

SC065059

Registered provider: Stoke-on-Trent City Council

Assurance inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

A local authority operates this home. It is registered to provide care for up to two children with emotional and social difficulties.

The registered manager left the service in July 2023. The current manager has been in post since August 2023 and has applied to register with Ofsted.

Inspection date: 25 March 2024

Date of last inspection: 8 November 2023

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Information about this inspection

At this inspection, the inspector evaluated:

- the care of children
- the safety of children
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers.

The inspector has looked closely at the experiences and progress of children, using the social care common inspection framework. This assurance 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'.

Findings from the inspection

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance inspection.

Since the last inspection, one child has moved out and one child has moved into the home. At the time of this inspection, two children were living in the home. Both children said that they were happy and liked living in the home.

One child has had an unplanned ending to their placement. Despite this, the home's manager and the staff supported the child to have a positive move out of the home and the child was able to return to live with their family.

Children's key-worker sessions are child-focused and creative. Staff actively engage children in relevant discussions by using external resources. These resources educate and enrich children's understanding of their risks and help them to work towards their goals.

Although the children's home is warm and welcoming, safety hazards are still present in children's bedrooms. For example, in one child's bedroom, electrical items were not stored safely, and assorted items were scattered across the floor. These conditions expose children to a risk of harm. Similar concerns were raised at the home's last inspection.

Some improvements have been made to children's risk assessments. However, children's missing-from-home plans lack clear timescales for staff to report children missing to the police. This could put them at increased risk of harm by potentially increasing the duration that children are missing from home.

The management of safeguarding incidents is effective. Staff adhere to safeguarding procedures to ensure children's safety. However, on one occasion, leaders failed to promptly notify Ofsted of a serious incident. While this delay did not affect the child, it restricts the regulator's oversight of the home.

Since the last inspection, there has been a significant reduction in the use of physical interventions. When physical interventions do take place, they are proportionate and are used as a last resort. Following such incidents, conversations are held with children that give them the opportunity to express their feelings and understand why the intervention was necessary. However, staff are not consistently debriefed, this is a missed opportunity for staff learning and development.

The manager and staff do not consistently foster positive relationships among the children when conflicts arise. This represents a missed opportunity for staff to educate children about the impact of their behaviours on their peers in the home and reduces children's opportunities to maintain and enjoy positive peer relationships.

The manager's monitoring is not effective in identifying shortfalls. Several shortfalls were found in recording practices. For example, conversations with professionals were not consistently documented, and discussions with staff following incidents were not recorded. In addition to this, children's plans were missing from their records. These shortfalls limit the manager's oversight of the quality of care provided to children and reduce opportunities to develop staff practice through learning from incidents.

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

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 missing-from-home risk assessments, and that they are reviewed and updated when children's circumstances change. Also that the home environment and children's bedrooms are free from hazards to children's safety. This is a repeat requirement.	29 April 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— 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)(a)(b)(2)(a)(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. It also relates to the provider ensuring that monitoring of the home is effective. This is a repeat requirement.	29 April 2024
Schedule 4 sets out the other information that the registered person must keep in relation to a children's home. The registered person must— maintain in the home the records in Schedule 4; ensure that the records are kept up to date. (Regulation 37(1) (2)(a)(b)) This specifically relates to provider ensuring that all serious incidents, staff discussions following incidents and conversations with professionals are recorded, dated and available in the children's records.	29 April 2024

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff encourage children to develop positive relationships with other children living in the home. ('Guide to the

Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 43, paragraph 9.13)

- The registered person should notify Ofsted of any serious incident relating to the protection, safeguarding or welfare of a child living in the home which the registered person considers to be serious. The notification must be sent to Ofsted within the required timescales. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 63, paragraph 14.10)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC065059

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Stoke-on-Trent City Council

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

Responsible individual: Tracey Docksey

Registered manager: post vacant

Inspector

Jas Nahar, Social Care Inspector

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