

SC065679

Registered provider: Staffordshire County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is managed by the local authority and provides residential short breaks for children and young people who may have experienced childhood instability resulting in trauma and associated complex behaviours. The home also provides outreach services to support children, young people and their families.

The manager was registered with Ofsted in 2017.

Inspection dates: 1 to 2 August 2018

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
---	--------------------

How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
---	-------------

The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
---	-------------

The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 23 January 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
23/01/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
05/10/2016	Full	Good
02/02/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
05/08/2015	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children and young people really look forward to spending time at this calm and nurturing short-breaks service. It provides a much-needed break for children and young people and their families during times of crisis. Staff quickly come to know children and young people and invest in them. They encourage children and young people to discuss their interests and plan activities accordingly. This helps children and young people to settle quickly and enjoy their short breaks.

Enthusiastic staff support children and young people to take part in a wide range of activities, and this aids their social, emotional and educational development. Some staff members are talented musicians while another is a trained swimming coach. They use their skills to provide children and young people with lovely experiences. The home often reverberates with the sound of children and young people learning to play the drums or guitar. A child took great pride in playing the keyboard for the inspector. Another child told the inspector, 'I love it here. The staff look after me. I get to do things I haven't done before. It's awesome.'

Children and young people make exceptional progress during their short breaks. For example, one child frequently went missing from home, resulting in fractured family relationships. In response, staff worked closely with the intensive prevention service to offer the family and child targeted and coordinated support. As a result, the child has a greater understanding of risk and uses new strategies to manage conflict better, significantly reducing the risk of family breakdown. The child's father told the inspector, 'The breaks are invaluable for us as a family. I have seen changes in her (child). The staff have helped her to learn respect. She is staying out of trouble. The staff are fantastic.'

Staff support children and young people to participate in the day-to-day running of the service. They use consultation forms, one-to-one sessions and group-work activity to enable children and young people to express their views. This helps the children and young people to maximise the benefits of their short-break stay. Staff also involve children and young people in more complex discussions about their care. For example, staff support children and young people to review their internal behaviour management and care plans. This helps them to understand their plans and take ownership of them.

Staff practice is consistently underpinned by the home's social pedagogy model. This is the cornerstone of children's and young people's exceptional progress. Staff use the 'common third' approach, finding mutually enjoyable activities to build relationships with children and young people. This provides a positive basis for children and young people to explore their difficult thoughts and emotions and to learn new strategies to manage them. A member of staff is the social pedagogy champion. They use learning from conferences to enhance staff knowledge of the model. As a result, children and young people benefit from consistent, nurturing care from highly skilled staff.

Children and young people receive excellent support to help them to build practical independence skills. They receive encouragement to cook, do their laundry, use public transport and create CVs. This helps children and young people to develop aspirations and a positive self-view. For example, one young person worked alongside staff to create a CV and to secure employment.

Innovative projects encourage fun and learning on a range of issues, including sexuality, anti-bullying and mental health awareness. Children and young people also took part in a gardening competition, learning to grow their own vegetables. In addition, staff organised a summer barbecue for children and young people to attend alongside their families.

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

Staff identify and understand the risks for each child and young person. Individualised and up-to-date risk assessments contain clear guidance for staff to manage risk. Staff liaise closely with the intensive prevention service, social workers and family to share information. This collaboration helps to keep children and young people safe.

Very careful matching ensures that children and young people are not exposed to further risk. The registered manager and senior staff skilfully build a profile of each child and young person. In turn, this helps children and young people to form healthy relationships with their peers and disrupts their risk-taking behaviour. A parent told the inspector: '(The home) has kept (my child) off the streets and out of danger. She is with young people her own age, doing lots of fun things. She seems really happy there.'

Staff work effectively with children and young people to help them to understand and manage risk. Targeted individual and group sessions focus on issues such as child sexual exploitation, healthy relationships and mental health. When necessary, staff ensure that specialist agencies provide children and young people with additional support. The registered manager uses research to organise additional events. These fun yet engaging projects include a focus on online safety, bullying and the risks associated with gangs. This comprehensive and innovative support helps children and young people to understand and significantly reduce their risk-taking behaviour.

