

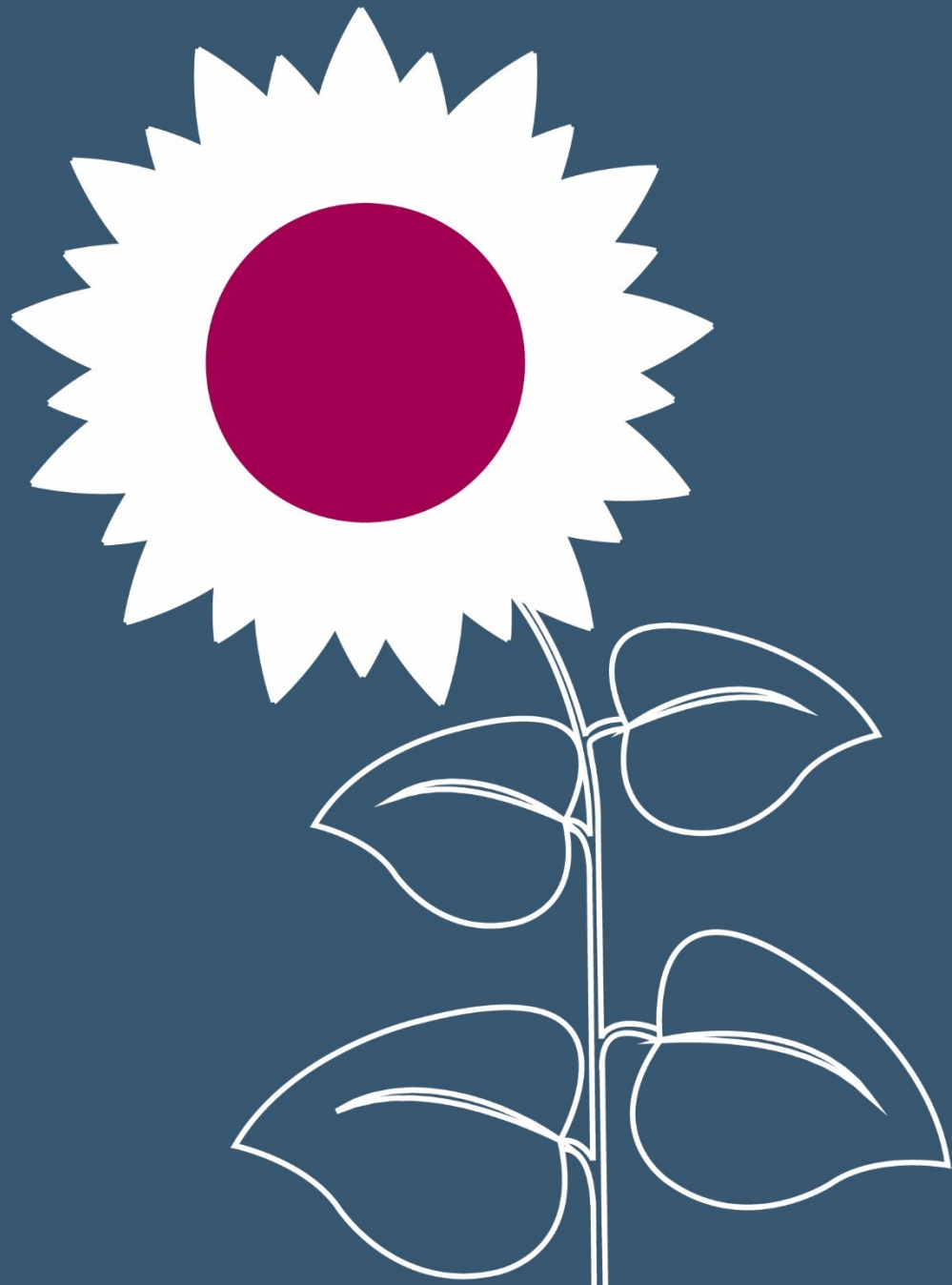


City of
Stoke-on-Trent

Dealing with Emergency Situations

Tri x 5_1_25 July 2024

Review July 2025



Information sheet

Service area	Children's Social Care
Date effective from	Nov 2019
Responsible officer(s)	Strategic Manager Children in Care
Date of review(s)	Nov 2020 July 2022 July 2023 July 2024
Status: Mandatory (all named staff must adhere to guidance) Optional (procedures and practice can vary between teams)	Mandatory
Target audience	All residential child care staff and Registered Small Group Homes Managers
Date of committee/SMT decision	
Related document(s)	
Superseded document(s)	July 2023
File reference	5_1_25

