

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	03/08/2016
Unique reference number	SC381089
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	03/08/2016
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

SC381089

Summary of findings

The children's home provision requires improvement because:

- The response of staff when young people go missing is variable.
- Staff do not always effectively support young people who display difficult behaviour.
- Staff use 'sanctions' that are unreasonable.
- Not all young people make adequate progress in some areas of their life.
- Staff are unable to fully meet some young people's cultural needs.
- Record keeping is inconsistent. At times, it is poor.

The children's home strengths

- Managers are taking action to improve the home and address the shortfalls.
- Feedback from other professionals is extremely positive.
- Planning when young people move to the home is good.

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(s) 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(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
11. The positive relationships standard In order to meet the positive relationships standard, with particular reference to understanding behaviour, the registered person must ensure that staff— (2)(a)(ix) understand how children's previous experiences and present emotions can be communicated through behaviour and have the competence and skills to interpret these.	09/09/2016
12. The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standard, with particular reference to going missing, the registered provider must ensure that staff— (2)(a)(vi) take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare.	02/09/2016
The registered person must ensure that no measure of control or discipline which is excessive or unreasonable is used in relation to any child. (Regulation 19 (1))	09/09/2016
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 a description of the measure and its duration. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(iv))	09/09/2016
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))	09/09/2016

The registered person must maintain records ('case records') for each child which include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child, this specifically relates to the child's cultural background. (Regulation 36 (1)(a))	02/09/2016
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Recommendations

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

- Ensure that any sanctions used to address poor behaviour are restorative in nature, to help children recognise the impact of their behaviour on themselves, other children, the staff caring for them and the wider community. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.38).
- Ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. ('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
03/02/2016	Full	Requires improvement
13/10/2015	Full	Inadequate
23/03/2015	Interim	Declined effectiveness
22/10/2014	Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Requires improvement
Some young people spend a significant amount of time away from the home. This affects their relationships with staff, their day-to-day experiences and the progress that they can make in some areas. For example, despite support from staff, some young people's attendance in education has decreased. This affected their academic attainment, specifically their ability to complete their courses and sit their exams. At times, these periods of absence also place young people in potentially risky situations. Other young people relish spending time with staff and engage in a range of positive activities. This strengthens the quality of their relationships and enables staff to support them. This helps young people to make progress in important aspects of their life. This includes developing better independence skills. They also develop greater emotional maturity. A social worker confirms this stating that 'they are braver' as a result. One young person has recently moved to the home. The registered manager planned this well. He consulted a wide range of professionals, along with carers. Consequently, staff were able to offer effective support to the young person, reducing her worries at an anxious time. A social care manager confirms this stating, 'The admission was well planned. It has worked really well.' All the young people in the home are local to the area. Staff generally seek young people's opinions and use them to inform the care that they receive. For example, staff are supporting one young person in her wishes to review her care plan. They support other young people to express their views about seeing their family. This means that young people stay in touch with the people most important to them, in a safe way. In contrast to this, staff are unable to offer individualised support to one young person in relation to her identify and family history. Some of her records are poorly maintained. They are unclear and hold conflicting information about where one of her parents was born. This prevents staff supporting the young person should she raise questions about her cultural background.	

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
Staff do not respond consistently when young people go missing. On some	

occasions, staff take robust action. Social workers and police officers confirm this, one officer summarising 'they did all they could in a very difficult situation'. On other occasions, staff do not take effective action. Specifically, during one incident, staff did not adequately search for a young person. In addition, they did not respond suitably to information that she may be with an adult that staff had concerns about. This failed to ensure that she received the support that she required.

Overall, staff have a good awareness of child sexual exploitation and the risks that young people face. Staff identify risks in this area well. After receiving a recent assessment from the registered manager, a specialist social worker commented it was 'the most comprehensive and informative assessment I have ever received'. Professionals can protect young people better as a result.

Incidents when young people harm themselves are rare. Staff generally assess and manage these incidents well, offering young people appropriate emotional support. In contrast, staff do not always manage aggressive or disruptive behaviour appropriately. Staff do not always consider how young people's previous experiences and present emotions can be communicated through their behaviour or consider this when responding. For example, on one occasion, a member of staff turned off the electric supply to a young person's bedroom. This was in response to them playing their music too loud. This is excessive and unreasonable. The registered manager identified this and took action to try to prevent any reoccurrences. In addition, the member of staff did not record the use of this measure within 24 hours. This limited external oversight of this incident. Staff also employ other 'sanctions' in response to negative behaviour. These are often not restorative in nature. Consequently, they do not help young people to recognise the impact of their behaviour on themselves or others. Furthermore, staff do not consistently evaluate the effectiveness and any consequence of the use of these measures. This prevents staff from recognising when the measure is not successful and amending their practice accordingly.

The use of physical restraint is rare and is proportionate. Records of these incidents vary in quality. On some occasions, the language used is not clear. On other occasions, staff do not record the duration of the restraint. These shortfalls hinder oversight in this area. In addition, the records will not be helpful to young people should they wish to access this information in the future.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
There have been a number of management changes over the past 12 months. Following the last inspection, a new suitably qualified, experienced registered manager took charge of the home. He is passionate and is committed to young people. He understands the progress that they are making and ensures that their	

needs are central to all he does.

The registered manager has implemented new, improved monitoring systems. He uses these to identify weaknesses and is aware of the majority of shortfalls identified during this inspection. He takes effective action and challenges staff performance when this is required. This ensures that the home continues to meet the overarching aims and objectives in the statement of purpose. He has also learned from previous shortfalls identified in this home and other homes across the service. This approach is steadily improving the quality of care that the home provides.

Senior managers in the organisation offer excellent support to the registered manager. Staff also talk positively about the support that they receive and the quality of their supervisions. Staff also access useful, good-quality consultations with a psychologist. This is starting to improve practice and deepen the understanding that staff have of how best to support young people. In addition, staff access a range of relevant training courses. Most staff are suitably qualified and hold the required level 3 diploma or equivalent in residential childcare. One member of staff is currently working towards this. There are appropriate plans in place to support them.

The registered manager has developed excellent relationships with families and a wide range of partner agencies. This includes social care, education, health and the police. Other professionals are wholly positive about this and the effectiveness of the communication. This insures that all professionals share information appropriately and young people receive consistent care. The registered manager and senior managers offer robust challenge to all agencies when they feel that their response is not adequate. This improves practice and ensures that young people receive the services that they need.

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 looked after children 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 that 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 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'.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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