

# 1273769

Registered provider: Oak Childcare Plus Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

This home is privately owned and provides care for up to three children who have experienced childhood instability leading to trauma and associated complex behaviours.

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

### Inspection dates: 20 and 21 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:** 16 September 2021

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** declined in effectiveness

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** Following the interim inspection on 16 September 2021, two compliance notices were issued. A monitoring visit on 3 November 2021 found that these compliance notices had been met.

## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
16/09/2021	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
28/04/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good
17/02/2020	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
07/05/2019	Full	Good

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate**

The manager's planning and oversight prior to new children moving into the home is poor and this does not improve once children move in. The manager does not fully understand children's needs or put in place plans to protect children and promote their welfare. For example, the manager failed to identify the main risks posed to a child who has recently moved into the home. This means that staff have not been given accurate information or guidance to keep the child safe.

Staff did not have the required skills or training to meet the needs of one child who has recently moved out of the home. Staff were ineffective in managing his behaviours and their actions often provoked the child, resulting in an escalation of his behaviours. This resulted in the child having to move out of the home in an unplanned way with no transition planning to his new placement.

The manager's poor oversight of the home environment means that maintenance issues have not been addressed. For example, there have been ongoing plumbing issues in the home, and at the time of the inspection children were not able to access hot water. Furthermore, a broken cover for an electrical fuse board meant that children could have gained access to the exposed wires. Although actions were taken during the inspection to rectify these shortfalls, the failure to address these issues prior to the inspection has exposed children to harm and has been detrimental to their experiences of living in the home.

The staff's approach to meeting children's health needs is inadequate. For example, one child requires specialised furniture due to his mobility needs; however, this furniture has not been provided for him. Healthcare plans either do not exist or do not accurately reflect children's health needs. This means that staff do not have a clear understanding of how to meet children's health needs.

Staff are not successful at promoting children's educational needs. A child's teacher said that one child often gets to school late or is absent. Children's progress is compromised due to the quality of care provided by staff.

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

Leaders and managers do not make referrals to the local authority designated officer when children and staff make allegations. For example, one child alleged that a staff member placed them in a 'headlock'. This was not referred to the local authority designated officer and was not investigated internally by the manager. This demonstrates that leaders and managers lack professional curiosity in protecting children and this places children at risk of harm.

In another example, a member of staff alleged that the manager had given children permission to play computer games that were not age-appropriate. This information was shared with senior managers but was not investigated. Ofsted was not notified about these allegations prior to the inspection.

The organisation's internal safeguarding policy is ineffective because it does not provide guidance on when managers should make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) or what managers should do if concerns are raised in a staff member's DBS check. As a result, in one instance a required referral to the DBS was not completed by the manager for a member of staff who had been dismissed. In another example, a member of staff notified the manager that an entry had been placed on their DBS record in November 2021. There was a five-month delay in the manager establishing what the information was. In the interim, there was no reassessment of whether it was appropriate for the staff member to continue to work in the home.

The manager has not ensured that there are risk assessments in place for children with known risks related to sexualised behaviour, self-harm, radicalisation and physical aggression. The absence and poor quality of risk assessments means that staff do not understand how to protect children from harm and keep them safe.

Staff and managers do not protect children from bullying. There was a high number of bullying incidents during the month of March 2022. Despite this, staff have not fully considered how to supervise children to reduce the likelihood of further bullying.

Staff have not had the training required to undertake the home's chosen approach to behaviour management and physical intervention. This means that staff are not able to follow the agreed strategies to keep children safe and are poorly equipped to manage children's behaviour. This has resulted in staff having to phone the police when children's behaviours have escalated out of their control.

The manager has also not completed the required behaviour management and physical intervention training. This has reduced the manager's ability to evaluate staff's use of physical interventions. The manager's oversight of the records related to physical intervention is weak. For example, the manager has not identified that staff do not clearly record the holds that are used by staff.

Staff have identified the need to complete work with one child in relation to his vulnerability to radicalisation. However, the manager has failed to ensure that staff have the required skills and competencies to carry out this work. This means that children are not provided with the guidance and support that they need to stay safe.

The arrangements for the storage and administration of medication expose to children to potential harm. For example, during the inspection staff found that medication records did not reflect the medication stored at the home. The manager changed the administration record without checking whether the child had been given an incorrect dose of medication. The manager's failure to check whether the

child had been given too much medication exposed that child to potential risk of harm. Furthermore, controlled medication is not stored in accordance with the organisation's policies. For example, controlled medication is not stored in a double-locked medication cabinet.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate**

The shortfalls identified during this inspection demonstrate that the manager and responsible individual do not have the required skills and knowledge to undertake their roles. Although a professional development plan is in place for the manager, this is not up to date. The responsible individual has undertaken a range of training to develop their knowledge. This includes the completion of 17 online training sessions in one day. Ofsted is not assured by the effectiveness of undertaking such a high number of training courses on a single day.

The provider has failed to fully verify the reason why the responsible individual has left a previous employer. This means that the provider does not have all the information to assure themselves that the responsible individual has the skills and expertise for the role.

There has been a high staff turnover since the last inspection and this means that there are staff shortages. One child said that he is unable to go on leisure activities because of the lack of staff. Another child's social worker stated that family contact for the child does not take place as planned because of the staffing changes.

Staff do not have the required skills and training to meet the needs of the children and keep them safe. For example, staff and the manager have not received training in safeguarding, responding to bullying behaviours, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, autism spectrum disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, global development delay, self-harm, harmful sexualised behaviour, radicalisation, and child criminal and sexual exploitation. Consequently, staff are not provided with the skills to care for and to safeguard the children in their care.

