

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC065679
Inspector	Rachel Ruth Britten
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Staffordshire County Council
Registered person address	Staffordshire County Council, Wedgwood Buildings Tipping Street STAFFORD ST16 2DH
Responsible individual	Richard Ronald Hancock
Registered manager	Mark Guest
Date of last inspection	25/11/2014

Inspection date	11/03/2015
------------------------	------------

Previous inspection	good
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection

This home was judged good at the last full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judge that it has **sustained effectiveness**.

This home continues to make a positive difference to young people's outcomes. It's short term assessment function means that the mix of young people in the home is continuously changing. This mix sometimes has adverse consequences for some young people's behaviour and risks. Despite this, the staff and manager make regular and influential contributions to the plans for each young person's future. They work together closely with families, social workers, independent reviewing officers and other professionals. Staff consult with all these stakeholders very regularly about each young person's care plan. Staff and managers also quickly gain insight into young people's needs and make opportunities for them to express their wishes and feelings. Staff forge caring and respectful relationships with young people. A social worker recently said, 'staff show compassion and genuine interest in young people.'

Four young people have moved on since the last inspection and are managing in foster care or back with their families. This is a positive outcome for each of them. Young people took mementoes and good memories with them as well as some personal skills to better conduct themselves and make relationships. Young people were celebrated and treated before they left, which boosted their self-esteem. For example, two unaccompanied asylum seeking young people were taken to watch a professional football match and had a buffet party in the home with everyone before their moves to foster care.

Four young people live in the home at present and have evolving plans which include return home, foster care and specialist residential care. Each young person has received a genuine welcome in the home from thoughtful staff.

Not all young people are currently in full time education. The local schools are not always able to quickly create suitable educational packages for young people who

are refusing to engage in education. Young people's learning opportunities are hindered during these times.

Young people are vulnerable to negative peer influences and risky night time behaviour. Staff and managers work cooperatively with police, youth offending, and education behaviour support staff. Together they strive to help young people and advocate for them. Nevertheless, some young people's future plans are having to change because returning home and fostering options are becoming unrealistic the longer they stay.

The Registered Manager has improved the effectiveness with which he monitors the home and looks for trends, patterns and messages for improving the setting. He thinks about the reasons for incidents or lack of engagement by young people and seeks ideas for practice solutions. He regularly consults with young people and stakeholders and holds their views in mind for planning changes and improvements. He is alert to the risks posed to young people simply by coming into residential care from family. This includes the potential damage caused by staying too long in the home when the mix of young people can lead to an increase in risky behaviour. To best reduce and minimise these risks, staff are given high quality support, including opportunities to talk about the feelings that arise from the work they do. Managers and shift leaders make sure that care is well planned and that shift handovers are thorough. The Registered Manager has also reviewed the present shift system as recommended at the last inspection. He and the staff are committed to completely change the shift system once a full complement of staff is in place. They believe that by removing the early afternoon shift change young people will get more consistent and higher quality care.

Staff communicate particularly well and have high expectations of one another's practice. They are tirelessly patient and consistently show young people respect and care. A social work student on placement said, 'communication is good here - adults talk to young people: there is eye contact, shaking hands, treating everyone with respect.' Similarly, the home's visitor said, 'staff remain upbeat and relationships with young people are relaxed and convivial.'

Three new staff are shortly to commence work in the home after a long period when the home had vacancies filled by regular bank staff. Staff and managers are excited about the quality of the newly recruited staff and are confident they will add value to the care that is provided. Young people living in the home were actively involved in the recruitment process and their choices mirrored those made by staff and managers of the home and local authority.

Information about this children's home

The home is a local authority children's home that provides short-term residential accommodation for five children who have emotional or behavioural difficulties. The young people usually stay for up to 12 weeks. During this time support is provided either to enable the young person to return home or to assist them in moving to an appropriate long-term placement.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25/11/2014	Full	good
20/03/2014	Interim	good progress
29/04/2013	Full	good
04/01/2013	Interim	good progress

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

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that children who have been excluded from school have access to appropriate education and training, so that they are supported and enabled to resume full time education. (NMS 8.8)

What inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspections we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The 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 relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.