

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 home is led by an experienced manager, who has applied to register with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 May 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 9 November 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
09/11/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
04/05/2022	Full	Inadequate
24/08/2021	Full	Good
22/01/2020	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Since the last inspection, the home's purpose has changed from a home that provides care and accommodation to a home that provides short breaks and emergency placements for up to four children.

Children are welcomed into a safe, comfortable and calm environment for short breaks when they are experiencing a crisis in the family. Most children say that they enjoy their short breaks and the time staff spend with them during outreach sessions. This service has enabled some children to stay or return to their family home and prevented family breakdown. When family reunification has not been possible, staff have supported children until a longer-term home is found.

Children develop positive relationships with staff. Children say they feel safe, well cared for and that they can talk to staff if they have any worries or concerns. This helps children to feel safe and secure. One child has told their support worker that they would like to live in the home forever.

Staff encourage children to share their views, wishes and feelings. When children raise concerns with staff, staff ensure that they respond quickly. For example, one child who was accessing the service as an emergency admission, was worried that they were not going to be able to see their sibling. The staff ensured that the child was supported to see their sibling regularly. This makes children feel valued and listened to. The child said they felt heard.

Children participate in a range of activities, both in the home and in the community. For example, staff support children to attend the cinema, go trampolining, participate in beauty evenings and baking. These experiences give children opportunities to have fun and enjoy themselves.

The environment is spacious, warm and welcoming. The communal areas are clean, well decorated and comfortably furnished. There is a games room, as well as an arts and crafts room, where children can chill out, have fun and spend time together. Children's bedrooms are bright and airy. This means that this is an environment where children feel comfortable and where they want to come and spend time in.

The short-breaks service is also used for emergency placements. There have been occasions when this has impacted on children being able to access their planned short breaks. The manager has tried to reduce the impact of this on children and their families by offering alternative nights or outreach support.

There has been one occasion when a child was admitted to the home whose needs did not reflect those that the home is intended to care for, as stated in the

statement of purpose. This did not impact on the children, and the responsible individual and manager have taken action to ensure that this does not happen again.

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

Managers and staff prioritise the safety and well-being of children. Children's written plans are comprehensive, and the manager ensures that these are reviewed regularly. Detailed, individual risk assessments provide staff with clear guidance and strategies to support children. The oversight of managers is effective in ensuring that staff always have up-to-date guidance.

Managers take prompt action when there are allegations or complaints. The manager ensures that information is shared swiftly with appropriate professionals to avoid delay and ensure that children are protected from harm.

Staff manage children's behaviours well. As a result, physical intervention is rarely used and is only used when all other strategies have been exhausted. Records of restraint are detailed. Managers have oversight of all incidents. They ensure that children and staff are spoken to following any intervention used. This ensures that, when used, physical intervention is proportionate and necessary.

Incidents of children going missing from home are low. When children are missing, the staff follow the missing-from-home protocols. They search the local area and, when required, report to the police. When children return, staff warmly welcome them back. Children are also offered the opportunity to talk to an independent person. This means that children can talk to people about the reasons why they were missing, raise any concerns they may have and feel reassured.

Staff talk to children about important topics, such as culture, identity and friendships. There are also displays around the home for children to read and educate themselves on. There is information on child criminal and sexual exploitation, children's rights and how to complain. This supports children to be informed and helps them to keep themselves safe.

Staff complete regular health and safety checks in the home. There are regular fire drills to ensure that children know how to exit the building in the event of an emergency. However, managers have not ensured that all actions from the fire risk audit have been completed within timescales, and the annual service for the firefighting equipment has recently gone out of date.

There has been one occasion when staff did not follow safeguarding policies. Staff failed to share information of a safeguarding nature in a timely manner with managers. On this occasion, while there was no impact on the children, it does have the potential to do so. The manager has addressed this shortfall in practice to prevent reoccurrence.

The manager follows safer recruitment practices. This ensures that only vetted individuals work at the home and provide care for children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager keeps the children at the heart of all she does. She is dedicated and compassionate. She has good working knowledge of all the children that use the service. The manager is supported by an enthusiastic and competent deputy manager, as well as a visible and conscientious responsible individual. Together, they have developed a good understanding of the home and how they want to improve the service further to offer better support to children, young people and their families.

Managers have effective monitoring systems in place, which support them to review the quality of care. They use these well, along with extensive development plans and independent visitor assessments to continually assess and improve the quality of care for children.

Staff say they feel supported by leaders and managers. Staff receive regular high-quality practice-related supervision and appraisal. This helps staff to feel supported and develops their practice. There are also regular team meetings to reflect on children's care and discuss how the team can work best together. This ensures children receive consistent, good-quality care.

Staff are well trained. As well as mandatory training, staff have been provided with child-specific training. This means that staff have the skills and knowledge to keep children safe.

On the whole, the manager informs Ofsted when there are safeguarding concerns. However, on one occasion, the manager failed to notify Ofsted about a serious concern. This means the regulator may not have all the relevant information to understand what is happening in the home.

Managers and staff work with a wide range of external services to meet children's needs. The feedback from professionals and parents is consistently positive. One child's social worker said: 'Staff are brilliant. They are consistent with (name of child) and have great communication.' Another professional said: 'Communication is fantastic. They work well with us and there is clear communication'.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person 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 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— are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2) (a)(vii)) This specifically relates to the registered person ensuring that staff follow safeguarding policies.	29 June 2023
After consultation with the fire and rescue authority, the registered person must- Take adequate precautions against the risk of fire, including the provision of suitable fire equipment in the children's home. (Regulation 25 (1) (a)) This specifically relates to the registered manager ensuring that the actions arising from the fire risk assessment are completed in a timely manner and maintenance of fire safety equipment is up to date.	29 June 2023

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that Ofsted and other relevant persons are notified if one of the situations specified in regulation 40 (4)(a)-(d) occurs, or if there is an incident relating to the protection, safeguarding or welfare of a child living in the home which the registered person considers to be serious (40(4)(e)). ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 63, paragraph 14.10)
- The registered person should only accept placements for children when they are satisfied that the home can respond effectively to the child's assessed needs as recorded in the child's relevant plans and where they have fully considered the

impact that the placement will have on the existing group of children. The statement of purpose is an important document in the process of care planning as it sets out the needs of children the home is set up and equipped to care for. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 56, paragraph 11.4)

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: SC065679

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Staffordshire County Council, 1 Staffordshire Place, Stafford ST16 2DH

Responsible individual: Justine Bishop

Registered manager: Susan Dodd

Inspector

Sonia Sullivan, Social Care Inspector

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