

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. It offers care for up to two children who have experienced early childhood trauma.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since May 2021.

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 November 2022

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: 3 August 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
03/08/2021	Full	Good
28/01/2020	Full	Outstanding
17/07/2018	Full	Outstanding
20/06/2017	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

At the time of the inspection, two children were living in the home. One child had moved out of the home since the previous inspection sooner than anticipated. However, this was a managed move, where staff supported the child well to return to their family. Children are settled and are making some progress from their starting points.

Staff support children well to maintain important and positive relationships with family members. They communicate effectively with the placing authority and with people important to the child. Staff show a good understanding of the importance of children spending meaningful time with their families. Children benefit from this care and understanding, enabling them to maintain a sense of belonging and identity.

Most staff have healthy and positive relationships with children and know them well. These staff use their knowledge of children to develop trusting relationships and have a good understanding of children's complex needs and vulnerabilities. Staff show children respect, patience and resilience.

Children's health needs are met to a good standard. Staff ensure that children's health needs are monitored and individual health assessments are in place. Recommendations from health plans are reviewed and acted on. Children attend regular appointments with the dentist, doctor, optician and specialist services.

Staff work closely alongside their in-house clinical team to provide children with specialist and individualised care. For example, staff receive bespoke training on the therapeutic model, which helps them provide good care to meet children's emotional needs. This approach is embedded in some staff practice and the strategies used help children to make progress at times of crisis.

Most children have good school attendance and are doing well at school. Staff have high expectations for children making progress in their learning and education from their starting points. They support children by attending statutory meetings as well as keeping in close contact with teachers. When children are struggling to engage with learning, staff take appropriate action to help them overcome barriers to learning and they support those who are not in school full time. One child who previously had poor school attendance has made progress with their education and completed their exams.

Staff ensure that children's voices are heard, by having regular important discussions with them. Children have input into planning and decisions about the home. As a result, children feel that their wishes and feelings are valued.

The physical environment of the home has improved and is welcoming and comfortable. Children's bedrooms are clean. Staff encourage children to personalise

their bedrooms to reflect their wishes and interests. However, some minor improvements are needed. For example, the bathroom and toilet area requires maintenance work and did not have a window blind for privacy. The registered manager acted during the inspection to address this.

The registered manager does not always use information from professionals effectively for planning before children move into the home. This undermined their ability to make an informed decision about whether children moving into the home were suitably matched with children already living there. For example, one child's needs and vulnerability had not been considered in relation to another child living in the home. Although there was no negative impact on the child, this resulted in staff not having relevant information about the children's compatibility.

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

Staff understand their roles and responsibilities to safeguard children.

Children make good progress and potential risks to them reduce over time. They rarely go missing from home. When they do, staff respond quickly and follow children's missing-from-care protocols. They escalate concerns by working in partnership with the local authority, local services and the police to ensure that children are returned home as soon as possible. This means that risks to children in the community are reduced.

Staff are skilled in supporting children with their behaviours and know how to de-escalate behaviour which may become challenging. The registered manager reviews all physical interventions effectively. Restraints are used proportionately when there is a risk or serious concern for children or staff.

Some staff continue to do good work with children in helping them to understand their behaviours and how these may impact on others, as well as learning better coping strategies to improve their development. For example, staff are consistent in supporting one child to develop independent living skills and keep safe online. Furthermore, when this direct work is undertaken, staff do follow-up work to help the child develop a better understanding of important issues. This actively encourages children to keep themselves and others safe.

Despite the good progress, staff are not always consistent in their approach to managing risk. For example, while some staff are vigilant in keeping children safe online, at times regular checks on electronic devices are not always carried out when there is a potential risk. Furthermore, one child's risk assessment had not been updated in relation to fire safety.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager has positive relationships with children and staff. Staff feel empowered by the support and guidance they receive, which help them develop their practice. One staff member told the inspector, 'He [manager] is very supportive

and considers my personal circumstances.' Staff look forward to coming into work. The registered manager listens to staff and encourages them in their learning and practice.

Staff show genuine passion about children in their care. They have ongoing reflective discussions and conversations about the progress of children. Regular clinical team meetings develop a more in-depth understanding by staff of the children's needs and develop their approach to improve the quality of care children receive. This enables staff to support children to make sustained progress.

The registered manager recognises the importance of maintaining strong relationships with partner agencies. He attends regular meetings with in-house therapists, teachers and social workers to closely scrutinise children's progress. Also, he uses this learning to continually promote children's care. Feedback from professionals is highly complimentary. An independent reviewing officer told the inspector, 'Staff are very child-focused, with the children being at the centre of all practice. They are very skilled and can maintain positive and strong relationships with children. The communication between staff and the local authority is very strong, promoting partnership working in the best interests of children.'

Staff benefit from an environment that encourages learning. Discussions in supervision have a healthy balance between challenge and support. Most staff receive regular reflective supervision to help them understand their roles and responsibilities and to develop their practice to safeguard children, but this is not always consistent. For example, new staff do not always receive regular and practice-related supervision.

Internal monitoring systems used by the managers are not always effective. For example, the registered manager has not identified shortfalls in the monitoring of children using devices online, or missing information in risk assessments.

The registered manager has worked hard alongside the in-house clinical team to ensure that staff engage with specific training to support children with complex behaviours effectively. This has recently included training to improve the staff's understanding of attachment and trauma. However, not all staff have received this training. Therefore, not all staff currently have the additional knowledge to meet the needs of children.

The independent person regularly carries out announced and unannounced visits to the home to audit the quality of care. However, , some reports do not contain the feedback from children and relevant information about the quality of care children receive. Leaders and managers acknowledge this shortfall and have a plan to ensure there is better oversight.

The registered manager has provided a detailed and informative quality of care report to Ofsted within the required timescale. However, this report does not contain important feedback from the children. This leaves the regulator without the full

information needed to review the registered manager's own assessment of the quality of 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, 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 (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(v)) This particularly refers to the registered manager and staff ensuring they understand and follow children's risk assessments and that these documents are up to date.	6 January 2023
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(c)(h)) This particularly refers to the registered manager ensuring all staff receive essential training to meet the needs of children.	6 January 2023

It also relates to the registered manager ensuring they use internal monitoring systems more effectively.	
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b)) This specifically relates to the registered manager ensuring relevant information obtained from professionals and relatives is used effectively when planning for children who move into the home.	6 January 2023
The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month. to inspect the premises of the home and such of the home's records (except for a child's case records, unless the child and the child's placing authority consent) as the independent person requires. The independent person must produce a report about a visit ("the independent person's report") which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether— children are effectively safeguarded; and the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being. (Regulation 44 (1)(b) (4)(a)(b)) This specifically relates to the registered manager ensuring that the independent person undertakes a rigorous assessment of the home and the quality of care children receive.	6 January 2023

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that views of children are captured in the review of quality of care report. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.2)

- The registered person should ensure that all aspects of the home environment are nurturing and welcoming. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.7)
- The registered person should ensure that all new staff have regular and practice-related supervision. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2)

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: Harry Rayner

Inspectors

Patrick McIntosh, Social Care Inspector
Charlie Johnson, Ofsted Inspector

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