Contents

1	Introduction	3
2	Aim of the Policy	3
3	Legislative Context	3
4	Emergency Arrangements	3
5	Action Immediately Following an Emergency Situation	4
6	Action Once Situation is More Stable	5
7	Fire Emergencies.....	5
8	Power Failure.....	5
9	Suspect Packages	6
10	Public Disorder	7
11	Industrial Action.....	8
12	Death of a Resident.....	8
13	Death of a Member of Staff in the Home	9

1 Introduction

- 1.1 It is the duty of the Registered Manager, supported by carers, to take all reasonable steps to ensure that emergency situations are avoided, if at all possible. However, in the event of an emergency within the home, clear guidance and procedures are necessary to ensure that everyone is aware of what to do.
- 1.2 This policy highlights specific situations that could arise within a children's home and gives guidance on what actions to take. Whilst it is important that regular formal checks are carried out, carers should take responsibility for the day to day monitoring of the home identifying potential hazards as they arise; bringing them to the attention of the Registered Manager and in the case of immediate danger e.g. smell of gas, reporting the risk to the appropriate agency.
- 1.3 In any emergency, the overriding concern must be the protection of people and not property.

2 Aim of the Policy

- 2.1 The aim of this policy is to highlight the importance of every carer knowing what to do in the event of an emergency and, in some circumstances, how this links to the wider Emergency Plan within the Authority.

3 Legislative Context

- 3.1 This policy links with Stoke-on-Trent City Council's Business Continuity Plan.
- 3.2 This policy is in line with the Children's Home Regulations 2015.

4 Emergency Arrangements

- 4.1 Risk Assessment should be carried out by the Registered Manager in relation to the home's premises and grounds and also in relation to the young people who live there. The assessment should be reviewed at regularly agreed intervals in line with departmental policy and procedure.
- 4.2 Each home should ensure that a notice detailing the location of gas and electricity meters, stop valves and any other cut out device is displayed prominently in the office and every carer has had this information drawn to their attention as part of their induction when joining the home. Carers should also be shown the actual location of the services concerned and where the emergency collection point is in the case of an evacuation.

- 4.3 Each home should include information about the emergency procedures that are relevant to them and their safety in their young people's guide. Young people should also be shown the service points that they need to know for their safety and in particular they should be shown the collection point in the event of an emergency evacuation. This information should be given at the time of admission and be reinforced at regular suitable occasions e.g. fire practices, 1:1 discussions or house meetings.
- 4.4 Each home should include a Disaster Plan which outlines plans should the home require an emergency evacuation. The plan also should include details of all professionals that need to be contacted as well in case of an emergency evacuation.

5 Action Immediately Following an Emergency Situation

- 5.1 In the event of residents not being allowed back into the home within half an hour of an evacuation, arrangements should be made for their transfer to temporary holding accommodation as soon as possible. In the event of transportation not being available, the Registered Manager may authorise the use of taxis. Carers and children should travel to the building that is nearest to the home and most able to cater to their requirements (e.g. able to provide meals, drinks etc).
- 5.2 As soon as practicable following an evacuation, the carer on duty should notify the following people:
- The Registered Manager.
 - The Emergency Duty Team if out of office hours/on call Strategic or Service manager.
- 5.3 The Registered Manager will be responsible for notifying the Small Group Homes Co-ordinator of what has occurred, if it is deemed necessary.
- 5.4 If a return to the home does not appear possible within a reasonable period, bearing in mind the needs of the residents involved, alternative arrangements should be made to provide children and carers with suitable, alternative accommodation. The following are examples of suitable alternatives:
- Based on the social worker's assessment, a child could stay with a family member or well-known friend.
 - Another Stoke on Trent City Council children's home, where space allows and risk assessments of all children make this a feasible option.
 - Young people with complex needs in receipt of short-term care would usually return to their parents or full-time carers.

- Nearby Bed and Breakfast or hotel that has been sanctioned by People Directorate, Vulnerable Children and Corporate Parenting as appropriate accommodation.

