

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	28/09/2015
Unique reference number	SC381085
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Stoke on Trent City Council
Registered person address	City of Stoke-on-Trent, Civic Centre, Glebe Street, STOKE-ON-TRENT, ST4 1HH

Responsible individual	Susan Hammersley
Registered manager	Linda Dent
Inspector	Matthew Hedges

Inspection date	28/09/2015
Previous inspection judgement	N/A
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Inadequate
There are serious and widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected. Their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded and their care and experiences are poor. Young people are not making progress.	
how well children and young people are helped and protected	Inadequate
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Inadequate

SC381085

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is inadequate because:

- Staff fail to protect young people or promote their welfare.
- Some young people make inadequate progress in their education.
- Young people do not receive the support or services they need.
- Staff fail to help young people to understand key risks, or how to keep safe.
- Risk assessments are poor.
- Care planning processes, specifically when young people move to the home, are wholly inadequate.
- Child protection policies are not implemented effectively.
- Staff lack key skills.
- Recruitment practices are deficient. New staff are not safely vetted.
- Managers fail to ensure there are sufficient staff to meet the needs of young people.
- Management oversight, monitoring and review is ineffective.
- The home's statement of purpose lacks key detail.

The children's home strengths

- Senior managers in the organisation have recently become more involved in the running of the home. They have started to take steps to address some shortfalls.

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 with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
5. Engaging with the wider system to ensure children's needs are met. In order to meet the engaging with the wider system standard, with particular reference to the arrangements for the provision of education, the registered person must ensure that staff: (b) seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child's needs (c) if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans.	13/11/2015
6. The quality and purpose of care standard In order to meet the quality and purpose of care standard, with particular reference to children's welfare and personal items, the registered provider must ensure that staff:- (2)(b)(ii) protect and promote each child's welfare (viii) provide to children personal items that are appropriate for their age and understanding.	13/11/2015
8. The education standard In order to meet the education standard the registered provider must ensure that:- (1) children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so	13/11/2015

(2)(a)(vii) staff 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.	
11. The positive relationships standard In order to meet the positive relationships standard, with particular reference to relationships, the registered person must ensure that staff: - (2)(a)(vi) 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.	13/11/2015
12. The Protection of Children Standard In order to meet the protection of children standard, with particular reference to risk assessment, skills, helping children and taking action, the registered provider must ensure (2)(a) that staff:- (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; (ii) help each child to understand how to keep safe; (iii) have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm (vi) take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare.	13/11/2015
13. The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard with particular reference to staffing, skills and monitoring and review systems the registered person must:- (2)(c) ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child (d) ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child	13/11/2015

(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 (h) use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.	
14. The care planning standard In order to meet the care planning standard, with particular reference to planning and admissions, the registered person must ensure that children: - (1)(a) receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home (b) have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home.	13/11/2015
The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ("the statement of purpose") which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1. (Regulation 16 (1))	11/12/2015
The registered person must ensure if a home has a website, that a copy of the statement of purpose is published on that website unless the registered person considers that such publication would prejudice the welfare of children in the home. (Regulation 16 (4))	11/12/2015
The registered person may only employ an individual to work at the children's home if full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (3) (d))	13/11/2015
The registered person must prepare and implement a policy which is intended to safeguard children accommodated in the children's home from abuse or neglect. (Regulation 34 (1)(a))	13/11/2015
The registered person must prepare and implement a policy ("the missing child policy") setting out the procedures to be followed, and the roles and responsibilities of persons working at the home, in relation to a child who is, or has been, so absent. (Regulation 34 (4) (b))	13/11/2015
The registered person must ensure case records are kept securely in the children's home during the period when the child to whom	13/11/2015

the case records relate is accommodated there. (Regulation 36 (2) (c))	
The registered person must notify HMCI if there is an incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(e))	13/11/2015
The independent person must produce a report about a visit ("the independent person's report") which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether children are effectively safeguarded; and the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being. (Regulation 44 (4)(a) and (b))	11/12/2015
The registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. (Regulation 45 (2) (c))	11/12/2015
The registered person must supply to HMCI a copy of the quality of care review report within 28 days of the date on which the quality of care review is completed. (Regulation 45 (4)(a))	11/12/2015

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home provides care and accommodation for up to two children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home is managed by a Local Authority.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/03/2015	CH - Interim	Improved effectiveness
15/05/2014	CH - Full	Adequate
15/05/2014	CH - Full	Adequate
18/02/2014	CH - Interim	Inadequate progress

