

SC469396

Registered provider: Acorn Homes (UK) Limited

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 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 manager has been registered with Ofsted since January 2019.

Inspection dates: 1 to 2 October 2019

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: 17 October 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
17/10/2018	Full	Requires improvement to be good
09/08/2017	Full	Good
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 protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard requires the registered person to ensure that staff assess whether each child is at risk of harm, considering information in the child’s relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; help each child to understand how to keep safe; and have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm.</p> <p>(Regulation 12 (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii))</p> <p>In particular, to develop risk assessments when children could be exposed to gang and county lines activity. Enhance training opportunities for staff in this area to ensure that they can identify when children are at risk.</p>	31/12/2019
<p>The registered person must ensure that any limitation placed on a child’s privacy or access to any area of the home’s premises is intended to safeguard each child accommodated in the home; is necessary and proportionate; is kept under review and, if necessary, revised; and allows children as much freedom as is possible when balanced against the need to protect them and keep them safe.</p> <p>(Regulation 21 (c)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv))</p> <p>In particular, to ensure that any decisions to restrict access are made for safeguarding purposes only.</p>	31/12/2019

Recommendations

- Staff should seek to meet the child’s basic needs in the way that a good parent would, recognising that many children in residential care have experienced environments where these needs have not been consistently met – doing so is an important aspect of demonstrating that the staff care for the child and value them as an individual. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality

standards', page 15, paragraph 3.7)

In particular, to ensure that garden play equipment is well maintained. Broken equipment should be disposed of and replaced if required.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children have well-developed care plans. Staff maintain a clear flow of information from referral to placement. They set children goals and targets, which are achievable and in line with the placing authority's required outcomes for the placement.

Children benefit from careful placement matching. The registered manager expresses her views clearly, with both external and in-house teams, when questioning the suitability of placements.

The registered manager is facing some recruitment challenges. In spite of this, she has managed to maintain consistency of care. Staff are able to offer plentiful focused time to children. Staff are proud of how far they have come. They are building strong relationships with children. The children at the home are very complimentary about the whole staff team. Children enjoy living at the home. They talk about feeling 'part of the group' and enjoy spending time with each other.

Parents are positive about the home. They praise the staff and mention 'honest, open communication'. One parent talks about previous negative experiences of care that she has experienced. She says that her experience with the staff at the home is 'refreshing'. Parents talk about the great progress that their children are making. Some highlights mentioned include: engagement in education; improved relationships, leading to better family contacts; and big changes in children's ability to manage their emotions.

The registered manager places a strong emphasis on positive engagement with external partners. Staff have strong relationships with schools and the police. They also benefit from links with specialist services offering support and advice in areas including substance misuse, missing persons and child exploitation. This promotes joined-up thinking to ensure the best outcomes for children. Staff have also fostered excellent relationships with parents.

The organisation has an attached health and well-being team. It carries out an assessment on each new referral. It also offers support packages for children. Staff praise the ability of the health and well-being team to support them with any challenges they are facing.

Staff have effective tools for monitoring progress. They use colour-coded progress reports to help children identify their achievements. Children's views are used to enhance their care planning. Their voice is reflected well in plans, meetings and reviews.

The home is in a good condition. Children are happy with the quality of the home and like their personal rooms. Staff ensure that bedrooms are age appropriate. Children say they have everything they need to be comfy and to feel at home. The gardens are spacious and well maintained, but there was some broken play equipment. On arrival, the lounge door was locked as some of the children had not gone to school.

Professionals and parents agree that developing independence skills is a strength of the home. Children regularly get involved with cleaning, cooking and shopping. Most of the children had independence skills included in their personal targets.

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

Staff carefully assess referral information and risks are well identified. The well-being team and registered manager complete impact risk assessments for all admissions.

The registered manager ensures that rigorous pre-planning happens with placing social workers. The registered manager describes excellent support from her organisation if she decides a placement is not suitable.

Children have good risk assessments and management strategies to support staff to reduce risk of harm. There was one exception in relation to a child that could be exposed to gang and county lines activity. Staff had not included this in their risk assessments. Key workers have discussed county lines with children in one-to-one sessions. It is not clear how many staff have been trained to identify this area of risk.

Individualised procedures are in place for staff to follow should a child go missing from the home. Records also include guidance on positive approaches to going missing from home episodes.

Recently, there have been incidents where children were engaging in bullying behaviour. Staff follow the home's anti-bullying procedures closely. A child, who had been involved, said that staff respond quickly and do not tolerate bullying. He said that he felt safe and well supported.

Staff produce high-quality incident reports. They reflect well after incidents for any learning opportunities. When necessary, risk management and behaviour support plans are updated to include new learning.

Staff recruitment procedures are safe. The registered manager ensures that she holds detailed information for all agency staff. This includes all the standard safer recruitment information along with an in-house induction form. The organisation has also updated the agency recruitment form to capture a full list of training for each agency staff member. The registered manager can then be certain that agency staff have the required skills to work at the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager describes a challenging start to her tenure at the home. She experienced some negativity and resistance to change. She took a clear decision that it would be best to rebuild a more effective team. This has required some significant changes to the staffing structure at the home.

The registered manager has a strong sense of the direction that she wants the staff team to follow. She is happy with the staff that are now in place and positive about the future development of the service.

The registered manager has a hands-on approach and shows a highly developed understanding of the needs of children in her care. She spends a lot of face-to-face time with children. These discussions are detailed in her manager's consultation records. She debriefs with children after every incident. She engages directly with children to help resolve any concerns or issues they have. She also documents children's negotiations around changes to daily practice. A recent example of this was how children negotiated more free time.

Staff who are new to the service describe good induction processes. Staff reflect positively on the quality of training. They feel that there are opportunities for in-house career progression. The registered manager feels well supported by her line manager.

Staff morale is good. Staff have a focus on service development and have a proactive approach to current challenges.

The registered manager demonstrates a good capacity for reflective analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. She worked alongside the home's independent visitor to produce a thematic overview of staffing. They explored the current make-up of the team, changes to staffing, strengths and weaknesses of members of the team and linked this back to the impact on the children in the home. The registered manager has used this to generate an action plan for improved stability for children.

The registered manager is committed to equality of access for all. She monitors service delivery to ensure that children have the same opportunities to engage in all aspects of daily life.

Children feel confident to voice their views and opinions. A child expressed satisfaction to the inspector with how staff were taking his concerns seriously. Children also have a wide variety of opportunities to influence decision-making that impacts on their lives.

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) Limited

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

Responsible individual: Carol Bradley

Registered manager: Nicola Standen

Inspector

Peter Jackson: social care inspector

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