

Children's homes – Interim inspection

Inspection date	23/03/2017
Unique reference number	SC387784
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	Post vacant
Inspector	Matt Hedges

Inspection date	23/03/2017
Previous inspection judgement	Good
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 good at the full inspection. At this interim inspection, Ofsted judges that it has sustained effectiveness.	
Young people have strong relationships with staff and talk positively about the care and support that they receive. Young people make good progress in important areas of their lives. For example, their school attendance is good. This helps young people to achieve more academically. A teacher commented, 'The young person is doing the right thing. Her attendance has improved. It is now 93.4%.' Another young person's teacher explained, 'His behaviour at school is much better. His work has improved, and he concentrates more.' This progress is largely due to the support that young people receive from staff and the close working relationships that staff have with young people's teachers. A teacher talked positively about this, stating, 'Staff are really good to work with. The communication is great.' Staff also work effectively with a range of other agencies, including social care and health services. This helps young people to receive the support that they need. A mental health professional confirmed this, highlighting 'good multi-agency working' as a strength of the home. Young people's behaviour improves and they often make good choices. For example, young people do not go missing. Staff understand the risks that young people encounter. As a result, staff generally manage incidents well. In contrast to this, on one occasion records do not show that staff took effective action in response to a safeguarding concern. Specifically, it is not clear whether they acted on concerning information about the risks faced by a young person's friend. This hindered them from accurately assessing the level of risk posed to the young person living in the home. Furthermore, staff do not always evidence that they assess the appropriateness of young people's friends or partners. The open and honest relationships that staff and young people share significantly reduce the impact of these shortfalls. On some occasions, staff are required to physically restrain young people to keep them, or other people, safe. The majority of these records contain the required information. In contrast to this, a small number of reports do not adequately describe the hold used or show the duration. Staff are suitably trained and work sensitively to avoid the use of restraint if possible. However, managers have not formally assessed whether the techniques used are suitable for the individual needs of each young person. This is particularly relevant for young people who are small	

in stature. This has not had a negative impact on young people to this point. Managers are aware of this issue and have already taken steps to begin to address this.

The registered manager has recently left the home. She worked with the assistant manager and senior managers to make sure that this was planned appropriately. This minimised the impact that her departure had on staff and young people. A new manager has recently been appointed. He is in the process of registering with Ofsted.

Overall, management oversight and monitoring continue to be strong and drive improvement in the home. Managers have resolved two of the four shortfalls identified at the last inspection. As a result, there has been an improvement in aspects of record-keeping and auditing processes. Despite these improvements, on a small number of occasions, staff do not ensure that records are sufficiently detailed. For example, a record in the 'consequences log' for one young person lacks clarity. This has not affected the support that young people receive. However, it could be unhelpful to young people, should they wish to view their records in the future. Managers took action during the inspection to start to resolve this issue.

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 supports children only from the local authority's area.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
22/11/2016	Full	Good
30/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
12/01/2016	Full	Good
17/02/2015	Interim	Improved 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) meet(s) 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
12. The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standard, the registered person must ensure that staff: (2)(a)(i) 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 (vi) take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare.	21/05/2017
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))	21/05/2017

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that approaches to restraint recognise that children are continuing to develop, both physically and emotionally. Any use of restraint should be suitable for the needs of the individual child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 48, paragraph 9.54)
- Ensure that staff understand the importance of careful, objective and 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)

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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