6 Action Once Situation is More Stable

- 6.1 As soon as possible notify Ofsted, social workers and parents/carers.
- 6.2 A meeting should be held to make arrangements for re-establishing stability in the home. The meeting should be chaired by the Registered Manager, the Principal Manager or the SGH Co-ordinator.
- 6.3 Formulate an action plan that determines where carers should be based, if the home cannot be returned to, and where children should live temporarily.
- 6.4 Ensure appropriate mid to longer-term arrangements are made for residents.

7 Fire Emergencies

- 7.1 In the case of fire alarm activation, carers and young people should follow the published and practised fire procedure for the home.
- 7.2 Once the home has been evacuated and a roll call has been taken at the Home's collection point, then no decision to re-enter should be taken until the senior fire officer attending the incident has given authority to do so. Missing carers or young people should be dealt with by the emergency services.
- 7.3 If unable to re-enter the Home follow Section 5 of these procedures.

8 Power Failure

- 8.1 It is important that all gas, electrical and plumbing installations/equipment are inspected at least annually. Where the gas supply fails, switch off all gas appliances as well as turning off the gas at the mains to avoid leaks when the supply is re-connected.
- 8.2 In respect of electrical appliances lights may remain on if you are staying in the building, but heating, cooking appliances, hair dryers and electric showers should be switched off if they were on at the time of the power failure.
- 8.3 Once it has been ascertained that the power failure is external i.e., it affects other buildings, streets etc, carers should contact the relevant supplier to gain some estimation of the likely length of disconnection to assist in contingency planning.

- 8.4 The impact of power failure will depend upon a number of factors such as:
- How long the power will be off
 - Whether the supply affected is the only source of power
 - The time of night/day
 - The time of year
 - Any special vulnerability/risk factors in respect of young people and carers
- 8.5 In the first instance attempts should be made to keep young people in their own home and evacuation should only take place where the period of power failure is likely to be lengthy or circumstances are injurious to health. All homes must be equipped with a rechargeable torch – on no account must candles be used.
- 8.6 Where the power failure is lengthy or conditions are likely to be injurious to health, there should be discussion between the Home's management and line management to make contingency plans. If there is a likelihood of delay in contacting a line manager, then the carers and young people should go to another children's home and contact the line management from there.
- 8.7 If the home is vacated, all power switches should be turned off; Property Services and EDT should be informed and the building should be secured.

9 Suspect Packages

- 9.1 On finding a suspect package or an object that cannot be identified or accounted for, carers or young people should not attempt to touch or move it, but should evacuate the building immediately avoiding where possible the immediate vicinity of the suspect package/object.
- 9.2 Carers and children/young people should assemble at the Home's collection point (which should be at a safe distance to protect from explosion) and a roll call taken. Missing carers or young people should be dealt with by the emergency services.
- 9.3 The Police should be informed by dialling 999. This should be done by landline telephone to avoid the risk of mobile/radio communication potentially detonating any explosive device.
- 9.4 If there are sufficient carers available, attempts should be made to alert inhabitants of nearby buildings. If sufficient carers are not available, then attempts should be made to enlist the aid of members of the public who may be at hand to undertake this task.
- 9.5 Inform the senior person on duty, who should inform the Registered Manager, the Emergency Duty Team and a member of the Divisional Leadership Team.

- 9.6 The home should only be re-entered on the authorisation of the emergency services.
- 9.7 Should there be significant delay in re-entering the home or waiting outside becomes injurious to health, then contingency plans outlined in Section 5 of these procedures should be followed.

10 Public Disorder

- 10.1 Where a number of people are creating public disorder outside the home and they are neither carers, nor residents of the Home, this will principally be a matter to be reported to and dealt with by the Police along with other emergency services as appropriate. Carers should report the matter to the Police and not form the view that it is nothing to do with them, or assume that someone else has reported the matter.
- 10.2 The primary concern for carers is to keep young people resident in the Home and themselves as safe as possible. This would normally be done by withdrawing into the home with the young people, locking doors and distracting the young people, so that they do not provoke an escalation of the situation.
- 10.3 If young people or carers are out and due to come back to the Home, then carers should either attempt to contact them and keep them away from the disorder whilst the situation is in progress, or failing this let the Police know of the risk. It is possible that Managers not on duty or carers from other homes may reach them more safely.
- 10.4 Dependent upon the time of day or night, and whether during the week or weekend, contact should be made with the Registered Manager on call and, dependent upon the severity of the situation a Strategic Manager, so that contingency planning can take place.
- 10.5 The Registered Manager/Strategic Manager on call will consider whether evacuation of the home is necessary and where the young people and carers should be accommodated. Should the need for evacuation be sudden, carers and young people should make their way to another appropriate venue. It may be necessary for the Police to assist with the evacuation. Providing it does not put carers or young people at risk, the Home should be made secure before leaving.
- 10.6 Arrangements should be made to ensure that any young person or carers, who are away from the building at the time of evacuation, do not wander back into danger, unaware of the risks.

