

SC381085

Registered provider: Stoke On Trent City Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is run by the local authority. It offers care for up to two children who may have experienced early childhood instability that has led to trauma and associated complex behaviours.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since December 2020.

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 April 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **inadequate**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **inadequate**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **inadequate**

There are serious and widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded and the care and experiences of children and young people are poor and they are not making progress.

Date of last inspection: 1 June 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
01/06/2021	Full	Good
09/04/2019	Full	Good
12/06/2018	Full	Good
15/03/2018	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

At this inspection, there was one child living in the home. Staff have not always protected this child from harm. Senior leaders, the registered manager and the staff have failed to respond to safeguarding concerns swiftly and effectively, and this has led to the judgement of inadequate.

Senior leaders, the registered manager and staff do not promote children's education. The child living at the home has been provided with only one hour a week educational support as an interim arrangement. While some attempts have been made by the registered manager to obtain more educational support, this had proved ineffective. There has been limited challenge by senior leaders and the registered manager, combined with a lack of support from staff with home studying, means the child has missed out on significant learning opportunities. As a result, children are not supported to engage in, or progress in, their education.

Staff do not always meet children's health needs. Senior leaders and the registered manager have not challenged the relevant professionals to ensure that the child received the specialist support that they require. In April 2022, the staff team escorted the child to use a tanning bed, despite the fact that the child is not old enough to use one. This could be detrimental to the child's long-term health. The registered manager and staff failed to identify the significance of recent changes in the child's behaviours, such as changes in the child's eating habits. There was no guidance in place for staff to support the child with this. These shortfalls demonstrate that staff do not have the skills or professional curiosity to promote and meet children's health needs.

Staff do not hold regular key-working sessions with the child to promote their welfare. The child has not received help to understand the risks in some important areas, such as sexual health, smoking, missing from care and the importance of education. As a result, staff do not support children to understand their needs and risks in order to help them to progress and keep themselves safe.

The managers' and staff's failure to implement structure and routine in the home has meant that the child chooses to spend large periods of the day in bed and, as a result, the child is not invested in the home. Consequently, outcomes for this child have been poor. This poor practice does not promote children's progress or support them to have positive experiences.

The home is not a welcoming or homely environment. The child's bedroom was not in an acceptable condition, as there were clothes and other items across the floor and it required redecoration. The second bedroom was being used for storage. Despite the child being missing for two nights, they did not have a homely environment to return to. This does not help children to feel valued.

Despite the shortfalls identified, the staff team successfully supported another child to move on to semi-independence in September 2021.

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

Staff's supervision and monitoring is poor and has failed to safeguard the child. Staff have been unable to prevent the child from going missing from the home on numerous occasions. Some of these incidents were avoidable. Staff have failed to follow the risk assessments and care plans in place to protect the child. As a result, they have failed to protect the child from coming to harm since living at the home.

Staff do not take action to safeguard the child. Despite the child requiring constant supervision, on one occasion staff dropped the child off at a family member's address without checking that their family member was at home. The family member was out. This left the child at significant risk.

The registered manager has not ensured that staff complete sufficient searches of the child or their bedroom. As a result, the child has been able to bring in items such as alcohol, cigarettes, lighters, screwdrivers and mobile phones. When staff have been concerned that the child has access to a mobile phone which they are not permitted to use, they have not carried out searches or attempted to remove the phone. When the child has refused searches of their bag, staff did not pursue this. This means that the strategies available to staff to manage risks to children are not being used. This practice compromises children's safety.

The risk management of the child is inadequate. The preventative strategies in place are generic and do not provide staff with clear and sufficient guidance to follow to keep the child safe. Not all staff understand the information contained in the child's risk assessment and, as a result, the staff were not following the guidance. This practice does not safeguard children.

The staff team is not skilled or confident enough to implement boundaries or challenge children's behaviour. The child who lives at the home smokes. On occasion, they have smoked in the house in front of staff. The registered manager has failed to provide staff with guidance on how to support the child to reduce and stop smoking. On another occasion, staff allowed the child to sit in the front of a car, despite the risk assessment stating that this was not permitted. Consequently, the child pulled on the handbrake, almost causing a collision. Failure to challenge or implement boundaries places children at significant risk of harm.

Staff do not put sanctions in place as a consequence of risky or undesirable behaviour. Staff are not supporting the child to understand or minimise their own risks. The registered manager has failed to ensure that staff complete direct work with the child following incidents. These are missed opportunities to help children to develop an understanding of their own risks and to learn to keep themselves safe.

During the inspection, the manager was unable to provide evidence that an allegation made against a member of staff had been appropriately investigated. As a result, it was not evidenced that the registered manager took the necessary action to safeguard children.

The registered manager has failed to notify Ofsted of two serious incidents. These oversights compromise the regulator's oversight and have the potential to prevent action being taken to safeguard children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The registered manager told the inspector that he has resigned and is working his notice. The registered manager has not had sufficient oversight of the home to ensure that staff are fulfilling their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding the children. In addition, staff lack the necessary skills to safeguard children. The registered manager was aware of some of the staff's shortfalls, but had not addressed them.

The registered manager does not have robust monitoring systems in place that allow him to have effective oversight of the home. The registered manager's oversight of recording and reporting is poor. He has failed to identify errors or omissions in documentation. As a result, incidents are not always recorded on the correct paperwork and the quality of staff recording is sometimes poor. The shortfalls in monitoring have negatively impacted the safety of the child and the quality of care provided.

The registered manager has failed to ensure that there is an accurate roster in place that records the hours that he has worked at the home. As a result, the roster cannot be relied on to identify if he has spent sufficient time at the home to perform his role.

