

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	26/10/2016
Unique reference number	SC458021
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	Kirstianne Pierce
Inspector	Matt Hedges

Inspection date	26/10/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Improved effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement

SC458021

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Young people make good progress.
- Staff have strong, supportive relationships with young people and want them to succeed.
- Young people's views actively influence the service that they receive.
- Young people's behaviour improves.
- Risks reduce. Young people are safer because they live in the home.
- Staff and managers have generally strong relationships with other professionals.
- Some aspects of management monitoring, oversight, record keeping, processes and staff support require improvement.
- Staff did not respond effectively to one isolated safeguarding incident.
- Advice in relation to health and safety issues is not always clear or followed up promptly.

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
<p>6. The quality and purpose of care standard</p> <p>In order to meet the quality and purpose of care standard, with particular reference to health and safety advice, the registered person must:</p> <p>(2)(c)(i) ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to meet the needs of each child.</p>	25/11/2016
<p>12. The protection of children standard</p> <p>In order to meet the protection of children standard, with particular reference to safeguarding, the registered person must ensure that staff:</p> <p>(2)(a)(vi) take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare.</p>	25/11/2016
<p>13. The leadership and management standard</p> <p>In order to meet the leadership and management standard, with particular reference to monitoring, the registered person must:</p> <p>(2)(f) understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home.</p>	25/11/2016
<p>The registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received into the children's home. (Regulation 23 (1))</p>	25/11/2016
<p>The registered person must ensure that within 48 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ('the authorised person') has spoken to the user about the measure and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate. (Regulation 35</p>	25/11/2016

(3)(b)(i)(ii))	
The registered person must maintain records ('case records') for each child which are kept up to date. (Regulation 36 (1)(b))	25/11/2016

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that the workforce plan is updated to include any new training and qualifications completed by staff while working at the home, and used to record the ongoing training and continuing professional development needs of staff, including the home's manager. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)
- Ensure that any staff member in a supervisory role such as 'shift leader' has substantial relevant experience of working in a children's home and has successfully completed their induction for the home in which they are employed. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.21)
- Ensure that the recruitment of staff safeguards children and minimises potential risks to them. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)
- Ensure that a record of supervision is kept for staff, including the manager. The record should provide evidence that supervision is being delivered in line with regulation. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.3)
- Ensure that staff understand the importance of careful 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 or young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. A local authority operates the home. The home supports only young people from the local authority's area.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
23/03/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
06/01/2016	Full	Requires improvement
24/03/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
18/12/2014	Full	Adequate

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home	Good
<p>Young people receive individualised care from a caring and committed staff team that develops sound, supportive relationships with them. Young people are extremely positive about this. One young person stated, 'My carers are literally the nicest, craziest...people you could ever meet. They know when I need them without me even having to ask them for support.' This gives young people confidence and improves the quality of their day-to-day experiences.</p> <p>Despite some significant challenges, young people make good progress in key areas. Education attendance improves and young people accomplish more academically because of this. An education professional confirmed this highlighting 'Excellent achievements' by both young people. One young person said, 'I can't take all of the credit for this. My carers worked so hard to make this happen.'</p> <p>Young people are actively involved in the running of the home and express their views openly to receptive staff. Because of this, young people take increasing control of their lives, within safe boundaries. Young people's self-esteem increases. They engage more with support services and partake in a range of positive activities. For example, one young person is actively involved in the recruitment of staff. They have developed some excellent questions to assist with this. Young people develop the skills that they need to help them to live more independently, preparing them for adulthood.</p> <p>Staff support young people and make sure that their physical and emotional health needs are well met. In contrast to this, the arrangements for the recording and storage of medication are not always effective. Specifically, records are confusing and do not clearly show the most recent medical advice, which often contradicts the prescription label. In addition, staff are unaware of the impact that refusing medication may have for some young people. A consistent staff team that knows young people well has reduced the impact of this shortfall.</p>	

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
<p>Young people feel protected. One young person confirmed this explaining, 'I feel safe, secure and cared for.'</p> <p>Staff identify risks well and take steps to minimise these. Young people are safer because of this. Incidents when young people go missing considerably decrease.</p>	

For some young people, this is a significant achievement. This also helps to reduce other risks, including the risk of exploitation. Staff are mindful of these issues and talk to young people about them. This helps young people to be more open with staff. A social worker commented on this highlighting, 'The young person's honesty is testament to the relationship they have with staff.'

