

1278087

Registered provider: Acorn Homes (UK) Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a privately run home, operated by Acorn Homes (UK) Limited. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to five young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. This is the first inspection since the provider was registered on 19 July 2018. The registered manager's post is currently vacant.

Inspection dates: 19 to 20 December 2018

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account requires improvement to be good

How well children and young people are helped and protected requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers requires improvement to be good

The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: not applicable

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
None		

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>5: Engaging with the wider system to ensure children's needs are met</p> <p>5. In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff—</p> <p>(a) seek to involve each child's placing authority effectively in the child's care, in accordance with the child's relevant plans;</p> <p>(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; and</p> <p>(d) seek to develop and maintain effective professional relationships with such persons, bodies or organisations as the registered person considers appropriate having regard to the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the children's home is to provide care and accommodation.</p> <p>(Regulation 5 (c)(d))</p> <p>In order to meet this regulation, the provider must ensure that they obtain clear information about the care plans for young people admitted to the home. In addition, the provider must challenge the professional network when necessary to protect the rights of children and young people</p>	20/03/2019
<p>13: The leadership and management standard</p> <p>13. (1) 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>(a) helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and</p> <p>(b) promotes their welfare.</p> <p>(2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>(a) 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>	20/03/2019

<p>(Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(2)(a))</p> <p>In order to meet this regulation, the provider must ensure that its health and well-being team is delivering support to staff and young people in order to inform practice and promote their welfare. The provider must also amend the statement of purpose to remove inaccurate information that indicates that children and young people have access to the provider's own registered education provision.</p>	
<p>33: Employment of staff</p> <p>(4) The registered person must ensure that all employees— (b) receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 4 (b))</p> <p>In order to meet this regulation, the provider must evidence that staff receive formal supervision at the frequency stated in the home's workforce development plan.</p>	20/03/2019
<p>14.—(1) The care planning standard is that children— (a) receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and (b) have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home.</p> <p>(2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— (f) that staff help each child to access and contribute to the records kept by the registered person in relation to the child. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b)(2)(f))</p> <p>In order to meet this regulation, the provider must ensure that the home's records in relation to care planning provide a coherent strategy for helping young people identify goals and to make progress. It is also important that these records reflect the views of children and young people.</p>	20/03/2019

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

This is the first inspection of this home since it was registered on 19 July 2018. Since opening there have been a number of staff and management changes in the home. This has had a negative impact on the progress and experiences of the young people. Three young people, who have left the home since it opened, made limited progress while

living there. Staff struggled to manage the group dynamics and individual behaviours. This resulted in a number of unplanned placement endings.

At the time of this inspection, one young person was in placement and another young person was admitted on day two of the inspection. During the young person's four-month stay in the home, only one member of staff had worked there on a consistent basis. However, the young person did report that he got on well with staff, liked living in the home and that he felt safe and settled there. He has made positive progress in terms of engaging in education, reduced episodes of missing from care and improved behaviours.

The placing social worker for the young person in placement reported that he is very happy with the care provided by staff. He feels that they 'go above and beyond'. He described how staff actively searched for this young person when he was missing from the home.

Staff ensure that young people access physical health checks and services. In one example, despite the young person refusing nine appointments for a health check, staff persisted and successfully supported him to attend. The statement of purpose for the home indicates that it has a 'dedicated health and well-being team' to support young people in terms of their emotional and mental health needs and to support staff in understanding these needs. However, there is no evidence that this team provides any such support to staff or young people. A member of staff commented that nobody from this team had ever attended team meetings.

Where possible, young people have had the opportunity to visit the home before moving in, and staff make efforts to welcome them into the home. However, the provider does not always make all reasonable efforts to obtain full information prior to admitting young people. For some young people, the provider was unclear about the care plan for the young person being admitted to the home. In another example, information that was readily available from the placing authority was not obtained to inform placement planning.

