

SC381089

Registered provider: Stoke-on-Trent City Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is run by the local authority and offers care for two children who have experienced early childhood instability that has led to trauma and/or associated complex behaviours.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since July 2016 and holds a level 5 qualification in leadership and management.

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 March 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	outstanding
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 31 August 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
31/08/2021	Full	Good
10/03/2020	Full	Outstanding
04/09/2018	Full	Good
08/03/2018	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Staff play an important role in supporting children who are leaving and moving in to the home. They work well with the placing authority to ensure that each child's transition is planned, and prepare children both practically and emotionally. One child told the inspector, 'They [staff] treat and care for me well and I feel safe.'

At the time of this inspection, two children were living at the home. Since the last inspection, two children have moved out of the home. They were prepared and supported by staff to move to other accommodation. One child went on to make a positive move to live with foster parents in accordance with their care plan. As a result, children have positive experiences that allowed them to feel safe and settled.

The physical environment of the home has improved and is welcoming, comfortable and nurturing. Overall, children take pride in their personal spaces, where they can relax. Children are encouraged to personalise them to suit their wishes and interests. Children's photographs are proudly displayed in the home, which creates a more-homely atmosphere.

Staff support children well to maintain important and healthy relationships with family members and friends. They communicate effectively with social workers to review the arrangements for children to spend time with their families. For example, the registered manager advocated on behalf of one child's wishes to spend more time with their family members. Staff show a good understanding of the importance of children spending meaningful time with their families. As a result, children benefit from this care and understanding, and maintain a sense of belonging and identity.

Most staff have healthy and positive relationships with children and understand them well. These members of staff have a good grasp of the children's complex behaviours and vulnerabilities and are quick respond to their needs. Staff show tolerance, compassion and kindness, which helps children to begin to develop trusting relationships. One child's independent reviewing officer told the inspector, 'Staff have given [child] respect and built a trusting relationship; they [staff] have listened to [child].'

Staff work closely alongside the in-house clinical team to provide staff with specialist knowledge and strategies to better support children with their difficulties and vulnerabilities. For example, staff receive bespoke training on the therapeutic model, which helps them to provide good care to meet children's emotional needs. This approach is embedded in staff practice to help children make progress. As a result, children have better coping strategies to manage their emotions and reflect on their behaviours and choices.

Staff are showing a greater awareness and understanding of the importance of children's identity. They are considerate and promote children's cultures and

identities. For example, one child participates in cultural days and evenings, which include them preparing and cooking foods of their own heritage. This enables children to retain a sense of being connected to their identity and cultural upbringing.

Overall, children's health needs are met to a good standard. Staff ensure that children's health needs are monitored, and individual health assessments are in place. Recommendations from health plans are acted on. Children attend regular appointments with the dentist, general practitioner, optician, and specialist services. However, on one occasion, staff did not offer one child advice and guidance on their health and well-being in relation to alcohol misuse. The registered manager recognises this shortfall.

Most children have very good school attendance and are doing well at school. Staff have realistic and high expectations for children making progress in their learning and education. However, not all children are making good progress with their education and learning. For example, staff have not been able to effectively engage one child each day in structured learning and education activities. Consequently, this child is, at times, left to their own devices during the day. The registered manager has advocated on behalf of the child for further supportive interventions, with the aim of keeping the child in full-time education.

Staff encourage children to express their wishes and views regarding their care. There are regular individual sessions and house meetings between staff and children. As a result, most children feel that they are listened to by staff.

Staff do not always regularly review and update children's records to capture their progress and experience. For example, children's placement plans do not contain relevant information about the children's needs. Furthermore, on occasions, staff have failed to log relevant information in children's daily records. This means that if children want to access their files in the future, information would be limited, misrepresenting their journey. The registered manager has a plan to address these omissions.

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

The registered manager and staff have continued to make sure that they assess risk and impact when new children move in to the home. Staff ensure that all known risks are identified and they consider the impact of the risks in relation to the location of the home. This level of scrutiny has resulted in positive experiences for children who have moved into the home.

