

Ofsted themes in house Residential provision

Date of report: July 2023

1. Aim and background to the report

- 1.1 The report will review the findings of Ofsted inspections of our residential provision. It will highlight areas of best practise and those that need to improve. To ensure that Stockton's Residential Homes are providing reliable and effective care for the CIOC in the borough, it will include plans for addressing any shortfalls.

2. Inspection Judgements

- 2.1 The table below illustrates the most recent Inspection Judgements made by Ofsted for Stockton's Children's Homes.

Ayton Place	Tilery House Turnaround	Oak View*	Rose House	Piper House	Hartburn Lodge	Our Place
SC456710	SC040583	SC035387	SC035222	SC442886	SC035380	2568244
04.07.23	17.01.2023	Currently closed for refurbishment	05.07.2022 – Full Inspection 28.03.23 - Assurance Visit	14.06.2023	01.02.2023	20.07.23
Good	Outstanding	Requires Improvement* 27.10.21	Requires Improvement	Good	Good	Good

3. Brief overview of each home and current Ofsted judgements

3.1 Ayton Place

Ayton Place provides care for up to four children who have experience significant trauma within their lives and can therefore experience emotional and social difficulties. The home has a history of outstanding judgements through Ofsted inspection.

It was disappointing that the home's rating was reduced to good during Ofsted's most recent inspection on the 3rd and 4th of July. Despite this, Ofsted made it clear that although home continues to provide the highest standards of care, outside systems were responsible for the downgrading in this instance.

These systems are related to the residential missing from care procedures since it was determined that there was not enough staffing available overnight at the home to actively look for children who might have gone missing.

Children have individualised missing-from-home plans that are in place during the day, as identified by Ofsted. On-call systems, however, are insufficient to guarantee that children's plans are conducted at night. This implies that staff members cannot leave the house to look for missing children at night. Since this shortfall fell under the 'help and protect' judgement, it automatically lowers the overall grading regardless of the outcomes the home achieves.

Due to the recent Residential Review, the recruiting of waking night staff had been underway for some time before the inspection. But filling the roles has been challenging. To make sure that these shortfalls are resolved, other options are now being explored.

Positively, the most recent report acknowledges that 'Children in this home are loved and valued by the caring staff team, that children have consistently good experiences while living in the home. This is because staff understand and respond to their individual needs.'

This home has benefitted from a stable and consistent staff and management team. Ofsted said, 'the registered manager's vision for the home is admirable. The manager and her deputy work dynamically to ensure that children's needs are met and that all children make progress. Managers have high aspirations for children and staff, and they accept nothing less than good outcomes for the children they support.'

It is without doubt that this home has the foundations and determination to strive forward and once again obtain an outstanding recognition.

3.2 Piper House

Piper House also provides care for up to four children who have experience significant trauma. The home has experienced significant challenges in the last 18 months and its Ofsted judgments reflect this.

The home previously achieved consecutive Outstanding judgements, however after the last Registered Manager progressed to her new role as Mentoring & Performance Manager, appointed new manager struggled to follow in her leadership. This has had detrimental impact which resulted in the home being downgraded to Requires Improvement in its inspection on the 4th January 2023.

During an internal investigation, the manager moved onto another role with a different LA. To resolve the issues an experienced manager with a history of receiving outstanding judgements took over the leadership in the home as an interim arrangement.

Several recruitment drives have been conducted to find a suitable replacement. However, as, this has proven to be a challenge. According to market intelligence, this is because of the offered salary, which is not entirely competitive with those of other external providers. A business case is currently being considered to explore solutions.

The input of the interim manager has been effective. The home was further inspected on the 14th June 23 and graded Good. The report reflects the work of the interim manager and deputy and noted the significant improvements in the home. 'The staff team is more settled, and staff are confident in their abilities.'

Ofsted noted that the children have made considerable progress since the last inspection. That the cornerstone of the children's progress is the positive relationships between them and a stable staff team. The staff provide consistency of care, which helps children to feel secure. These trusting relationships enable children to build a strong sense of identity, which helps them to achieve and have positive experiences.

As with Ayton Place, there is confidence that Piper House will again achieve outstanding. There is work to do be done. A suitable Registered Manager is the current key priority.

3.3 Rose House

Rose House can provide care for up to three children. Currently there is one young person in the home due to the significant care needs they require.

Rose House's most recent full Ofsted inspection took place on 12th October 22 and resulted in a grade of Requires Improvement. Given the difficulties and challenges the young person was facing, this came as little surprise.

A follow up Assurance inspection was conducted on the 28th March 2023. The purpose of this inspection is to assess the ongoing effectiveness of the service and to ensure it is meeting its legal obligations. The outcome was that Ofsted did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children in the home.

Ofsted reported that Leaders and managers have made good progress in improving the home environment. The child is developing trusting relationships with staff. Agency staff still work in the home but at a much-reduced rate since the last inspection. This has led to more consistent care for the child from staff who are known to them. Staff have received specialist training and taken additional steps beyond their roles to support the child.

3.4 Our Place

Our Place provides care for up to five children who may have social or emotional difficulties, and/or physical disabilities. The placements are a combination of short breaks and short to medium term permanent placements.

Our Place has just had their most recent inspection on the 20th July 23. The outcome was the home was judged as Good. We are still awaiting the final report.