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	inadequate
The home's admission process is wholly inadequate. It fails to protect young people or promote their welfare. As a result, young people fail to receive effectively planned care and do not have a positive experience of arriving at the home. There have been a number of changes in relation to young people living at the home. Some young people have left and others have moved in. For some young people their experiences are positive, for others exceptionally poor. Impact assessments completed by the registered manager prior to young people coming to live in the home are significantly flawed. They fail to assess whether young people are at risk of harm. They do not take into account key information and do not make satisfactory arrangements to reduce risk. This compromises young people's safety. For some, this has resulted in an increase in missing episodes, concerns regarding child sexual exploitation, and increased concerns regarding drug use. This significantly impacts on their emotional and physical well-being and the progress they can make. The impact of this is increased by insufficient planning with regard to mental health services. Young people who have previously accessed therapy receive unsatisfactory support. Their needs are poorly assessed and staff fail to secure the services young people require. Education placements are not arranged before young people move to the home. This is a result of poor planning. Consequently, young people's attendance significantly reduces. For example, one young person's attendance was 98% prior to moving to the home. As no education was immediately available, they were unable to attend for several weeks following their move. This significantly hinders young people making progress towards achieving their educational potential. A social care professional comments that a young person, 'wanted to go to education but didn't know where they were going and we couldn't tell them'. When an education provider was identified staff were unaware of basic details. For example, they did not know the address or location of the school. Young people with special educational needs are poorly supported. Despite clear recommendations from other professionals, staff do not raise the need for further assessment or specialist provision with young people's education providers or with the placing authority. These shortfalls significantly affect the quality of care young people receive and directly contribute to their lack of progress. A social worker concludes, 'we have set them up to fail'. The majority of young people spend a lot of time away from the home. For some	

this is because staff cannot engage them effectively. Risk assessments outline the need for a, 'full weekly programme to be offered' by staff. This is not implemented satisfactorily. An Independent Reviewing Officer comments, 'I was worried the young person did not have much structure in their life.' The absence of effective action and engagement by staff compromises young people's welfare.

Staff fail to provide young people with personal items. For example, a young person wanted to have some photographs of their family. This was highlighted at their statutory review but was not followed up by the home. This impacts on young people's emotional well-being and the quality of the relationships young people have with staff.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	inadequate
Staff fail to implement the home's policy for safeguarding young people from abuse. Significant safeguarding concerns are poorly recorded, insufficiently assessed, and are not communicated effectively. This places young people at risk of harm and fails to protect and promote their welfare. Some staff do not have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a young person is at risk of harm. For example, not all staff have completed sufficient training in identifying and responding to potential child sexual exploitation. As a result, they are unable to help young people understand how to keep safe. Furthermore, staff fail to adequately support young people to understand, personal, sexual, and social relationships, and how these relationships can be supportive or harmful. The home's missing child policy is not implemented effectively. Most young people go missing and spend a significant amount of time away from the home. For some this decreases over time, for others it increases. Staff do not respond effectively or consistently to these incidents. For example, some staff transport young people to areas they are not allowed to go. On one occasion, staff contacted a young person who was missing and arranged a time to meet them. Staff then failed to arrive on time, being over an hour late. Consequently, staff fail to take effective action when there is a serious concern about a young person's welfare. This reduces young people's feelings of safety and the trust they have in the adults caring for them. Young people generally receive an independent return interview following an episode when they have gone missing. These interviews are not always completed in a timely manner. In addition, reports from these interviews are not made available to the home. This is inadequate and fails to ensure that key information is shared effectively. Staff do not challenge the placing authority or the relevant	

person effectively about this. This fails to ensure that young people's needs are met.

Staff are not safely vetted prior to working in the home. Records are confusing and difficult to locate. They fail to evidence that, where an applicant has previously held a position involving work with children or vulnerable adults, verification has been sought as to why the employment or position ended. In addition, not all staff files contain a satisfactory explanation of any gaps in employment. This places young people at risk from potentially unsafe adults.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	inadequate
The home is run by a suitably qualified and experienced registered manager who has been in post since July 2008. The home's assistant manager is currently in a temporary role. This causes uncertainty for staff and young people. Managers fail to effectively assess staff knowledge and ensure that staff have the skills to meet the needs of each young person. For example, in relation to potential child sexual exploitation. Consequently, not all staff have been sufficiently trained in this area. They have also failed to ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each young person. The home's lone working policy has not been updated since 2013. This does not reflect the needs of staff or young people. Due to this, staff often work alone. This hampers their efforts to locate young people who are missing and affects their confidence to implement strategies effectively. Monitoring and review systems are ineffective and do not promote continuous improvements in the quality of care provided. The registered manager's formal 'quality of care reviews' do not identify any actions necessary to improve the service provided for young people. Moreover, these reports are not sent to HMCI, Ofsted within 28 days. Similarly, the registered manager does not ensure that HMCI, Ofsted is notified when there is a serious incident in relation to a young person. This reduces the oversight the home receives between inspections. An independent person visits the home every month. The reports produced are poor. They fail to sufficiently set out the independent person's opinion as to whether young people are effectively safeguarded and the conduct of the home promotes well-being. They fail to offer adequate challenge, do not drive improvement, and therefore do not improve the experiences of young people. As a result of these shortfalls, the registered manager does not understand the	

strengths and weaknesses of the home and is unable to identify, or address, shortfalls. She does not understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of young people or use this understanding to inform the development of the service.

Young people's case records are not kept securely. A young person was able to access the office and remove confidential emails from their files. These emails contained highly personal information that had not been shared with them. This caused great distress to the young person who subsequently went missing.

The home's statement of purpose does not contain sufficient detail in relation to the therapeutic support available to young people. In addition, the version published on the home's website is significantly out of date. This does not ensure that accurate information is available to young people, their families, or other professionals. This limits their awareness of the support they should expect.

Senior managers in the organisation have recently become more involved in the day to day running of the home. Some action has been taken to safeguard young people however it is too early to see the impact of this.

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 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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