

Children's homes – Interim inspection

Inspection date	09/02/2017
Unique reference number	SC381089
Type of inspection	Interim
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	09/02/2017
Previous inspection judgement	Requires improvement
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection This home was judged requires improvement at the full inspection. At this interim inspection, Ofsted judges that it has sustained effectiveness. One child has moved out of the home since the last inspection. Despite difficult circumstances, the registered manager and staff made sure that she felt supported. One child has also moved into the home. The registered manager engaged with a wide range of professionals prior to this. He sought their views and used these to make sure that the child experienced a smooth transition. As a result, the child has settled quickly. Her behaviour has improved and there are less serious incidents. Her school attendance is also good and she is making progress. Another child also continues to make good progress in key areas of her life. Her school attendance is good and this is helping her to make good progress academically. In addition, she has developed numerous positive friendships in the local community. This helps her to have fun and to develop her social skills. Her social worker told the inspector, 'She has been more settled here than anywhere. She has made the most progress here and is more emotionally settled.' The registered manager has made improvements in some areas. This includes aspects of monitoring. This has resulted in internal processes starting to provide better oversight over the provision of care. The registered manager has also taken action to address some areas of poor performance. Consequently, he has met five of the eight shortfalls identified at the last inspection. Significantly, he has clarified expectations and processes surrounding incidents when children go missing. There have been no recent incidents of this nature. The changes made by the registered manager ensure that staff now have clear guidance. This has improved their awareness and their practice. In contrast, the registered manager has not adequately addressed a number of other shortfalls. These primarily relate to physical restraint and the use of sanctions. Generally, staff have strong and supportive relationships with children, who are positive about the care they receive. However, some staff have used sanctions in response to negative behaviour that are not always reasonable. For example, on one occasion a senior member of staff told a child that she would not get her	

bedtime story that night due to her behaviour. The registered manager took swift action to make sure that this sanction was not used. However, this could have caused significant upset to the child. On another occasion, a child was told she would have to pay towards the cost of replacing food items she had touched, without washing her hands. These measures are excessive and unreasonable. They also demonstrate that staff cannot always communicate expectations about a child's behaviour in a way that is appropriate to the child's age and understanding. In addition, records of these incidents lack detail. Specifically, they do not demonstrate that staff consider the effectiveness of the measure or the consequences of its use. The registered manager is aware of these issues. He is taking steps to improve practice in this area.

Although incidents of aggressive behaviour have reduced, staff are still required to use physical restraint at times. Practice and recording in this area are variable. On one occasion, a member of staff used a restraint that was not proportionate. The registered manager talked to the child after this incident. She raised concerns that the hold used had restricted her breathing. The registered manager took some action to address this. He made sure that medical attention was offered to the child and raised the issue with the child's social worker. He also discussed the incident with both of the staff that were involved. However, there was a significant delay before he took adequate steps to make sure that this hold would not be used again. This could have placed children at risk of harm. The response of a senior manager during the inspection was swift and this issue is now being suitably addressed.

Records of physical restraints do not always contain adequate detail. For example, on some occasions staff record several restraints as one incident. As a result, the duration of each technique is not always clear. Furthermore, the record does not adequately describe the hold used. The registered manager discusses the holds with staff who demonstrate the technique to him. However, the lack of clarity in the records does not allow for easy oversight and future reference.

The registered manager consults regularly with children and actively seeks their views. He also has good relationships with children's families when this is appropriate. The registered manager has also developed close working relationships with a number of other agencies including social care, health, the police and education. This helps to make sure that children receive consistent messages about their care and that information is shared appropriately. However, the registered manager does not include or consider the views of children, parents, placing authorities and staff in his 'quality of care review'. This detracts from the quality of the report but has little direct impact on the quality of care received by children.

Information about this children's home

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

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
03/08/2016	Full	Requires improvement
03/02/2016	Full	Requires improvement
13/10/2015	Full	Inadequate
23/03/2015	Interim	Declined in effectiveness

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 behaviour, the registered person must ensure that staff: (2)(a)(v) communicate to each child expectations about the child's behaviour and ensure that the child understands those expectations in accordance with the child's age and understanding	10/04/2017
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))	10/04/2017
The registered person must ensure that restraint in relation to a child is always necessary and proportionate. (Regulation 20(2))	10/04/2017
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))	10/04/2017
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))	10/04/2017
The registered person must complete a 'quality of care review' which provides for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff. (Regulation 45(5))	10/04/2017

What the inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspection we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

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 whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

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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