

SC469396

Registered provider: Acorn Homes (UK) Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is registered to accommodate four children aged 11 to 17 years old who may have social, emotional and/or mental health difficulties. Placements are medium or long term for children who have suffered abuse or neglect and who may display challenging behaviour due to their emotional difficulties. The home is one of several managed by this independent provider.

The manager has been in post since June 2018 and has made an application to register with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 17 to 18 October 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: 9 August 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
09/08/2017	Full	Good
23/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
19/07/2016	Full	Good
18/05/2016	Full	Inadequate

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— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; 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 provide to children living in the home the physical necessities they need in order to live there comfortably. (Regulation 6 (2)(b)(vii))</p>	30/11/2018
<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 that staff 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. (Regulation 12 (2)(a)(i))</p>	30/11/2018
<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 that staff manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other. (Regulation 12 (2)(a)(iv))</p>	30/11/2018
<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 that staff take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (a)(vi)(vii))</p>	30/11/2018

<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 helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that the home’s workforce provides continuity of care to each child; 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. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(2)(e)(f))</p>	<p>30/11/2018</p>
<p>The registered person must prepare and implement a policy (“the behaviour management policy”) which sets out how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the children’s home; and the measures of control, discipline and restraint which may be used in relation to children in the home.</p> <p>The registered person must ensure that within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so (“the authorised person”) has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate. (Regulation 35 (1)(a)(b)(3)(b)(i)(ii))</p>	<p>30/11/2018</p>

Recommendations

- For children’s homes to be nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of their children, they will, in most cases, be homely, domestic environments. Children’s homes must comply with relevant health and safety legislations (alarms, food hygiene etc.); however, in doing so, homes should seek as far as possible to maintain a domestic rather than ‘institutional’ impression. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- Just as in a family home, children should be able to access all shared areas of their home unless there are specific reasons why this would not meet a child’s needs. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 15, paragraph 3.10)
- As outlined in 10.1, the registered person should plan staffing levels to ensure that they meet the needs of children and can respond flexibly to unexpected events or opportunities. Staffing structures should promote continuity of care from the child’s perspective. If children complain, or give a view on how the

staffing structure could be improved to promote the best care for them, appropriate action should be taken. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.15)

Inspection judgements

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

There has been a period of instability in this home since the last inspection. Plans made to manage the change of manager were affected when the manager had to leave unexpectedly and sooner than expected. Senior managers took swift action to put in place a new manager. However, these changes, together with a high turnover of staff, have had an impact on the young people living in the home. The in-house health and well-being team has provided some important consistency during this period, and young people have maintained positive relationships with some staff.

The home has a large lounge and kitchen area that the young people use. However, inspectors questioned the rationale for external locks on these rooms and the downstairs toilet, which affect the quality and homeliness of the environment. During the inspection, inspectors noted some damage to the fabric of the building, which included a door and window that needed replacing and broken glass that had not been properly cleared away.

The individual health needs of young people are well supported by specialist services. Staff recognise the importance of education. They have supported the young people who struggled to maintain an educational placement, by encouraging their participation in home tuition. This has been successful for some young people. The staff team works well with the virtual school in order to support the young people's education plans.

Contact with family is well supported by staff. The young people are encouraged to see their families when this is safe and appropriate. Staff have developed constructive relationships with family members and work together with the placing authority social worker to develop these. Social workers shared positive feedback during the inspection. This included good communication with social workers, the quality of care provided and relationships between staff and young people, despite the difficult changes in the staff team.

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

Staff have an overall good understanding of the safeguarding issues affecting young people they care for. The staff recognised and responded well to a complex safeguarding matter. There have been a number of missing from home episodes since the last

inspection. These have decreased in frequency over that time. However, these have at times involved significant concerns about the misuse of substances.

The management team has developed good working relationships with the local police force and reports any incidents including those where risks are identified in respect of possible child sexual exploitation. However, these have not then been reflected in individual young people's plans, which have not consistently been updated with known risks. The means that staff do not have all available information in order to help them respond to and minimise those risks.

The strategies put in place by the staff to manage the bullying of one young person in the home were ineffective. During the inspection, further measures were put in place to support this young person.

Staff recruitment follows safer recruitment practice. Staff are provided with appropriate training, and the home's manager has sourced appropriate specialist safeguarding training when necessary. Staff receive regular individual supervision. Safeguarding is discussed, when appropriate, in team meetings, including the most recent staff concerns in relation to the bullying in the home.

Allegations against staff and a small number of complaints made by young people have been appropriately addressed. The management team ensures that it keeps young people informed of the actions taken in response. Young people were able to identify staff they would speak to if they have any concerns.

On one occasion, an incident of restraint was not reviewed within the appropriate timescale. As a result, a safeguarding issue was not identified at the time and was not reported immediately. The manager subsequently took appropriate action, which included reporting the matter to the designated officer.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home's manager had been in post for five months at the time of this inspection. They have managed a potentially difficult transition into their new post well. Focusing on the impact of this for the young people living in the home and the staff team has been key to this. The home's manager is clear about the need to provide regular support and supervision to staff. Together with the deputy manager, they have worked additional hours, to support the staff team through a recent particularly difficult period.

The responsible individual acknowledged the impact of the difficult transition and responded appropriately when they became aware of these difficulties. It is important for young people and the staff team to feel listened to.

The home's manager has improved the review and recording systems for evidencing young people's progress in placement. These are supporting her in improving and developing the quality of care in the home.

The need for staff learning and development is identified and supported fully by the home's manager. Staff reported feeling supported by the management team. However, recently, there have been some problems in terms of consistency of staff rotas. The home's manager has recognised the impact of this on staff and action has been taken to address this, including the recruitment of additional staff. The potential impact of this on young people's day-to-day experiences has not been fully considered by the home's manager.

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: SC469396

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

Inspectors

Maria Lonergan, social care inspector

Anne-Marie Davies, social care inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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