

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	13/10/2015
Unique reference number	SC381089
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	13/10/2015
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 they are not making progress.	
how well children and young people are helped and protected	Inadequate
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Inadequate

SC381089

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is inadequate because:

- Child protection policies, particularly in relation to allegations against staff and missing from care are not implemented effectively and so fail to protect young people effectively.
- Young people are not supported to make adequate progress in their education.
- Management oversight is ineffective. Significant shortfalls are not addressed, including previous requirements.
- Reports by the home's independent person are of an inadequate standard.
- Staffing levels are insufficient and do not provide consistency of care to young people.
- Staff supervision fails to address key issues.
- Induction of some staff is wholly inadequate.
- Recruitment of staff is not safe and does not adequately safeguard young people.
- Staff do not effectively challenge poor practice in other agencies. As a result, young people do not get the support or services they need.
- Care plans and risk assessments are not kept up to date. Important information is omitted or is contradictory.
- The home's statement of purpose is misleading in relation to the therapeutic input available to young people.
- Young people do not have access to an informative children's guide.

The children's home strengths

- Some staff have developed good relationships with young people.
- Some staff talk positively about the support they receive from the registered manager.

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 communication and the arrangements for the provision of therapeutic support, the registered person must ensure that staff:- (a) seek to involve each child's placing authority effectively in the child's care, in accordance with the child's relevant plans (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.	04/12/2015
8. The education standard In order to meet the education standard the registered provider must ensure that staff:- (2)(a)(i) help each child to achieve the child's education and training targets, as recorded in the child's relevant plans.	04/12/2015
12. The Protection of Children Standard In order to meet the protection of children standard, with particular reference to risk assessment, helping children and taking action, the registered provider must ensure that staff:- (2)(a)(i) assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into	04/12/2015

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 (vi) take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare.	
13. The leadership and management standard. In order to meet the leadership and management standard with particular reference to staffing and monitoring and review systems the registered person must:- (2)(d) ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child (e) ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child (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.	04/12/2015
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))	04/12/2015
The registered person must ensure that the home is at all times conducted in a manner which is consistent with its statement of purpose. (Regulation 16 (5))	04/12/2015
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))	04/12/2015
The registered person must ensure that each employee completes an appropriate induction. (Regulation 33 (1) (a))	04/12/2015

The registered person must ensure that all employees receive practice-related supervision. (Regulation 33 (4)(b))	04/12/2015
The registered person must prepare and implement a policy which sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect. (Regulation 34 (1)(b))	04/12/2015
The registered person must prepare and implement a policy ("the missing child policy") setting out the steps taken, and to be taken, to prevent children from being absent without permission. (Regulation 34 (4)(a))	04/12/2015
The registered person must ensure that within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure. (Regulation 35 (3) (a) (vii))	04/12/2015
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child. (Regulation 36 (1)(a))	04/12/2015
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which are kept up to date. (Regulation 36 (1)(b))	04/12/2015
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)) *	04/12/2015
The registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the quality of care provided for children; the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. (Regulation 45 (2)(a)(b)(c)) *	04/12/2015
The registered person must review the appropriateness and suitability of the location of the premises used for the purposes of the children's home at least once in each calendar year taking into account the requirement in regulation 12(2)(c) (the protection of children standard). (Regulation 46 (1))	04/12/2015

* These requirements are subject to statutory requirement notice.

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- Ensure that the children's guide helps children to understand what the day to day routines of the home are ('what happens in the home') and how to contact the Office of the Children's Commissioner. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 24 paragraph 4.22)
- Ensure that staff make available in the home, information in an appropriate form which enables children to contact their placing authority to call for a review of their care plan if they have concerns about their safety or welfare. Homes should encourage children to understand they can speak to an independent advocate, Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs), Ofsted inspectors or other relevant persons if they have concerns about their safety. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 43 paragraph 9.11)
- Ensure that when a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority provides an opportunity for the child to have an independent return home interview. Homes should take account of information provided by such interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect each child. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 45 paragraph 9.30)
- Ensure that any sanctions used to address poor behaviour are restorative in nature, to help children recognise the impact of their behaviour on themselves, other children, the staff caring for them and the wider community. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 46 paragraph 9.38)