Staff are quick in their response to the risk of children going missing. This has helped to reduce the risk to children over time. Staff act quickly to the associated risk and know how to follow children's missing-from-care protocols. They escalate concerns by working in strong partnership with the local authority, local services, and the police to ensure that children return home as soon as possible.

Children raise concerns or make complaints with the registered manager without fear of any adverse consequences. The registered manager is responsive to children about any concerns and is thorough throughout the complaints process. Information is shared with the relevant agencies and managed in a sensitive and thoughtful way. Children receive feedback following the outcome any investigations.

The registered manager and staff ensure that individualised risk assessments are detailed and include guidance about how to manage and reduce children's risks. Furthermore, the registered manager has an in-depth understanding of risk assessments and behaviour support plans. These are of a very good quality and provide staff with comprehensive strategies to manage risk. This level of scrutiny has resulted in better management and reduction of risk for children in the home.

When safeguarding incidents happen, the registered manager is quick to respond and undertakes a thorough review to comprehend what has taken place. Reflecting on staff practice continues to help to develop and improve the management of risk to children.

Most staff show professional curiosity and vigilance to keep children safe. For example, staff ensure that they carry out routine checks to monitor children's usage of their mobile phones when there is a potential risk of exploitation. However, this practice is not consistent with other electrical devices. For example, staff do not implement security measures on one child's device that stop them from accessing inappropriate websites. Furthermore, staff fail to ensure that regular checks are made. This has the potential to increase the risk to vulnerable children. The registered manager acted during the inspection to ensure that security measures were installed on the child's electrical device.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager has positive relationships with children and staff. Through his enthusiasm, ambition and aspiration, he makes a positive impact on the lives of children and staff. Staff feel empowered by these principles, and children enjoy the relaxed culture full of laughter and humour.. Staff look forward to coming into work. The registered manager listens to staff and encourages them in their practice.

Staff and the registered manager show a genuine commitment to looking after the children in their care. Staff have continued to participate in ongoing reflective discussions about how best to improve their practice to help children to progress. They regularly use the in-house clinical team meetings to develop a more in-depth understanding of children's difficulties and needs. This helps them to sharpen their practice approaches so that they can improve the quality of care that children receive.

There is effective care planning and strong working relationships between the staff and the placing authority. The registered manager appreciates the importance of maintaining secure relationships with partner agencies. Feedback from all professionals is highly complimentary. A teacher and social worker both told the inspector that the registered manager is a strong advocate for children, and staff

work well collaboratively with other professionals. Furthermore, another child's social worker said that 'the support they give is just amazing'.

Staff benefit from an environment that encourages learning and development. Discussions in supervision and staff meetings strike a healthy balance between effective challenge and support. All staff receive regular supervision to help them to understand their roles and responsibilities, and to develop their practice to safeguard children.

The registered manager uses internal audits to track children's progress and staff practice. These help to identify strengths and areas for further development. Moreover, the registered manager closely scrutinises patterns of behaviour and evaluates these to improve the quality of care for children.

The registered manager has worked hard to ensure that staff engage with specific training to support children effectively. This has recently included training to improve staff's understanding of non-epileptic seizures. Furthermore, new starters receive a good-quality induction that includes face-to-face training. This provides staff with additional knowledge and skills in how to keep children safe.

Most staff hold the required level 3 diploma qualification for residential childcare. Two members of staff will shortly be undertaking this qualification; however, they are within the required timescale for completion. This provides staff with the essential skills and knowledge for their roles.

The registered manager has effectively addressed the two requirements made at the last inspection effectively.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) 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(s) 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— assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(v)(vii)) This particularly refers to the registered manager and staff ensuring that they understand and follow children's risk assessments, and that these documents are up to date.	28 April 2023

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that where children are excluded or have no school place, staff support educational activity throughout the day. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 26, paragraph 5.3)

- The registered person should ensure that all children's case records are kept up to date. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)
- The registered person should ensure that staff support children in line with their individual health plans and are offered advice, support and guidance on health and well-being. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.18)

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: SC381089

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Swann House, Boothern Road, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST4 4SY

Responsible individual: Tracey Docksey

Registered manager: Christopher Whalley

Inspector

Patrick McIntosh, Social Care Inspector

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