Staff are not provided with effective supervision sessions that encourage reflection, development and learning. For example, staff are not provided with support and guidance to ensure that they can adequately carry out their role. One staff member told the inspector that she is not provided with support to cope with the challenges of balancing daily duties and care of children.

The manager does not act on the feedback and recommendations from the monthly visits completed by the independent person. Furthermore, the responsible individual has not held the manager to account for making the required improvements.

Managers do not ensure that children's placing authorities are notified of significant events. For example, staff did not make a notification that a child had been exposed to sexualised behaviour from another child. This means that children's social workers are not provided with accurate information to ensure that there is effective support in place for children.

Following this inspection, Ofsted received information that the manager had resigned. This means that the home is now without a manager. Due to the concerns identified during this inspection, and considering the lack of a permanent manager, Ofsted has issued a notice of suspension of registration and two compliance notices.

## 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
<p>The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who—</p> <p>understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children;</p> <p>use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to—</p> <p>meet the needs of each child; and</p> <p>enable each child to participate in the daily life of the home. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(i)(ii))</p> <p>This specifically relates to the manager ensuring that all maintenance issues are addressed and that the home is maintained to a standard that meets children's needs.</p>	1 June 2022
<p>The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>help each child to achieve the child's education and training targets, as recorded in the child's relevant plans;</p> <p>help each child to attend education or training in accordance with the expectations in the child's relevant plans.</p>	1 June 2022

<p>(Regulation 8 (1) (2)(a)(i)(x))</p> <p>This specifically relates to the manager ensuring that there are effective arrangements in place to meet the educational needs of children.</p>	
<p>The health and well-being standard is that—</p> <p>the health and well-being needs of children are met;</p> <p>children receive advice, services and support in relation to their health and well-being; and</p> <p>children are helped to lead healthy lifestyles.</p> <p>(Regulation 10 (1)(a)(b)(c))</p> <p>This specifically relates to the manager ensuring that there are effective arrangements in place to meet the health needs of children.</p>	<p>1 June 2022</p>
<p>The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on—</p> <p>mutual respect and trust;</p> <p>an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and</p> <p>positive responses to other children and adults.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children;</p> <p>understand and communicate to children that bullying is unacceptable; and</p> <p>have the skills to recognise incidents or indications of bullying and how to deal with them; and</p> <p>that each child is encouraged to build and maintain positive relationships with others.</p> <p>(Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(xi)(xii)(xiii)(b))</p>	<p>1 June 2022</p>



<p>This specifically relates to the manager ensuring that staff are trained to recognise the signs and indicators of bullying behaviours and support children who display these behaviours.</p>	
<p>*The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>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;</p> <p>have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm;</p> <p>manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other;</p> <p>understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person;</p> <p>take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child’s welfare; and</p> <p>are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home’s child protection policies;</p> <p>that the effectiveness of the home’s child protection policies is monitored regularly.</p> <p>(Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(e))</p>	<p>1 June 2022</p>
<p>*The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children’s home that—</p> <p>helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and</p> <p>promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p>	<p>1 June 2022</p>

<p>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;</p> <p>ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child;</p> <p>ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child;</p> <p>ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child;</p> <p>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;</p> <p>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)(d)(e)(f)(h))</p>	
<p>The care planning standard is that children—</p> <p>receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and</p> <p>have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b))</p> <p>This specifically relates to the manager carrying out a placement matching risk assessment before a child moves into the home.</p>	1 June 2022
<p>The registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received into the children's home. (Regulation 23 (1))</p> <p>This specifically relates to the manager ensuring that the storage and recording of controlled medication are carried out in accordance with providers own internal policy.</p>	1 June 2022
<p>A responsible individual must—</p> <p>satisfy the requirements in paragraph (5)(a) to (c); and</p>	1 June 2022

<p>have the capacity, experience and skills to supervise the management of the home, or the homes, in respect of which the responsible individual is nominated. (Regulation 26 (7)(b))</p> <p>This is a repeat requirement. This specifically relates to ensuring that the responsible individual is suitably assessed as appropriate and the reasons for leaving previous employment are verified.</p>	
<p>A person may only manage a children's home if—</p> <p>having regard to the size of the home, its statement of purpose, and the number and needs (including any needs arising from any disability) of the children—</p> <p>the person has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills to manage the home effectively and lead the care of children. (Regulation 28 (1)(b)(i))</p> <p>This specifically relates to the provider ensuring that there is a registered manager in post who has the necessary training and skills to manage the home.</p>	
<p>The registered person must ensure that all employees—</p> <p>receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(b))</p> <p>This specific relates to the manager ensuring that staff receive supervision that supports them to carry out their roles effectively.</p>	1 June 2022
<p>The registered person must ensure that—</p> <p>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—</p> <p>details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure;</p> <p>a description of the measure and its duration;</p> <p>details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure;</p>	1 June 2022

<p>the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(ii)(iv)(v)(vii))</p> <p>This specifically relates to the manager ensuring that all physical intervention is recorded clearly, stating the holds used by staff with the manager's oversight.</p>	
<p>The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if—</p> <p>there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there;</p> <p>there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (c)(e))</p> <p>This specifically relates to the manager ensuring that all serious incidents are notified to Ofsted.</p>	1 June 2022

\* 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:** 1273769

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** Oak Childcare Plus Limited

**Responsible individual:** Denise Knowles

**Registered manager:** post vacant

## Inspector

Sam Dulay-Kainth, Social Care Inspector

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