

1256417

Registered provider: Acorn Homes (UK) Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home caters for up to five children who, according to the home's statement of purpose, are likely to have suffered abuse and/or neglect.

The current manager registered with Ofsted in August 2017.

Inspection dates: 4 to 5 October 2018

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers good

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 14 February 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- As set out in regulations 31–33, the registered person is responsible for maintaining good employment practice. They must ensure that recruitment, supervision and performance management of staff safeguards children and minimises potential risks to them. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)
In particular, ensure that recruitment procedures are consistent and best identify suitable candidates, and that good employment practice includes a probation system that clearly records performance and progress.
- The registered person must ensure that the regulation 45 review process includes analysis of relevant data, the drawing of conclusions and actions required for the next six months. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.4)
- That the registered manager continues to seek ways in which to enhance the physical environment to increase the homely and domestic feel of the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15 paragraph 3.9)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The way in which leaders and staff consider new referrals to the home is thorough, flexible and careful, regardless of the time available. This results in the young people who move in, including those who do so at short notice, settling quickly and soon developing feelings of belonging.

Most young people engage fully in their education and make progress in their attainment. Some have gone onto further vocational education. If young people are unable to access formal learning, they receive professional home tutoring in a designated area of the home. Staff champion education and become very concerned when a young person is not engaging in their schooling. This results in sustained efforts to turn these situations around.

Young people are supported to pursue their particular interests and to develop these further. All are encouraged to try out and engage in a wide range of recreational and sporting activities outside the home. This helps them to expand their experience of the world, have fun and build positive memories.

Staff understand and recognise the importance of the young people's backgrounds and maintaining family ties, and they communicate closely with their placing social workers about this. They are diligent in facilitating agreed family contacts and will take appropriate action should a young person become distressed during these times. This approach helps the young people to maximise the benefit of maintaining family ties.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Each young person enjoys a highly individualised approach to their care. A confident and experienced staff team displays high levels of acceptance of the wide range of individual differences and difficulties presented by the young people. This helps young people to explore the issues that make their lives difficult. Professional help is quickly accessed to address their more complex needs.

Young people who have been the subject of difficult decisions about their futures are helped to come to terms with the changes that these have brought. The stable, warm and accepting environment is reassuring, and their challenging behaviours have been reduced substantially by being here. The needs and associated risks for each young person are understood by staff, and the plans to guide them in managing these are clear.

Good maintenance and adherence to schedules for health and safety checks, as well as diligent fire safety practice, provide a safe home environment for the young people. The staff team has a good collective understanding of all aspects of the locality. This enables staff to protect the young people from hazards in the area and to safely facilitate positive community activities.

Staff are knowledgeable and diligent in supporting the young people's safe use of the internet, and have developed the expertise to recognise and address the risk of possible exploitation by others. Staff know and follow safeguarding procedures.

Disruption and damage to positive relationships by young people's unsafe behaviours in the home are kept to a minimum by the staff's careful and proportionate use of physical interventions. The conscientious recording of these steadily reducing incidents reflects a caring approach by staff and the significant efforts to support young people's reflection and learning following incidents.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Interim management arrangements are currently in place to facilitate the registered manager's maternity leave. The strength of leadership in the home, as well as the wider organisation, is reflected in the smooth transition to interim management arrangements, following the planned absence of the registered manager. Stability and continuity of care for the young people have been maintained and, under the leadership of the acting manager, the service's improvement and development have continued.

A confident and cohesive core staff team has been maintained, providing a good continuity of care for the young people. However, during this inspection period six members of staff have come and gone. Although standards for safer recruitment have been maintained, both the collection and assessment of candidate information and the decision-making have been inconsistent. Variations and a lack of continuity in the induction, probation and supervision processes were also identified.

Areas of strength and those requiring further development and improvement are understood by the leadership of the home. Although the plans to support the progress and well-being of each young person are clear, these are not matched by plans for developing and improving the service. Insufficient use is being made of the available data and records during the regulation 45 review process to inform improvement and reinforce good practice.

The property has many positive attributes, many of which have been utilised to create a homely feel and an environment that contributes to the young people feeling valued. However, some parts, particularly the front room and outdoor areas, could be further developed.

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 difference 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: 1256417

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: Stacey Christian

Inspector:

John Pledger, social care inspector

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