Most of the staff team members are newly appointed. Several new recruits have good transferable skills but no direct experience of working in residential care. Despite this, the inspector observed staff using skill and insight to engage with the young people. Staff provide good nurturing care and are attentive to the needs of the young people living in the home. However, some staff lack the confidence to challenge the professional network in order to promote the best interests of the young people. In one example, a young person was arrested for breach of bail conditions and spent a night in police custody. However, the young person had not in fact breached his bail conditions and this was not challenged by staff.

The provider has a wide range of written records and assessments that are designed to clearly identify needs and describe how young people are provided with help and support. These records contain useful information but are fragmented and do not provide a coherent plan. Some records are updated, while some are not. This means

that the case files sometimes provide contradictory information, and this leads to confusion in terms of what staff and the young people are expected to do. In one example, it was not clear whether a young person was expected to get himself up in the mornings or whether staff should wake him.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

The home has experienced a period where young people were exhibiting challenging behaviours and placing themselves at risk by going missing from care. Staff were proactive in working with the professional network and followed agreed procedures to manage these situations to reduce the risks.

Some of the difficulties in managing the group dynamics are due to poor placement planning and matching of new admissions to the home. This continues to be the case. For the most recent admission to the home, there was a lack of understanding about how previous behaviours had resulted in the young person being placed outside of London. It was not clear how these behaviours would be managed in the home. Staff could not adequately assess the impact on the other person living in the home, who had similar vulnerabilities.

The provider undertakes individual risk assessments and identifies interventions in order to reduce risks. These assessments are regularly reviewed.

Staff undertake training in key areas of safeguarding and understand how to respond to child protection concerns. The provider conducts stringent vetting and checks on all new staff to ensure that they are suitable to work with vulnerable young people.

The young person currently in placement has made significant progress in terms of reducing behaviours that place himself and others at risk. Staff have formed positive, nurturing relationships with him and he is engaging with support. Staff use a range of positive strategies to encourage positive behaviours. The young person is not currently involved in committing criminal offences and has cut ties with individuals who put him at risk of exploitation. He is now much more stable and has a more positive outlook on his future.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The registered manager of the home when it opened in July 2018 resigned on 3 September 2018. A subsequent interim manager had some positive impact but left at short notice for personal reasons. The provider has recruited an experienced manager but, at the time of this inspection, he was not yet in post. Currently the home is being managed by a deputy manager, who is experienced in the role but also very new to the post. A service manager has provided increased support and oversight during this period. She is knowledgeable and experienced in managing residential care but oversees several other homes run by this provider. This means that she does not have sufficient capacity to be in day-to-day charge of the home.

The home's statement of purpose contains inaccurate information about the way care is delivered. It claims to have an education provision that is registered by the Department for Education. This is not the case. The services provided by the health and well-being team, as described in this document, are not provided in practice.

The staff team has a good range of skills and experience; its members are committed, work with passion and demonstrate good potential. Because of the instability of the leadership team, the staff team lacks the direction and support it needs to realise this potential. Its members do not receive regular formal supervision in accordance with the frequency identified in the home's policies.

The service manager has done her best to monitor the quality of care provided to young people. She has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the service. She has clear plans to improve practice. However, without the stability of a manager being in place it has not been possible to implement these plans. Despite a difficult period of managing complex group dynamics within the home, placement planning and matching has not improved.

The lack of stability, through not having an experienced manager to lead the service, has had a significant impact on the quality of care, progress and experiences of the young people living in the home. The provider has taken reasonable steps to address staffing issues and, with the appointment of an experienced manager, is in a stronger position to address the shortfalls identified at this inspection.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and 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 whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: 1278087

Provision sub-type: children's home

Registered provider: Acorn Homes (UK) Ltd

Registered provider address: 424 Margate Road, Ramsgate CT12 6SJ

Responsible individual: David Knowles

Registered manager: post vacant

Inspector

Lee Kirwin, social care inspector

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