

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	19/07/2016
Unique reference number	SC381085
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Stoke-on-Trent City Council
Registered provider address	City of Stoke-on-Trent, Civic Centre, Glebe Street, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 1HH
Responsible individual	Susan Hammersley
Registered manager	Christopher Whalley
Inspector	Matt Hedges

Inspection date	19/07/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Requires improvement
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home	Requires improvement
The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC381085

Summary of findings

The children's home provision requires improvement because:

- Staff do not always take effective action when young people are at risk of harming themselves or when they go missing.
- Not all staff are adequately trained.
- Staff do not consistently follow the guidance outlined in young people's risk assessments/plans.
- Some features of the building are not adequate.
- Some aspects of record-keeping are poor. Not all records are up to date.

The children's home's strengths

- Young people have good relationships with staff.
- Young people make good progress in their education.
- Managers are taking robust action to improve the service provided to young people.
- Staff work collaboratively with parents and other agencies.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person meets 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
12. The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standard, with particular reference to taking action and building design, the registered provider must ensure: (2)(a)(vi) that staff take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare (d) that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health.	19/08/2016
13. The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard, with particular reference to training, the registered person must: (2)(c) ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child.	19/08/2016
The registered person must ensure that within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure. (Regulation 35(3)(a)(vii))	19/08/2016
The registered person must maintain records ('case records') for each child which are kept up to date. (Regulation 36(1)(b))	19/08/2016

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further, the service should take account of the following recommendations:

- Ensure that a record of supervision is kept for staff, including the manager. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.3)
- Ensure that staff understand the importance of careful, objective, clear recording. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home provides care and accommodation for up to two children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. A local authority operates the home. The home only supports young people from the local authority's area.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
19/01/2016	Full	Requires improvement
28/09/2015	Full	Inadequate
11/03/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
15/05/2014	Full	Adequate

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Require s improvement
Young people's progress is variable. In some areas, young people make good steps forward. For example, young people's attendance at school is very good, and improves in some cases due to individualised support from staff. A teacher talks positively about this, stating, 'The young person's attendance was 95% ... We worked really closely with the staff at the home to ensure this ... Staff are really supportive.' This has a positive impact on young people's academic progress. For example, one young person recently sat her exams at school despite some significant personal challenges. Staff ensure that young people have access to a range of positive activities. A teacher said, 'They do loads ... this helps to develop self-esteem'. A particular achievement includes young people completing the Race for Life with several staff. In contrast, a number of significant incidents have adversely affected young people's progress in other areas. This is most notable in relation to their health and emotional well-being. All staff have strong relationships with young people. However, the response of staff on a small number of occasions has been inconsistent and they have failed to take effective action. This has affected young people's experiences of living in the home. Escalating concerns about a young person's safety meant that she had to leave the home, quickly. This reduced the ability of staff to prepare her. Despite this, the registered manager and staff team worked closely with her social worker to ensure the move was as supported as possible. This helped to reduce some of the young person's anxieties. A new young person is due to move into the home. The registered manager has learned from previous shortfalls in this area. He has employed a more thorough and rigorous matching process. This process also ensures that all young people's views are considered. These are now central to the planning. This has ensured that young people and staff are well prepared. A social worker confirms this, stating, 'The admission was really well planned with a very in-depth risk assessment'. Staff seek young people's opinions in a number of other areas, including how they would like to stay in touch with their friends and family. This ensures that young people stay in touch with the people most important to them, in a safe way.	

