

SC065679

Registered provider: Staffordshire County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned by a local authority. It is registered to provide care for one child who may have experienced childhood instability which has resulted in trauma and associated behaviours.

The home has been without a registered manager since December 2021.

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 November 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **requires improvement to be good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **requires improvement to be good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **inadequate**

The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 4 May 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
04/05/2022	Full	Inadequate
24/08/2021	Full	Good
22/01/2020	Full	Good
01/08/2018	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Since the last full inspection, two children have moved into the home in an emergency. The planning prior to these moves was limited and the manager did not consider the individual needs of the children or staff's skills in being able to meet their needs. This had a detrimental impact on staff's ability to promote children's progress and welfare.

At the time of the inspection, one child was living at the home. The previous child had recently moved out of the home. For this child the manager has not taken effective action to promote the child's education progress. The child had not attended school for a significant period. Efforts to address this have been slow and unsuccessful. Furthermore, the manager had not put in place, or worked with partner agencies to identify, alternative interim education arrangements. These shortfalls have reduced the child's chances of achieving his educational goals.

For one child, staff have not been proactive in promoting all the child's health needs, specifically helping the child to achieve a healthy sleeping pattern. The child did not always sleep well at night and sometimes slept late into the day. Staff did not sought to understand or explore the reasons behind the child's sleeping habits, or taken steps to assist the child to improve his sleep routines.

The child has developed positive relationships with the staff and manager, and the child told the inspector that he 'liked living at the home'. During the inspection, the inspector observed relaxed and humorous interactions between the child and the staff.

The child enjoys attending many different activities. He particularly enjoys fishing, and the staff have purchased new fishing equipment for him and have taken him on fishing trips. During the inspection, the child was keen to inform the inspector of all the fish he had caught. These activities not only provide the child with a sense of enjoyment but with a sense of purpose.

The manager has made changes to the home environment which help to create a warm and welcoming feel. The living room is the hub of the home and is where the child and staff spend time together. The child's bedroom is bright, and the use of soft furnishings and photos provides a personalised touch. This has helped the child to invest in the home and gain a sense of belonging.

During the inspection, the inspector was made aware that the local authority has received a whistle-blowing complaint. While it is not Ofsted's role to investigate the complaint, this information was considered as part of the inspection.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

The child living at the home told the inspectors that he feels safe and that he can identify an adult who he can talk to about any worries or concerns.

Children who previously lived at the home, have gone missing from the home. The frequency in which the current child goes missing from the home has reduced. When such incidents have occurred, staff have worked effectively with other professionals, such as the police, to ensure that the children are returned home safely. However, return home interviews for children are not always carried out and, therefore, children are not provided with the opportunity to speak to somebody independent from staff at the home.

Since the last full inspection, the manager has taken steps to improve the quality of risk assessment. Despite this, risk assessments are not always updated to reflect changes in the child's current circumstances. This means that staff are not always given the advice they need to keep the child safe.

Staff do not always complete key-working sessions or have important conversations with children to help improve their awareness of risk in relation to exploitation, going missing and recognising unsafe situations. This means that children are not supported in keeping themselves safe.

The provider's locality risk assessment contains out-of-date information. The provider does not actively check or put in place strategies to mitigate and manage risks that may be present in the local area.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The home has been without a registered manager since December 2021. The former registered manager did return to manage the home for a short period before leaving. This means that the home has experienced a prolonged period without a stable and permanent manager. The former deputy manager has been appointed as the new manager and intends to apply to Ofsted to be registered. This is a recent appointment and she is still establishing herself in the role.

The manager has a developing understanding of the home's areas for improvement and strength. The manager is taking steps to improve the home. However, three requirements issued at the last inspection have not been met and are restated.

The responsible individual and another senior manager will be leaving the service shortly. At the time of the inspection, a timescale for recruiting to these positions was yet to be confirmed and it was unclear what the interim arrangements would be. The change to the senior management increases the vulnerability of the home, although it is uncertain what, if any, effect this will have on the quality of care provided to children.

Staffing shortages mean that agency staff continue to be used in the home on a regular basis. However, the manager has used a consistent group of agency staff to reduce the number of unfamiliar adults that care for the child.

Most staff describe being well supported by leaders and managers. However, some staff say that managers do not always listen to their views. This includes their opinions on the suitability and planning for new children moving into the home. The failure to take into consideration the views of staff is detrimental to the quality of care planning and means that, in some instances, staff do not feel valued.

Staff have regular supervision, and records demonstrate that supervision is of adequate quality and gives staff an opportunity to reflect on their practice. In addition, the staff team has undertaken training in specific matters that are relevant to the needs of children living in the home. This contributes to staff's developing skills and knowledge.

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 education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to use reasonable endeavours to ensure— that staff— help a child who is excluded from school, or who is of compulsory school age but not attending school, to access educational and training support throughout the period of exclusion or non-attendance and to return to school as soon as possible. (Regulation 8 (1) (2)(a)(viii)) This specifically relates to staff ensuring that children are supported in accessing education.	19 December 2022
The health and well-being standard is that— the health and well-being needs of children are met; children are helped to lead healthy lifestyles. (Regulation 10 (1)(a)(c)) This specifically relates to staff ensuring that children are supported in achieving a healthy lifestyle.	19 December 2022
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	19 December 2022

necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; help each child to understand how to keep safe. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)) The registered person must review all children's risk assessments to ensure that they include all current known risks and identify the actions staff must take to reduce these risks. The registered person must implement a system where children are supported to learn about risk.	
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(h)) This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	19 December 2022
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended	19 December 2022

that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home's statement of purpose;

that arrangements are in place to—

manage and review the placement of each child in the home.
(Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(ii))

This specifically relates to the registered person ensuring that children are suitably matched to the home.

Recommendation

- The registered person must ensure that the responsible local authority provides an opportunity for the child to have an independent return home interview. The registered person must ensure that they take account of information provided by such interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect each child. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)

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: SC065679

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Wedgwood Buildings, Tipping Street, Staffordshire ST16 2DH

Responsible individual: Elizabeth Kelay

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Lydia Isaac, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022