Some children and young people arrive at the service in an emergency and in crisis. Inevitably, they can feel anxious and distressed, and this results in some children and young people going missing from the home. When such incidents happen, staff follow a clear protocol and respond robustly to keep children and young people safe.

The registered manager works closely with the local authority emergency duty team to ensure that emergency placements are managed safely and that all risks are known. She closely scrutinises information and makes the necessary arrangements to ensure that both children and young people placed in an emergency and those currently using the service are kept safe.

Highly effective partnership working with key safeguarding agencies, including the police

and substance misuse and youth offending teams, promotes children's welfare. For example, staff met with the police to discuss a young person who was at risk due to his association with gangs. Staff also attend child sexual exploitation panels to gather and disseminate information on local risks. This proactive response helps to keep children and young people safe.

Staff spend time with children and young people and understand the triggers to their challenging behaviour. They offer timely and sensitive discussions when children and young people are agitated or anxious. This helps children and young people to open up to staff and discuss unsettling and traumatic experiences. Together, they find strategies to help to minimise children's and young people's distress. A parent told the inspector, 'The staff have a great approach. She (child) can talk to them about things she can't talk to me about.'

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager is passionate and aspirational for the children and young people in her care. She has extensive managerial experience and is working towards a level 7 management qualification. Her extensive knowledge and innovative approach inspire staff to provide children and young people with exceptional care.

The diverse staff team has an excellent mix of experience and skills. Some staff have a background in youth work and others have specialist skills in music and swimming. As a result, children and young people have access to staff with a range of expertise. Furthermore, the staff team is well resourced.

Strong management structures ensure that staff receive excellent support and oversight. This underpins the exceptional progress that children and young people make.

The registered manager has effective monitoring systems in place. This helps her to identify strengths and areas for development. For example, she completes a comprehensive annual report which focuses on patterns, trends and the outcomes for children and young people. This helps her to implement strategies to develop the service. In addition, the registered manager completes a six-monthly review of care and works closely with the independent visitor to continually improve the quality of care. Consequently, children and young people thrive in this service.

Staff work closely with key partners and families to ensure that children's and young people's plans are individualised and meet their needs. For example, the registered manager holds a weekly meeting to provide excellent oversight and review. This ensures that the support that children and young people receive is consistent and in line with their needs. Importantly, staff have regular dialogue with families to ensure that they are fully informed of all developments. This helps families to feel involved in the care of their child. A parent told the inspector: 'Staff share information with us all the time. They keep me in the loop about what is going on.'

The registered manager strikes a healthy balance between effective staff support and

challenge. She provides strong leadership and encourages all staff to contribute to the positive and nurturing ethos of the service. Staff benefit from excellent inductions, and the subsequent training programme is extensive. The registered manager and senior staff offer regular supervision and appraisals which focus significantly on staff development. Staff love working at the service and feel that morale is excellent. A member of staff told the inspector, 'I love my job, I love coming here every day. You feel like you are making a difference.'

On occasion, the registered manager invites local authority services and specialised agencies to meet with the staff team to share information, learning and good practice. Plans are in place to offer staff an opportunity to shadow the emergency placement team to broaden their knowledge and understanding. Professionals speak highly of the service. A professional told the inspector: 'It's an excellent service. They (staff) have helped to stop many families from breaking apart.'

The physical environment is vibrant and child friendly. The home has a happy and welcoming feel, and this encourages children and young people to feel relaxed and enjoy their surroundings. It contains a large music room, complete with piano, keyboard and guitars. An outside area has been converted into a mini football pitch. Lounges are spacious and contain televisions, a pool table and games consoles. Children and young people can also make use of 'chill-out' rooms for moments of quiet reflection and relaxation.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and 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.

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: SC065679

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Staffordshire County Council, Wedgwood Buildings, Tipping Street, Stafford, Staffordshire ST16 2DH

Responsible individual: Richard Hancock

Registered manager: Kerry Hutchinson

Inspector

Gareth Leckey, social care inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2018