Staff offer sensitive support to young people when they are upset, distressed or at risk of harming themselves. This approach has seen an overall reduction in the frequency and severity of these incidents. Young people's behaviour also improves through consistent, appropriately negotiated boundaries. One social worker commented, 'The young person is responding well and does compromise...this allows her choice but within limits.' Staff use some formal 'rewards and consequences' in response to behaviour. However, the registered manager does not always speak to the user about the measure. Nor does she always sign the record in a timely way to confirm it is accurate. This reduces her oversight in this area.

On one occasion, staff failed to take effective action in response to a safeguarding concern. This related to an incident when a young person was in possession of unsafe, possibly illegal items. Specifically, staff failed to notify the police or secure the items appropriately. This was an isolated incident that took place prior to the registered manager's employment. She has identified learning from this. This reduces the likelihood of this error being repeated.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement
<p>An experienced, suitably qualified registered manager leads the staff team. She has been in post since June 2016. A competent, dedicated assistant manager supports her. The management team prioritises the needs of young people and is committed to improving the quality of the service.</p> <p>The registered manager has made a number of improvements. She has rectified all previous regulatory shortfalls. This makes sure that the service continues to meet the overarching aims and objectives set out in the statement of purpose. She is also systematically reviewing the home's processes. This has helped her to understand the home's strengths and weaknesses. However, this work is yet to be completed and some aspects require improvement. For example, 'management audits' are lengthy and do not focus enough on young people's outcomes. This reduces the registered manager's understanding of the impact that the quality of care is having on young people's progress and experiences.</p> <p>Staff and young people have helped to decorate the interior of the home. This creates a more homely feel. The registered manager certifies that approved contractors carry out regular safety checks. This includes checks in relation to fire safety. Despite this, she has received conflicting advice about whether the home's</p>	

fire doors need replacing. The registered manager has not taken sufficient action to resolve this. Consequently, she has not ensured that the premises are designed and furnished to meet the needs of young people.

Staff are very positive about the support that they receive from the management team. The vast majority of staff members are suitably qualified. They hold the required level 3 diploma in residential childcare or a suitable equivalent. A small number of staff members are working towards this. There are plans in place to make sure that they complete the award within the required timescales. Staff also have access to a wide range of relevant training. This helps to equip them with the skills that they need. Conversely, training records are poor and the workforce plan is not up to date in this area. This prevents the easy identification of future training needs.

Staff receive regular, good-quality supervision. This helps them to reflect on their practice. However, records of these sessions are not always completed in a timely way and fail to evidence the support that staff are receiving. This affects the registered manager's oversight.

Staff recruitment processes are generally effective and have improved. In contrast, on one occasion the recruiting manager did not explore a discrepancy in an applicant's previous employment dates. On this occasion, other safeguards limited the impact of this shortfall.

In one instance, the registered manager did not plan a new member of staff's induction thoroughly. In particular, she scheduled him to work alone in the home, as a shift leader, before induction was fully complete. This had the potential to affect the quality of care offered to young people.

Some aspects of record keeping are ineffective. Not all records are up to date, for example, some still refer to school when young people are now at college. Other records lack clarity. Staff handwriting is sometimes difficult to read and they do not always take adequate care when recording dates and actions. These shortfalls reduce the quality of the information available.

The registered manager and staff have developed productive working relationships with a wide range of agencies. This includes education, social care and health. Professionals are generally very positive about this. This makes sure that all professionals share information appropriately and challenge each other's practice when this is required. This benefits young people as they receive consistent support.

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 harm or that 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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