

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC369825
Inspector	Mark Ryder
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Stoke on Trent City Council
Registered person address	City of Stoke-on-Trent, Civic Centre Glebe Street STOKE-ON-TRENT ST4 1HH
Responsible individual	Susan Hammersley
Registered manager	Christine Jeanette Speakman
Date of last inspection	25/03/2014

Inspection date	24/07/2014
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Previous inspection	satisfactory progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	adequate
Outcomes for children and young people	adequate
Quality of care	good
Keeping children and young people safe	adequate
Leadership and management	adequate

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	adequate
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Full report

Information about this children's home

This children's home is registered to provide care and accommodation for two young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home is operated by the local authority.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25/03/2014	Interim	satisfactory progress
04/04/2013	Full	good
11/12/2012	Interim	satisfactory progress
02/05/2012	Full	good

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

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
4 (2001)	ensure the statement of purpose details any health care or therapy provided, including how the children's home measures the effectiveness of its approach; and the evidence referred to by the children's home to demonstrate the effectiveness of its approach, and how this information can be accessed (Regulation 4 Schedule 1 (19) (b)(1-2))	21/08/2014
18 (2001)	ensure that the routine of the home is organised so as to further children's participation in education, including regular attendance at school and participation in school activities of children of compulsory school age, regular attendance at	21/08/2014

	college where applicable (Regulation 18 (1)(b))	
27 (2001)	ensure that all persons employed by him receive appropriate training, supervision and appraisal (Regulation 27 (4)(a))	21/08/2014
23 (2001)	ensure that any activities in which children participate are so far as reasonably practicable free from avoidable risks with regards to individualised lone working risk assessments (Regulation 23 (a))	21/08/2014
34 (2001)	establish and maintain a system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals least once in every 3 months; and improving the quality of care provided in the children's home (Regulation 34 (1) (a-b))	21/08/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure written records kept by the home when a child goes missing detail action taken by staff, the circumstances of the child's return, any reasons given by the child for running away from the home, and any action taken in the light of those reasons. This information is shared with the responsible authority and where appropriate, their parents (NMS 5.10)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **adequate**

Young people living at this home have made some progress although frequent missing episodes from the home has negatively impacted on their overall outcomes.

Young people enjoy a healthy diet and say the food served is good. Menus are planned in advance with the young people providing them with choice of preferred foods. Staff encourage healthy eating which is accepted, in the main. Young people have regular access to all health care professionals.

Healthy lifestyle choices are discussed with young people on a regular basis. The misuse of drugs, for example, remains an area of concern although young people do have opportunities to talk to staff about the dangers of experimenting with cannabis. Sexual health guidance is also provided. An external agency visits young people to help them understand safe choices. A young person said that they can relate to the staff and talk to them.

Education is not strongly promoted at this home despite staff encouraging young people to engage. Attendance of formal education and academic or vocational attainment is low. Education and activity timetables are not always followed. This has led to drift in some young people's educational progress.

Young people enjoy regular contact with family and friends. They are supported to maintain contact and as a result parents feel their relationships with their children has improved since living at this home.

Quality of care **good**

Staff are capable and confident in working with young people who often present unsafe behaviours. There are good and positive relationships between the staff and young people. A young person said that they like the staff, can relate to them and enjoy their company.

Care planning is of a good standard. Young people are actively involved in the decisions affecting their lives. A key working system is in use in which young people can talk openly about any concerns they have. Key working sessions explore a number of areas of concern. For example, drug misuse, the dangers of missing from the home and attending education. These discussions provide young people with an opportunity to consider their life choices whilst in placement.

There have been no complaints made since the last inspection. Young people and

parents are aware of the complaints procedure and feel confident that they would be listened to.

The wishes and feelings of young people are respected and acted upon. Care plans reflect the diverse needs of young people regarding their age and gender. Young people are able to make informed decisions about their daily routines and how they wish to spend their time.

Young people do engage in leisure activities with the staff and this is seen as a positive move towards more structured educational involvement at the start of the academic year. Staff have a good understanding of the young people's needs and interests.

Keeping children and young people safe adequate

Young people are kept safe at this home although high levels of missing from care place young people at risk of harm.

The home operates a lone working policy for staff to be on shift on their own with young people. However, risk assessments in relation to individual young people and the circumstances that staff may find themselves in, are not suitable. The lone working risk assessments are generic and do not provide sufficient detail for safe working practices. This was identified during the last inspection and continues to be an area for improvement.

There have been 15 missing events since the last inspection in March 2014. Interagency meetings have taken place to review the level of risk to young people. The staff have established contact with the local police and work with social workers within the same local authority that operates the home. This leads to effective interagency working. However, recording of recent incidents in which young people have absconded have not included reference to discussions with young people when they return about where they have been, why they left the home and what actions the staff need to take to reduce the frequency of missing in the future. This continues to be an area for further development.

Young people say they are safe. However, they recognise, that their behaviour has put them in unsafe situations in the past. There has been one safeguarding referral since the last inspection which was suitably managed. Staff are aware of the procedures to protect children and have received training and guidance on such areas as children who are at risk of sexual exploitation. This awareness has led to discussions with young people about the dangers of associating with older males.

Behaviour management strategies are fair, proportionate and reasonable. Young people benefit from the continuity of staff providing them with clear boundaries. Young people recognise the reasons for sanctions but are not always in agreement

with these. Young people had no concerns about bullying.

Recruitment and vetting of staff is safely planned to ensure young people are cared for by adults who have been appropriately checked. The organisation supports young people to be actively involved in the recruitment of care staff.

The environment is physically safe to live in. All maintenance and repairs are carried out promptly and within timescales. Fire safety is sound.

Leadership and management

adequate

The current Registered Manager has a number of year's experience in residential child care and has been in post for 12 months. She is qualified to national qualification level 4 in the care and management of child care services. The manager has responsibility for two small group homes run by the same local authority. However, the Registered Manager has been absent from work since June 2014. The current interim management arrangements are carried out by a senior member of the local authority. While this has been satisfactory for an interim period, the absence of a manager on a daily basis has limited progress of the home to further develop.

There were three recommendations made at the last inspection. Only one of these recommendations has been met. Young people are now provided with contact details of independent reviewing officers and Ofsted within the young person's guide. This ensures young people are able to make contact with people outside of the home if they have any concerns.

Of the two previous recommendations referred to, one has been reissued with regards to providing further written evidence to support the practice that young people have been spoken to when they return from being missing and one escalated with regards to reviewing current lone working risk assessments.

Staff say they feel they have sufficient support and are able to contact managers when required. However, formal supervisions and annual appraisals have not taken place at the local authority's own required frequency. This has left some staff without formal supervision for a number of months. Leadership and professional guidance has therefore been affected over the time the Registered Manager has been absent.

Staff are all qualified to diploma level 3 or its equivalent and have sufficient training to provide safe care to young people. Handover meetings are thorough. The staff team present as competent and motivated to work with young people.

Internal monitoring of the home by the Registered Manager is not strong. A review of the homes current practice has not been completed at the required period of time.

For example, there has been only one report submitted to Ofsted over the last 12 months. A report recently submitted did not provide sufficient evaluation of the home or feedback from parents, young people or social workers as to how effective the home is in working with children. The lack of reports and the omissions from the latest report negates Ofsted's reviewing process of children's homes between inspections. This is an area for significant improvement.

The home's statement of purpose has recently been updated. However, the update has not included any evaluation as to how effective services are for young people as required under the revised regulations. For example, there is no reference to the effectiveness of health care or therapy provided. Therefore, the Statement of purpose does not currently meet children's homes requirements.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

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.