

SC387784

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 January 2018 and holds a level 5 qualification in leadership and management. The manager is also managing another children's home for the local authority and has not applied for registration for that setting.

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 March 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 7 September 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
07/09/2021	Full	Good
07/01/2020	Full	Outstanding
12/02/2019	Full	Good
23/01/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

At the time of the inspection, two children were living in the home. Since the previous inspection, one child has moved out of the home. This child's move was well planned and they had a positive experience, moving into semi-independent accommodation. One new child had a planned move into the home and has made some progress. Another child who has been living at the home for some time is making good progress because they live in a settled home and have good relationships with staff.

The physical environment of the home is welcoming and well maintained, which creates a homely atmosphere. Children are encouraged to personalise their bedrooms to suit their wishes and interests. When repairs are needed, the registered manager takes quick action to ensure that work is carried out in a timely fashion.

Staff support children well to maintain important and positive relationships with family members and friends. They communicate effectively with social workers to regularly review the arrangements for children to spend time with their families and friends. For example, agreements are in place for one child overnight stays with their friends. Staff show a good understanding of the importance of children spending meaningful time with people who are essential to their well-being. As a result, children benefit from this care and understanding, enabling them to maintain a sense of belonging and identity.

Most staff have healthy and positive relationships with children and know them well. Children are generally polite and respectful towards staff and display a good sense of humour. Staff demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the children's complex behaviours and vulnerabilities and respond to their needs. Staff display tolerance and flexibility, which helps children to begin to develop trusting relationships.

Staff work collaboratively with the in-house clinical team to provide children with specialist and well-informed care. For example, staff receive tailored training on the therapeutic model, which helps them provide strategies to support children with their emotional needs. This approach is rooted in staff practice and the plans used help children to make progress. As a result, children are better able to manage their emotions and reflect on their behaviours and choices.

Children's health needs are consistently 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, GP, optician and specialist services.

Overall, children are making good progress in developing independence skills, as staff support them to develop some life skills. As a result, one child is learning to

cook, budget, use public transport and undertake personal self-care tasks without assistance. Learning these skills has resulted in the child becoming more independent, to prepare them for adulthood.

Children's progress in education varies. Staff successfully support one child with their college education and training. This child has good attendance, is making good progress and has completed their GCSE exams. However, progress is not consistent for all children. Another child who has low school attendance is making little progress. Staff communicate well with teachers, but do not always engage this child effectively each day in structured learning and educational activities. Consequently, this child is left to their own devices at times during the day.

Staff work hard to ensure that children's records and plans capture their progress. However, they do not always ensure that all children's case records are kept up to date and contain relevant information about the children's experiences. This has the potential to leave staff without important information about the child's journey.

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

The registered manager assesses children's risks and needs before they move into the home. Staff ensure that all known risks are identified and consider the impact of the risks in relation to the location of the home. The registered manager considers the impact of children on each other and gathers as much information as possible from professionals involved in the child's care. This level of scrutiny results in positive experiences for children who have moved into the home.

Staff show professional curiosity and vigilance to keep children safe online. For example, staff carry out routine checks to monitor children's use of electronic devices when there is a potential risk of exploitation. This practice reduces the potential risk of vulnerable children being harmed.

There is a proactive approach by staff to keeping children safe in the community, using safety contingency plans. Staff keep in touch with children when they are out in the community and check in on them by phone or in person, depending on the child's needs. This approach, and the care by staff, help to reduce risk over time.

When children go missing from the home, staff respond quickly to the associated risks and know how to follow children's missing-from-care protocols. They escalate concerns by working in partnership with the local authority, local services and the police to ensure that children return home as soon as possible.

Staff are skilled in supporting children with their behaviours and know how to de-escalate any behaviour which may become challenging. Restraint is used proportionately when there is a risk or serious concern for children or staff. The registered manager reviews all physical interventions, using records that contain all the relevant information. This means that staff practice is scrutinised and regularly reviewed.

Staff help children to build positive friendships with other children. They also support children to understand their own behaviour, how this may impact on others and to learn better coping strategies. Children spend time with their friends in their home area, in line with the child's plans, age and understanding.

Overall, staff ensure that individualised risk assessments are detailed and include guidance about how to manage and reduce children's risks. However, staff do not always ensure that risk assessments include the correct information. For example, one child's risk assessment has not been updated in relation to going missing. This has the potential to leave staff without the relevant information about children in their care.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The home benefits from an excellent, well-skilled and knowledgeable registered manager. He understands the strengths of the home and the needs of the staff team, to support their development. He has high expectations for children's care and progress and is effective in improving and challenging practice, both in the home and with wider agencies.

The registered manager strives for effective care planning and promotes strong working relationships between the home and the placing authority. He is a strong advocate for children. For example, when he was concerned about the welfare of one child, he escalated his concerns with other statutory agencies to ensure they took these seriously. As a result, the police give priority status due to the child's vulnerabilities. This close partnership played a key role in protecting the child.

Continuity of staffing has been essential in promoting children's progress. The registered manager ensures that suitable, experienced and skilled staff provide care to children. One child's guardian told the inspector, 'The home is the only real stability in [name of child]'s life.'

The registered manager and staff show genuine compassion for children. Clinical team meetings include collective reflective discussions about staff practice and the progress of children. This enables staff to develop a more in-depth understanding of the different practice approaches, to improve the quality of care children receive.

The registered manager is not complacent. He has worked hard to ensure that staff engage with further specific training to support children effectively. This has recently included training to improve staff's understanding of contextualised safeguarding and drug misuse. This provides staff with additional knowledge and skills in how to keep children safe.

The registered manager has addressed effectively the one requirement made at the last inspection. There is now a much more positive approach by staff when responding to children's challenging behaviours.

Most staff hold the required level 3 diploma in residential childcare. Only one member of staff has yet to complete this qualification and they are within the required timescale for completion. This qualification provides staff with the essential skills and knowledge for their roles.

Monitoring arrangements for the home are highly effective. Issues arising from the registered manager and independent visitor's monitoring ensure that the registered manager has a very good understanding of the home's strengths and areas for development. He is quick to address any shortfalls or recommendations that are made.

Staff receive regular formal and informal guidance and support from the management team. This includes reflection on children's experiences and discussions about adherence to policies and procedures. The registered manager welcomes new ideas and supports staff to develop in their role. However, not all staff have received reflective supervision. The registered manager acknowledges this gap in practice and has taken action to ensure supervision is undertaken by an appropriately experienced manager.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff continually and actively assess the risks to each child and update their risk assessments. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)
- 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 all staff receive supervision of their practice which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2)
- The registered person should ensure that the ethos of the home should support each child to learn. In particular, ensure that daily routines support children's learning when there may be a reason for them not attending school. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 29, paragraph 15.8)

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: SC387784

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Stoke-on-Trent City Council

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

Responsible individual: Tracey Docksey

Registered manager: Gareth Dawson

Inspector

Patrick McIntosh, Social Care Inspector

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