

SC065679

Registered provider: Staffordshire County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The children's home is managed by the local authority and provides residential short breaks for young people aged between 12 and 17 years and who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home also provides outreach services to support young people and their families.

Inspection dates: 19 to 20 April 2017

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: 23 January 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because

- Young people in crisis benefit from the calm, comfortable and welcoming environment, which enables them to relax and focus on their own needs.
- Young people enjoy their short breaks and feel that staff care about them.
- Young people quickly form warm and trusting relationships with staff, who spend time with them and engage them in a range of stimulating and fun activities.
- Staff listen and respect young people.
- Staff support young people to make progress in their ability to manage their emotions and behaviour.
- Staff provide young people with support that enables young people to improve their family relationships.
- Staff work with young people to help them understand how to keep themselves safe.
- Staff are trained in safeguarding, including understanding and responding to child sexual exploitation, and how to respond effectively when young people go missing.
- The registered manager supports her staff to develop the service for the benefit of young people and their families.
- Staff work closely with a range of professionals in order to provide a flexible service, which meets the needs of young people and families. This reduces the risks of family breakdown.

The children's home's areas for development

- The registered manager has not offered sufficient challenge to social workers when poor referrals and plans are provided.
- The registered manager does not secure recorded feedback from professionals and families to help drive up standards.

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

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
5: Engaging with the wider system to ensure that children's needs are met. In order to meet the engaging with the wider system standard, with particular reference to challenging the quality of referrals and plans from social workers, the registered person must ensure that: (c) if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, they must challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans;	31/05/2017
The registered person must ensure that the system for reviewing the quality of care undertaken by the registered provider provides for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff. (Regulation 45(5))	31/05/2017

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Young people are welcomed into a comfortable, calm and well-maintained home for short breaks, when they are experiencing a crisis in the family. Young people say that they enjoy coming for their short breaks and feel that staff care about them. One young person commented that he was given the choice to come here and was able to have a look round before he started his short breaks. He said he likes it here and comes for two days a week. Another young person said, 'They look after us fantastic.' Young people particularly enjoy the food, which is skilfully provided by the cook to meet any specific needs. The home is spacious and allows young people to choose to be quiet by themselves in their own room, or to socialise. Young people get on well with each other due to careful matching. Young people quickly form trusting relationships with caring staff, who understand their emotional needs and provide young people with emotional warmth and one-to-one attention should they need it. One young person told the inspector that he can go to staff to talk about anything that worries him and that he

knows how to make a complaint. Another young person said, 'We have great fun here. I can see my mates and I feel safe and cared for. I can talk to staff and it makes me feel calmer. It's a lot calmer than at home. It's really helping at home and gives me a fresh weekend.'

Young people engage with staff and their peers in a wide range of activities that support their emotional and physical well-being. They can spend time in the garden and, if they wish, take part in this year's sunflower growing competition. Enthusiastic staff encourage young people to play table tennis, badminton, visit a local trampoline centre and use the art materials and musical instruments in the home. Low-cost activities include skateboarding and going for bike rides and walks. These enable young people to develop interests they can continue at home. Young people enjoy playing five-a-side football in the evenings with staff. This regular fixture welcomes parents and staff from the intensive prevention service, who work closely with young people and their families. Young people and their families have also enjoyed parties at Christmas and Easter, when staff provided food, music and games. These have offered the young people and families who access the service, the opportunity to relax together and get to know one another.

Young people make significant progress during the time that they access short breaks. This includes feeling calmer, getting better at managing their emotions and behaviour and complying with boundaries. One young person commented that coming for short breaks calms him down. Some young people demonstrate increased confidence and have recently been involved in interviewing prospective employees for the service. Despite his initial lack of confidence, one young person fully engaged in thinking of questions to ask interviewees and putting the questions to them in the interview. This progress also leads to young people managing their behaviour better when they are in their family home. This has reduced the risk of family breakdown. One parent commented, 'He enjoys it, loves coming, his room is great and he can be himself. He is accepted for who he is here. It helps the family – we get a night's sleep. His behaviour at home has become better, he is learning how to be around other people and to share and be in a group. I never expected this.'

