

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	14 June 2016
Unique reference number	SC065059
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Stoke on Trent City Council
Registered provider address	City of Stoke-on-Trent, Civic Centre, Glebe Street, Stoke-on-Trent ST4 1HH

Responsible individual	Susan Hammersley
Registered manager	Helen Malanaphy
Inspector	Matt Hedges

Inspection date	14 June 2016
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

SC065059

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Young people feel safe.
- Staff and young people have positive, respectful relationships.
- Young people make good progress.
- Staff assess, understand, and manage risk well.
- The registered manager is effective. She is committed to young people.
- Staff are well supported.
- There are some shortfalls in relation to medication and the vetting of new staff.
- Some records are not up to date. This hinders staff and affects management oversight.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that must be taken so that the registered persons meet the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'. The registered persons must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The registered person must maintain records ('case records') for each child, which are kept up to date (Regulation 36(1)(b)).	29 July 2016

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further, the service should take account of the following recommendations:

- Ensure that when the home has questions or concerns about a child's medication, it approaches an expert such as a general medical practitioner, community pharmacist or designated nurse for children looked after ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 35 paragraph 7.15).
- Ensure that recruitment of staff safeguards children and minimises potential risks to them ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1).

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home provides care and accommodation for up to two children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home is operated by a local authority. It only provides support to young people from that area.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
1 March 2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
12 May 2015	Full	Good
11 February 2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
6 November 2014	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
Young people are happy at the home and enjoy living there. One young person stated, 'The home is outstanding... The best things are the manager and the staff.' Staff have strong, supportive relationships with young people. They offer them highly individualised care. This helps young people to make good progress in all areas of their lives. Young people attend school and have 100% attendance. Staff support young people outside of school with revision and homework. One young person reads to staff every night. This helps young people to improve their academic attainment. A teacher confirmed this stating, 'They have made real progress... We think this is because they feel more settled.' Young people develop the practical skills that they need to live more independently. Staff sensitively ensure that these skills are encouraged in an informal way, appropriate to young people's age and capacity. Young people receive the emotional and psychological support that they need. This helps them to develop relationships. They feel more confident and secure as a result. Staff underpin this by helping young people to access a range of positive activities. Particular favourites include roller skating, cadets, trampolining and horse riding. One young person also attends singing lessons and stated, 'I want to be on television one day!' Young people's friends are welcomed into the home. This creates a homely atmosphere and improves young people's day-to-day experiences. Staff ensure that young people's physical health needs are generally well met. In contrast to this, one young person's medication record is confusing. It lacks clarity as to how often the young person should take their medication and what to do if this is not possible. Staff do not raise these questions or concerns effectively with an expert such as a general medical practitioner, community pharmacist or designated nurse for children looked after. This shortfall has the potential to reduce the effectiveness of the medication. The registered manager and all of the staff actively seek young people's views and support them to express their opinions. They advocate for them when required, ensuring that young people have input into the decisions made about their lives. Young people feel valued as a result and are confident to raise any queries or concerns that they may have. Transitions are well managed.	

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Young people are safe and they feel safe. One young person summarised, 'Staff keep me safe and do what's best for me.' Staff manage incidents well and support young people to improve their behaviour. For some young people, this is a significant achievement. A social worker comments, 'Since being at the home the change has been fantastic... Incidents have really reduced. This is because boundaries are consistent.' Young people echo this view. A young person highlighted, 'Sometimes there are consequences for your actions... One of the good things about the home is that they explain consequences to you... They are doing this to keep me safe... I am proud I have stuck to the rules.' Staff assess risk well. They understand the issues that young people face and work with them to manage and reduce concerns. All young people have a safety plan, designed by the registered manager, explaining risk in a way that they can understand. This ensures that young people are well informed and are more careful about the choices that they make. Young people do not go missing. They do not self-harm. They do not engage in substance misuse and do not smoke. This helps young people to be safer and reduces other risks, including the risk of child sexual exploitation. However, staff do not keep all young people's records up to date. For example, staff should contact young people's friends should they have concerns or the young people do not return on time. However, they have not added these contact details to the home's new paperwork system. This reduces the speed with which staff could respond. New staff are generally well vetted prior to working in the home. Conversely, on one occasion, the registered manager did not scrutinise anomalies in a member of staff's employment history. This gap in the home's recruitment process increases the risk that unsuitable people may gain employment in the home. Other safeguards in place reduced the impact on this occasion.	

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
An experienced, suitably qualified registered manager has managed the home since 2010. She is passionate about working with young people, putting them at	

the heart of all she does. She is proud of the progress that young people make and is central to the care planning arrangements for them.

The registered manager understands the strengths and weaknesses of the home. She ensures that the ethos and services offered reflect those outlined in the statement of purpose. She learns from feedback and incidents and is committed to making improvements. For example, she has recently implemented a range of new monitoring tools. These are yet to embed fully. However, they have the potential to drive further improvement in the home. They also help to meet previous regulatory shortfalls in this area. Conversely, the registered manager does not ensure that young people's records are up to date. This limits her oversight. It particularly hinders her ability to monitor whether staff have completed specific tasks.

Staff are wholly positive about the support that they receive from the registered manager. She has developed an open, transparent environment. Supervisions are regular and she assesses staff performance through high-quality appraisals. The induction programme for new staff is robust, and all staff have access to a range of effective training courses. The majority of the staff team members are suitably qualified and hold the required level 3 diploma. There are realistic plans in place to ensure that the remaining staff complete the qualification within the necessary timescales. These processes ensure that staff are well supported and have the skills required to help young people.

The registered manager has good relationships with young people's families when it is safe to do so. She also works closely with a number of other agencies. She uses these relationships effectively and provides challenge if their performance does not meet young people's needs. An education professional confirmed this highlighting, 'first-class communication' as a particular strength. They also explained, 'The slightest thing is robustly followed up.' This ensures that young people receive the support that they need.

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 children looked after 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 that 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 that 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 whom 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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