Notably this home has provided and been recognised for their excellent care to UASC. Ofsted commented that Staff are experienced and skilled in looking after unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and take great care and pride in doing so. They ensure the child's cultural and religious needs are respected, promoted, and provided for. Written information is translated into their spoken language. Interpreters are provided for meetings and direct work sessions. This ensures that they can be given the same information, support, and opportunities as their English-speaking peers.

This home has also experienced the challenges of not having a full time Registered Manager for the past 12 months. The homes deputy has acted up in support of the home during this time but has chosen not to progress a registration to Ofsted. During the recent review, the manager of Rose House applied to manage Our Place. He has since started his transition and is currently registering with Ofsted. The plan at this time is for him to manage both homes given his extensive understanding of the needs of the child currently in Rose House. Moving forward it is anticipated that Rose will become a 'cluster home' with one of our new or remaining homes.

3.5 Hartburn Lodge

Hartburn Lodge provides care and support for children with physical and/or learning disabilities. The home offers short break care for up to five children, after school care and day care. Until recently the home had one long-term placement.

Hartburn has always achieved great results in their Ofsted inspections. They have a history of outstanding judgments; however, in the last 2 years they have been graded Good. The rationale for this has been two long-term placements. These placements have stretched the current staffing and there has been a reliance on agency to fill the shortfall. Short breaks for other children have been impacted and this has brought some discontent from families who services had to be reduced. Covid also played a significant part due to the restrictions on the care the home could provide, given the additional vulnerabilities of the children who attend Hartburn.

Hartburn's last full inspection was on the 9th February 23. Ofsted commented how the children have formed trusting and secure relationships with the staff and look forward to their visits to the home.

The registered manager has a clear vision for the service and how to achieve her goals. She understands where development is required. The management team makes its values and expectations clear, and staff share them. Staff feel confident under the strong leadership that is in place.

3.6 Tilery House

Tilery House, or Turnaround as it is commonly known provides care for up to three young people. The home has a strength in supporting young people to be reunified to a family environment identified to meet their longer-term needs.

This home has been consistently graded outstanding by Ofsted and most recently on the 18th January 23. Ofsted said the home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection, and care.

This is an exceptionally happy home. It is also a family home, with the children's presence felt, seen, and heard throughout. When the inspector asked the children to rate the home out of 10, one child said, '100 out of 10.' The child said, 'Staff help me when I am upset.' Another child said, 'This is the best place I have ever lived. The staff are the best. I love them all.'

Despite moving into the home in difficult circumstances, and often after a succession of placement breakdowns, children make remarkable emotional progress. One professional said of the staff members, 'I can't sing their praises enough.' A family member said, 'They have worked miracles.' Children are shown unconditional love and that they deserve to be loved. As a result, children become more confident and positive. One professional said, 'This is a special place.'

We intend to use and build on the strengths of this home to develop our new 'turnaround' provision at Oak View. The Manager has been appointed as our first Cluster Manager and will manage both homes. We are in the process of recruiting team members and specialist training will be provided to support the team to care for a further three young people. The manager is excited about the challenge and there is full confidence in his abilities to achieve future outstanding outcomes.

3.7 Oakview

Oakview has been closed for several months whilst we undertake significant renovations to the building. We anticipate that the home will be re-opened by the end of August 23.

The home will be able to accommodate up to a maximum of 5 young people, however this is dependant on the number of placements in Tilery as Ofsted regulations stipulate, we cannot have more than 6 placements over the two homes.

Planning is in progress to admit three young people who are currently in expensive external provision. Each of these children will have a detailed care plan with the intent to support them to be reunified to their families following a period of intensive support.

4. Summary

4.1 There have been some challenges for the homes in the last couple of years. In summary these include:

- Recruitment and retention of suitably qualified and experienced Registered Managers.
- Recruitment and retention of Residential Care Workers, thus
- Reliance on use of agency staffing to meet the needs of young people. Such workers are often unqualified and inexperienced.
- Staff development and progression planning for staff and managers.
- The absence of the Team Manager due to completing additional studies.
- Needed maintenance and redevelopment of the homes.

4.2 In contrast, the homes have continued to provide excellent care for our young people. As recognised by Ofsted our homes have.

- Children make good progress.
- Children and young people can form trusted relationships with staff, and this is evident across all our homes.
- The young people told Ofsted that they were 'happy and felt safe, and that they thoroughly enjoyed their experiences.
- The staff and leaders are committed and professional.
- The homes are homely, where children can feel loved.
- The children's many achievements are captured.
- Managers invest in their staff and recognise their potential. A significant amount of time has been spent over recent months in developing the staff teams. In-house training days regularly take place, and staff attend specialist training on themes such as trauma. This helps staff provide the best possible care to the children.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 Investment is needed to attract experienced and suitable Registered Managers and staff, given external market forces.
- 5.2 Investment into internal development and progression opportunities. The development of an internal academy to provide necessary qualifications, training and progression planning is integral to achieve this.
- 5.3 The Team Manager is now back full-time lead of the homes and recently taken the role as Responsible Individual. She is exceptionally experienced, skilled, and knowledgeable in managing and leading children's homes and has an established rapport with Ofsted. This will provide the homes with day-to-day direct support, and leadership and provide a direct point of contact with Ofsted.