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

Young people are safe during their short breaks. The parent of one young person told the inspector, 'He's extremely safe here. He gets angry and, if he walks out, staff follow him. He comes back within 10 minutes. Safety is the staff's top priority.' Young people respond positively to the boundaries and rules that staff set down for them. None of the young people who come for planned short breaks have gone missing since the last inspection. Vigilant staff ensure that young people can enjoy trips into the town with regular agreed mobile phone calls and visits from staff to ensure that they are safe. When staff told one young person that they did not want him to go into the town on his first night in placement, as he did not know the area well, he accepted this and said, 'I was happy for them to make that decision for me.'

Behaviour management is strongly influenced by the matching of young people. Staff skilfully identify matches that are both safe and beneficial for young people. Young people who present as suicidal are not admitted for short breaks in order to protect them and the other young people.

Staff address safeguarding directly with young people to help them understand how to keep themselves safe. Close liaison with other professionals, such as drug and alcohol workers, the police and social workers, enables staff to provide young people with information and specialist help. Staff support young people to engage in direct work with them and other professionals. For example, services relating to drug misuse, debts and making the right relationships are all accessed. Young people say that staff talk to them about keeping safe and that this helps them to understand risks. One young person commented that staff talk to him about things that he should not do, such as drugs, and they talk about relationships. He says he finds this helpful. Consequently, young people's drug misuse and going missing behaviours have reduced significantly.

The registered manager ensures that the detailed and effective risk assessments are reviewed and updated. Behaviour management plans address the risks of child sexual exploitation, and include key information about potential perpetrators and strategies to protect young people. Staff identify and address internet and mobile phone risks. Staff work closely with the local police to ensure that they are updated with the locality assessment when any new risks are identified. The registered manager attends the police meetings regarding child sexual exploitation, which she then feeds back to staff. Staff demonstrate very good knowledge of how to identify the risks of child sexual exploitation and of how perpetrators organise grooming.

Staff are trained in safeguarding, physical intervention and radicalisation. When safeguarding issues arise, staff are proactive and quickly engage in partner agencies to ensure that young people are protected. Staff handover and team meetings address any concerns about young people and identify measures required to address them effectively.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

This short breaks provision has now been in operation for a year. During this time, the staff have successfully adjusted to a new manager, focus and pace of work, and increased work with families and other professionals. The registered manager and senior staff have skilfully supported these changes, resulting in a well-run, innovative and effective service for young people and families in crisis. The home has been refurbished to provide young people with an appropriate environment for short breaks. The registered manager has redesigned paperwork systems so that they take less staff time, so that staff can focus their time and attention on the needs of the young people.

The team has developed and evolved under the new leadership and staff express strong commitment to the new service and the aims of the statement of purpose. Staff receive regular and constructive supervision, their training is up to date, and they feel supported and are confident in their roles. Staff have successfully challenged the local authority and defended this new resource when social workers seek to place young people who do not meet the criteria for placement set out in the statement of purpose. Staff are extremely positive about the registered manager and say that they feel listened to, able to contribute to the service and that they love working in the home.

Staff are increasingly working in partnership with families and welcoming them into the home. Firm foundations have been established in working relationships with the intensive

prevention team. Staff have aspirations for young people to remain in the family where possible, but they are realistic and recognise that some young people will not be able to achieve this. Staff excel at meeting the needs of young people in the short periods available during short breaks, in order to maximise the positive impact on families. The social pedagogy approach to relationships effectively underpins all of their work.

There are a couple of shortfalls in practice. The manager is not seeking every opportunity to capture feedback and views from family members and professionals. Staff have not always challenged poor-quality referrals made by social workers. These shortfalls create missed opportunity to enhance consultation and to ensure that social workers understand the requirements of any referral.

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 who 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 ST16 2DH

Responsible individual: Richard Hancock

Registered manager: Kerry Hutchinson

Inspector

Louise Whittle, 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 children looked after, 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 <http://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 <http://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: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

© Crown copyright 2017