28/01/2020	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

One child was living at the home at the time of the inspection. The child was present and talked with the inspector during the visit. One child has moved from the home since the last inspection and returned to their family. The manager and staff supported a positive transition for the child. This practice helps to promote positive endings for children, which contributes to children's life stories.

Staff are committed to supporting children with their emotional well-being. Children are registered with primary care services, and access them when required. When children refuse to attend appointments, staff educate children on the impact of their decisions on their health and well-being. When children have additional health needs, staff have training to meet these specific needs and consult with the appropriate health professionals to ensure they are providing the right support to children.

Staff work closely with their in-house clinical team and with child and adolescent mental health services to provide children with specialist and individualised care. This provides staff with additional resources to enhance their knowledge and awareness to better support children to use more positive coping strategies to manage their emotions.

Children's engagement with education continues to be a challenge. The manager continues to advocate for children to ensure that they have the appropriate support in place. Staff use rewards and other initiatives to promote children's attendance at education. This has contributed to one child overcoming some of the anxieties they have in attending their education setting.

Children are able to share their views by having regular discussions with staff. Children have input into planning and decisions about the home. The manager and staff do not consistently update children about how they have acted on their views and wishes. This could leave children feeling that their wishes and feelings are not being listened to.

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

Children receive help and support to manage their behaviour and feelings safely. Staff understand children's experiences, respond with appropriate boundaries about what is safe and acceptable for each child and seek to understand the triggers for behaviour. Consequently, children develop skills and strategies to manage their own conflicts and difficult feelings through developing positive relationships with staff.

The use of physical restraint has dramatically reduced. One child, who has lived in the home for almost two years, used to be restrained frequently to ensure their safety and the safety of others when they were in crisis. The support from staff has contributed to the child managing their emotions and behaviours more positively, resulting in no restraints being used for almost 12 months.

Staff understand the risks that using the internet may pose for children. Staff educate children about the risks posed online and have put strategies in place to keep children safe. When concerns with online safety are identified, staff take prompt action to address these concerns to ensure children's safety and welfare are prioritised.

There has been a significant increase in children going missing from the home due to peer associations and influence. Staff understand the risks associated with children going missing. Managers and staff use a multi-agency approach to manage the risks to children. Individual risk assessments address any known vulnerabilities for each child effectively and set out the actions staff should take to manage the risks. Staff, however, have missed opportunities to take prompt actions to locate children and report them missing in line with their plans. When children returned to the home, staff and managers did not show sufficient curiosity in exploring children's locations and experiences while they were missing. This practice leaves children vulnerable to harm.

Professionals are positive about the care and support children receive. Parents say that staff take prompt actions to keep children safe. One parent said that 'despite the challenges, they gave 100% to protect [name of child]'.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

An experienced manager leads the team, with the support of their deputy manager. The manager has the relevant qualification for the role and registered with Ofsted in June 2024. The manager is a child-centred practitioner who has an ambitious vision for the children and staff team.

Managers use supervision and team meetings as a space for reflection on the care and support to children. Children's needs and outcomes are discussed in detail, and strategies are agreed on how to best support children. This approach has contributed to staff practice being underpinned by the home's therapeutic parenting approach, which was made evident during the visit when staff were supporting children.

The manager has a range of monitoring and review systems to ensure he has oversight of all areas of the home. These systems have been effective in ensuring oversight of safeguarding incidents and the quality of care provided to children.

Staff are complimentary about the support from the managers and the responsible individual. Staff shortages remain a challenge throughout the organisation, and this has impacted on the consistency of care for children. This has resulted in some individuals covering additional shifts, impacting on staff morale and well-being.

When children were frequently missing from the home, managers did not review the staffing arrangements to ensure that sufficient staff were available to safeguard children. Consequently, staff who were assigned to do sleep-in shifts were managing incidents at night and working shifts the following day. This resulted in staff sickness.

This lack of oversight compromises the quality of care and safety arrangements for children.

The manager and senior leaders are actively recruiting to cover the vacancies to ensure that children receive consistent 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. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(vii)) This specifically relates to ensuring that staff follow children's risk assessments and take prompt action to ensure that children are located when they are missing from the home.	27 October 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. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—	27 October 2024

ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(d))

This specifically relates to the provider ensuring that children's plans are reviewed, and that staffing ratio is allocated in line with children's current circumstances.

This also relates to the provider ensuring that there is sufficient staff in the home at night to support children when they go missing.

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that staff consult with children regularly on their views about the care they receive and ensure that children see the results of their views being listened to and acted upon. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 22, paragraph 4.11)

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: Civic Centre, Glebe Street, Floor 2, Stoke on Trent ST4 1HH

Responsible individual: Tracey Docksey

Registered manager: Lee Davies

Inspector

Nateisha Cardoza-Evans, Social Care Inspector

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