Staff have access to a range of training. However, some staff have not completed specific training that they require in order to meet the needs of the child living at the home, for example training in child exploitation, attachment and trauma, restorative justice, and in the home's therapeutic approach. This demonstrates that staff do not have the skills and knowledge to meet the needs of the child in placement. Despite these shortfalls, staff told the inspector that they receive supervision and feel supported by the registered manager, who they describe as approachable and available.

One member of staff has not achieved their level 3 in residential childcare within the expected timeframes. This means they have not obtained the minimum qualification required for their role.

Three of the requirements raised at the last inspection have not been met and have been reissued. In addition, a further six requirements have been issued. Due to the widespread concerns and serious safeguarding shortfalls, a notice to restrict the home's accommodation was issued on 28 April 2022. Following this inspection, three

compliance notices were issued under Regulation 6, the quality and purpose standard, Regulation 12, the protection of children standard and Regulation 13, the leadership and management standard.

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 quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— provide to children living in the home the physical necessities they need in order to live there comfortably; ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(vii) (2)(i)) The provider must ensure that the home is decorated and furnished to a good standard and is welcoming to children. This requirement was issued at the last inspection and is restated.	5 June 2022
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 ensure— that staff— support each child's learning and development, including helping the child to develop independent study skills and,	9 July 2022

where appropriate, helping the child to complete independent study; understand the barriers to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child to overcome any such barriers; help each child to understand the importance and value of education, learning, training and employment; promote opportunities for each child to learn informally; and raise any need for further assessment or specialist provision in relation to a child with the child's education or training provider and the child's placing authority. (Regulation 8 (1) (2)(a)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vii)) This specifically relates to ensuring that children are provided with appropriate levels of education. If children are not attending school full time, the staff team will promote and support informal learning.	
The health and well-being standard is that— the health and well-being needs of children are met; children receive advice, services and support in relation to their health and well-being; and children are helped to lead healthy lifestyles. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff help each child to— understand the child's health and well-being needs and the options that are available in relation to the child's health and well-being, in a way that is appropriate to the child's age and understanding; and understand and develop skills to promote the child's well-being. (Regulation 10 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(ii)(iv)) This specifically relates to ensuring that staff support children with all aspect of their health, including sexual and mental health. This includes ensuring that children have access to appropriate specialist services.	9 July 2022

The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— mutual respect and trust; an understanding about acceptable behaviour. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— meet each child’s behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child’s relevant plans; help each child to develop socially aware behaviour; encourage each child to take responsibility for the child’s behaviour, in accordance with the child’s age and understanding; communicate to each child expectations about the child’s behaviour and ensure that the child understands those expectations in accordance with the child’s age and understanding; help each child to understand, in a way that is appropriate according to the child’s age and understanding, personal, sexual and social relationships, and how those relationships can be supportive or harmful; help each child to develop the understanding and skills to recognise or withdraw from a damaging, exploitative or harmful relationship; strive to gain each child’s respect and trust; understand how children’s previous experiences and present emotions can be communicated through behaviour and have the competence and skills to interpret these and develop positive relationships with children; and are provided with supervision and support to enable them to understand and manage their own feelings and responses to the behaviour and emotions of children, and to help children to do the same. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(v)(vi)(vii)(viii)(ix)(x))	9 July 2022
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This specifically relates to ensuring that staff support children to understand their experiences, behaviour and risks. In addition, supporting children to have positive and healthy relationships with others. In addition, to ensuring that staff have the skills and confidence to meet the children's specific needs.	
*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 necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; help each child to understand how to keep safe; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; and take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(v)(vi)) This requirement was issued at the last inspection and is restated. This specifically relates to ensuring that robust and up-to-date risk assessments are in place for each child. That staff understand and follow these risk assessments. In addition, this relates to staff supporting children to understand their risks.	5 June 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—	5 June 2022

that staff— are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(vii)) This specifically relates to ensuring that allegations against staff are investigated. In addition, that the investigation and outcome are recorded.	
* 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— lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; 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; and use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(c)(f)(h)) This requirement was issued at the last inspection and is restated. This relates to ensuring that there are effective monitoring systems in place to identify learning and improve practice. In addition, this relates to ensuring that staff have the skills to meet the needs of the children living at the home.	5 June 2022
For the purposes of paragraph (3)(b), an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate	9 July 2022

qualification if, by the relevant date, the individual has attained— the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England) ("the Level 3 Diploma"); or a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the Level 3 Diploma. The relevant date is— in the case of an individual who starts working in a care role in a home after 1st April 2014, the date which falls 2 years after the date on which the individual started working in a care role in a home; or in the case of an individual who was working in a care role in a home on 1st April 2014, 1st April 2016. The registered person may defer the relevant date if the individual— does not work, or has not worked, in a care role in a home for a prolonged period; or works, or has worked, in a care role in a home on a part-time basis. (Regulation 32 (4)(a)(b) (5)(a)(b) (6)(a)(b)) This specifically relates to ensuring that all staff complete the Level 3 Diploma within the required timeframes.	
Schedule 4 sets out the other information that the registered person must keep in relation to a children's home. The registered person must— maintain in the home the records in Schedule 4; ensure that the records are kept up to date. (Regulation 37 (1) (2)(a)(b)) This relates to ensuring that the staff rota shows planned and actual hours worked by all staff.	9 July 2022
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if—	9 July 2022

a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation; an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious; there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(a)(b)(c)(e)) This specially relates to ensuring that the registered person notifies Ofsted without delay of any notifiable incidents.	
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* These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

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: SC381085

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Stoke On Trent City Council

Registered provider address: City Of Stoke-On-Trent, Swann House, Boothens Road, Stoke-On-Trent, Staffordshire ST4 4SY

Responsible individual: Tracey Docksey

Registered manager: Darren Edwards

Inspector

Debbie Holder, Social Care Inspector

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