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home may only provide care and accommodation for up to 2 children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home is owned and operated by a local authority.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
23/03/2015	CH - Interim	Declined in effectiveness
22/10/2014	CH - Full	Good
18/02/2014	CH - Interim	Good Progress
08/05/2013	CH - Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	inadequate
Young people fail to make adequate progress in relation to their education. This is due to a lack of support from staff. Their attendance is sporadic and in some cases has declined. Consequently, their attainment is affected and they do not achieve their full potential. The registered manager has not ensured that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child. For example, there is only one member of staff working at the home in the morning. As a result, they are unable to offer adequate support to both young people when preparing for school. Some staff develop strong relationships with young people, and offer warm and individualised support. However, there has been a significant number of staffing changes over the last six months. During this period the registered manager has failed to ensure that young people receive sufficient continuity of care. Children's records are not consistent. This significantly impacts on the information available to staff and their understanding of young people's needs and severely limits their ability to support young people effectively. Case files do not include all of the required information, for example, statutory review minutes and out-of-date information about education attendance. Staff do not have the contact details for young people's independent reviewing officers, and in one case, a GP. This means staff are unsure how to contact key professionals and cannot easily involve young people's placing authorities effectively in their care. As a result, the oversight and safeguards that professionals can provide are not being used effectively. Young people do not receive intervention and the specialist mental health support services required to meet their needs, particularly in relation to their emotional well-being. Neither staff nor the home's managers challenge relevant agencies effectively. This is unacceptable. Young people are not provided with sufficient information about the home. The young people's guide lacks important and accurate details. For example, the telephone number for the home is incorrect, and there are no details for the Office of the Children's Commissioner. Furthermore, contact details for their independent reviewing officers are not available to young people, and the telephone number provided to them for Ofsted is incorrect. This prevents young people contacting these people if they have concerns about their safety, or require advice and assistance about their rights and entitlements.	

These shortfalls hinder the progress young people make, the quality of their relationships with staff, and their experiences on a day-to-day basis.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	inadequate
Young people are not kept safe. Some are vulnerable to sexual exploitation and go missing. There are not always enough staff on duty to go looking for them. For example, there is only one member of staff at night. The home's 'missing child policy' cannot be implemented effectively. In some instances, there are insufficient numbers of staff to follow the protocols. For example, the expectation is that staff follow young people when they leave the home and there are concerns about their welfare. When staff work alone this is impossible, as it would leave other young people unsupervised in the home. As a result, staff are prevented from taking effective and appropriate action to minimise risk and safeguard the young people they care for. Risk assessments are poor quality and do not address this risk. They provide little guidance for staff. Some documents contradict each other. For example, outlining differing times when staff should report a young person missing. This has the potential to place young people at unacceptable risk. When young people return to the home after being missing, the placing authority offers an independent return home interview. The registered person does not ensure that information from these interviews is shared in a sufficiently timely way. Consequently, staff are unable to take account of the information gathered in the interview, when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect young people. Allegations against staff are poorly managed and recorded. Although the home has a policy which sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect, it is not implemented satisfactorily. There has been a serious allegation: the registered person had no accessible records of the investigation or the outcome, as required by their safeguarding procedures. This is wholly inadequate and places young people at unacceptable risk. Staff do not help young people understand how to keep themselves safe. There is insufficient evidence of useful direct work with young people about their key issues. This is particularly evident in regard to: e-safety; the risks associated with going missing, and child sexual exploitation. As a result, young people are not	

effectively equipped with the skills they need as they approach adulthood and independence.

Support to young people who display challenging or negative behaviour is inconsistent. On some occasions staff handle incidents well. At other times they do not, and sanctions do not relate to the young person's behaviour, or to their underlying issues. Sanctions are not restorative in nature. As a consequence, staff do not help young people to recognise the impact of their behaviour on themselves, other young people, staff and the wider community.

Records of measures of control and discipline are poor. They do not include an adequate description of the effectiveness of the measure or any consequences of its use. This limits learning opportunities for staff about the effectiveness of the support young people receive.

The registered person does not safely vet staff before they work in the home. They do not satisfactorily explore gaps in their employment history, nor their reasons for leaving previous positions with children or vulnerable adults. This does not protect young people from potentially unsafe adults working in their home.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	inadequate
The home is managed by a suitably qualified and experienced registered manager who has been in post since 2008. Management oversight is poor. Monitoring and review systems are underutilised and are ineffective. This prevents managers from understanding how the unacceptably poor quality of care provided to young people living in the home effects their progress and experience. As a result managers are not able to use accurate information to support developments to the service or make required improvements to the quality of care. The registered manager has failed to meet two requirements made at the home's last two inspections. Reports by the home's independent person continue to be poor. They lack detail and analysis in key areas and do not provide an adequate assessment of whether young people are effectively safeguarded or whether the home promotes their welfare. 'Quality of care reviews' continue to be ineffective. The system fails to monitor, review and evaluate: the quality of care provided; the feedback and opinions of young people about the home; and any actions required in order to make	

improvements. These shortfalls adversely affect the development of the service offered to young people and impacts on the quality of their overall experience of living in the home, specifically their safety and education.

The registered manager's review of the appropriateness and suitability of the home's location is ineffective. This review does not consider key safeguarding information about local dangerous areas that young people have given. Consequently, this key information, required to keep young people safe, is not available to all staff.

Managers do not provide consistently good quality support for staff. For example, some staff are positive about the support they receive. Others do not receive effective induction or supervision. As a result, poor practice is not effectively challenged or addressed.

The home is not able to deliver the services described in its statement of purpose to young people. It contains details of therapeutic services not yet available to them. In addition, the statement of purpose, published on the home's website, is out dated. This does not provide young people, their families, or other professionals, with the information they require.

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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