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
In the main, the registered manager is good at identifying and understanding the risks young people face, particularly in relation to self-harm. He seeks the views of young people, psychologists and the young people's social workers about how best to manage these risks. This collaborative working produces clear guidelines for staff to follow. However, on a small number of occasions, staff have not adhered to or implemented these strategies and have failed to take effective action. For example, on one occasion staff waited several days to search a young person's room, despite suspecting there were items in the room that the young person could use to harm herself. On another occasion, staff did not follow guidance when a young person blocked themselves in their bedroom, waiting longer than the agreed time before calling for assistance. These errors place young people at potential risk. In addition, the registered manager has not adequately assessed the design of the doors, or considered any changes to other areas of the building to reduce the likelihood of this incident reoccurring. As a result, this remains a potential hazard. Staff access a number of suitable training courses and develop a range of skills. However, some staff are yet to undertake formal training in supporting young people who self-harm. In addition, one member of staff has not completed specific training regarding how to use ligature cutters. These shortfalls affect staff confidence and skills, reducing the support they can provide to young people. Some young people continue to go missing. Staff understand the risks that this may pose, including the risk of exploitation. Despite this, the response at these times is variable. On some occasions, staff take robust action. The police talk positively about this, with one officer confirming, 'They put all the strategies in place they need to and try everything they can'. In contrast, on one occasion, staff did not alert a manager, or their colleagues, to the fact that a young person was threatening to leave the home. As a result, staff were unable to follow her when she left. In another instance, staff did not report a young person missing in a timely way. The registered manager has also failed to ensure that one young person's 'absence protocol' is up to date. This absence protocol states that staff should wait 30 minutes before reporting her missing. Other guidance correctly states that staff should report her missing immediately due to the level of concern. Although this has the potential to cause confusion for staff, on this occasion it was not the cause of the delay in reporting. These shortfalls affect the quality of the response young people receive when they leave the home and go missing. Staff generally respond well when young people display verbally or physically aggressive behaviour. A teacher confirmed this, stating, 'Staff are really good at managing this... They do not sweep things under the carpet, they deal with everything, and put everything in place they need to in order to address the	

behaviours.' Staff involve young people in discussions about their actions and the possible 'consequences' they may face. This ensures clear expectations and consistent boundaries. Young people feel more secure because of this. Staff record any measures implemented but do not always assess their effectiveness or the outcome of their use. This prevents staff from ascertaining whether they need to amend their approach.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
There have been several management changes over the last year. The current registered manager has been in post since February 2016. He is suitably qualified and experienced. He brings passion and commitment and he focuses firmly on the needs of the young people. The registered manager is well aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. He has improved monitoring and audit processes and uses these tools to drive improvement. He has also met both of the shortfalls identified at the last inspection. This has helped to improve the consistency of staffing and the admissions process. This improves the quality of the service provided to young people and ensures the aims and objectives outlined in the statement of purpose are met. Senior managers in the organisation support the registered manager well. They ensure he receives high-quality supervision and provide additional quality assurance of the home. As a result, all managers now have a detailed understanding of the progress young people make. This also helps the registered manager to assess the development needs of the staff team. The registered manager has high expectations of staff and takes swift and robust action to address shortfalls in practice. This has resulted in a number of improvements. Staff talk positively about the changes he has made and the quality of the support they receive. This includes regular and effective supervision. However, the registered manager does not ensure that there is an adequate record of all of these sessions. This prevents him from being able to evidence the support he provides in a timely way. Planned improvements in other aspects of record keeping are yet to embed. Specifically, some entries by staff lack clarity or are crossed out/covered so they cannot be fully read. In addition, the language used by staff on some occasions is not easy for young people to understand. This may limit the usefulness of these records to young people; particularly should they wish to look back on this period in later life.	

The vast majority of staff are well qualified. They hold the level 3 diploma for residential childcare or a suitable equivalent. There are also clear plans in place to support a new member of the team to achieve this.

The registered manager and staff have developed good working relationships with a range of partner agencies, including education, health, social care and the police. This ensures that young people receive access to the support and services they require. The registered manager actively challenges other professionals when he considers their response inadequate.

Families talk positively about their relationships with the registered manager and staff team. One young person's parent commented, 'It's good ... People talk through things with her, she has a lot of support. They are also good at involving me and keeping me up to speed. They are really good.' This has helped some young people to significantly improve their relationships with their families.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of children looked after is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place. However, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference that adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, 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.

This 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 Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance *raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted*, which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

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, workbased learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It inspects services for looked after children 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 4234, 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/government/organisations/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2016