11 Industrial Action

- 11.1 Official industrial action should always be balloted for and notified to employers by the appropriate trade unions and as such can be planned for. In such circumstances the Home's management together with senior Management will draw up contingency plans for the provision of service. However, duty of care should be considered.
- 11.2 In the event of sudden unofficial action known as 'wildcat strikes', which are illegal, this should be reported to both line management and Human Resources. In such an event the priority is always the safety and well being of the young people. Carers should not walk off shift as this will place them in violation of their contract. This should be pointed out to carers, but managers should not attempt to physically prevent carers from leaving the work place.
- 11.3 Dependent upon numbers of carers participating, other competent carers should be brought on duty to replace missing carers. Dependent on occupancy levels, homes may also be able to pool resources to maintain provision of services to children and young people living in the home.
- 11.4 As a last option, consideration should be given to young people who can safely go home for a short period of time. This should not happen if there is a court order preventing this or current child protection concerns.

12 Death of a Resident

- 12.1 On discovering a young person you suspect to be dead, call an ambulance immediately. If the circumstances appear suspicious, then call the police as well, avoiding moving potential evidence as far as possible.
- 12.2 Alert other carers on duty and designate one carer to remain with the young person concerned.
- 12.3 Other carers should keep the remainder of young people occupied away from the scene of the suspected death. Re-assurance should be given and other young people should be kept calm. One carer should be available to admit the ambulance crew to the Home when they arrive.
- 12.4 A carer should always accompany the young person to hospital and remain there until relieved; this is consistent with good parenting and will help to reduce distress for parents/family.
- 12.5 If death is confirmed by a doctor attending the Home and the body is not removed by ambulance, arrangements should be made for an undertaker to remove the body. This should be done in consultation with the parents/carers. Any difficulties that arise must be discussed with a Strategic Manager.

- 12.6 At the earliest opportunity the Registered Manager (if not on duty), the SGH Co-ordinator and the Strategic Manager, the social worker, the Assistant Director, Ofsted and the Secretary of State at the Department for Children, Schools and Families should be informed. Notifications can be shared with management as long as it is absolutely clear who will cover each notification.
- 12.7 Unless there are specific instructions in the care plan to the contrary, the parents/carers of the young person should be notified without delay. This task is normally done by the social worker, but advice should be sought if waiting for the social worker could cause delay.
- 12.8 The Registered Manager or other appropriate Manager should decide how to share information about the death with the children living in the home in a sensitive manner. The need for and provision of counselling/support for young people/carers should always be considered.

13 Death of a Member of Staff in the Home

- 13.1 On discovering a carer you suspect has died, call an ambulance immediately. If the circumstances appear suspicious, then call the police as well, avoiding moving potential evidence as far as possible.
- 13.2 If there are other carers available then alert them and ensure that one carer remains with the body. If there is only one carer left, that person may have to lock the room the body is in whilst they summons an ambulance and other carers to come on shift.
- 13.3 Young people should be kept occupied, calm and away from the scene of the death. It is appreciated that if there were only two carers on duty, that it will be a challenge for the remaining carer to have to carry this task in addition to responding to the death until support arrives.
- 13.4 Contact should be made with the deceased person's next of kin as a matter of urgency. Homes should keep a register of carer's next of kin in a secure place which can be accessed if the need arises. Help may be required to physically contact the next of kin if telephone contact is unsuccessful.

NB Only a doctor can certify death, so do not tell a relative that someone is dead until this has been properly certified.
- 13.5 At the earliest opportunity inform the Registered Manager (if not on duty), the Strategic Manager and Human Resources.
- 13.6 Responsibility for arrangements in respect of the body lies with the next of kin. However, carers should give such assistance as is possible and reasonable.