

SC023646

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 is one of 10 owned and operated by an independent provider. It is registered to accommodate and provide care for up to seven children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since March 2007.

Inspection dates: 28 to 29 January 2020

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers outstanding

The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 6 March 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/03/2019	Full	Outstanding
05/12/2017	Full	Outstanding
14/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
29/06/2016	Full	Outstanding

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, 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.</p> <p>(Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(i))</p> <p>In particular, to provide clear rationale when discounting risks identified in referral paperwork when children are admitted to the home.</p>	30/03/2020
<p>The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality of care review") at least once every 6 months.</p> <p>The registered person must supply to HMCI a copy of the quality of care review report within 28 days of the date on which the quality of care review is completed.</p> <p>(Regulation 45 (1)(4)(a))</p>	30/04/2020

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, managers should ensure that references are fully verified. Where personal email addresses are given for referees, it should be made clear whether the reference is a personal reference or an employment reference. In cases where personal emails are given as employment references, it is essential to

verify whether the referee is speaking in an independent capacity or on behalf of the organisation specified.

It is also essential that all elements of staff induction have been completed prior to the manager signing off induction documents.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children continue to make excellent progress. Managers and frontline staff have consistently high aspirations for children's futures. Children spoke openly about previous placement breakdowns, emotional trauma, engagement in criminal behaviour, aggression and violence. In all cases, they directly attribute the improvements in their quality of life to the work of staff at the home. Children hold the staff team in extremely high regard. It is clear that relationships between children and staff in the home are founded on deep affection and mutual respect.

Staff create ambitious plans in partnership with children. This has led to sustained improvement in all areas. Educational engagement and attainment are consistently high. One child proudly spoke about how a part-time job at a local salon had now enabled him to gain a place at college to study to be a hairdresser. Another child, who had been out of education for large parts of her life, is now engaging daily in quality education. Importantly, she is enjoying school for the first time.

Many children come to the home with complex emotional and behavioural challenges. Through consistent, caring and well-informed behaviour management practice, staff are able to create transformational change. Children thrive in a calm, safe space. Children are proud of the changes that they have made in their ability to manage emotions.

Staff have supported children to maintain positive relationships with carers and relatives. Wherever possible, staff work in close partnership with parents. In many cases, this has led to an improvement in the quality of relationships that children have with their birth families. In one recent case, this has resulted in a return to home for a child. Staff recognise the emotional impact that time with family can have for children. They monitor triggers and ensure that children receive the support that they need if they are struggling as they re-establish links with family.

Feedback from professionals and parents is very positive. A social worker said, 'I am really lucky to have a child in this home.' This attitude was mirrored in all conversations with those who work in partnership with the home. A parent spoke with clear emotion about the progress that her child has made. She said that the home had done an amazing job looking after her child.

Staff benefit from a dedicated health and well-being team. Staff from this team can work directly with children. Staff can also access professional support from the clinicians in the health and well-being team. They seek advice on effective strategies, based on the latest research and developments in childcare practice, to enhance their work with children.

Children live in a spacious home that provides a range of communal spaces for them to spend social time in. Children's rooms are personalised, and children take pride in their home. One child, who had really struggled to look after her own room, has made great progress this year. Her room was bright, colourful and age appropriate. She has been able to introduce personal items, toys and decorations to the room that she had never managed to maintain before.

Children have been able to engage in special training courses including anti-bullying, e-safety and fire safety. These are provided by the same training provider used by staff. Staff say that this has helped children gain insight into the roles and responsibilities of the team.

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

Staff complete clear risk assessments and have good understanding of strategies in place to keep children safe. Children at the home are vulnerable to exploitation, but staff have managed this well and ensure that children are able to live safely both at home and in the community.

Missing episodes have increased due to one child in placement frequently leaving the home without authorisation. In all cases, missing persons procedures are extremely effective. Both the police and the child's social worker said that the home's practice went way beyond their expectations.

One child's referral information contained some reference to criminal exploitation in a previous placement. This was not risk assessed. The child's social worker was able to confirm that, in a strategy meeting at the start of the placement, it had been agreed by all professionals that this was no longer considered to be a risk. However, the manager had not made this clear in any of the initial planning documents for the child.

Children, who in the past have displayed extremely chaotic behaviour, have been supported to learn to manage their emotions and aggression. Staff are skilled at de-escalating potentially risky situations. Children talk about how much they enjoy living in a peaceful home.

Staff recruitment processes are generally safe. However, there are examples of personal references being confused with employment references. Verification of these references was not clear. Staff induction checklists were sometimes signed off before the entire document was completed. Managers were able to supply alternative evidence that induction tasks had been completed.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Leaders show tireless commitment to the well-being of children in the home. They talk openly about their love for the children in their care. One staff member said they want to give children the very best experience of positive parenting possible.

The registered manager knows her children well. She understands their history and how experiences, prior to them coming to the home, have shaped their attitude and behaviour.

Staff feel very well supported. They speak about the manager with great respect and affection. One member of staff said that the registered manager had provided him with the best experience of management ever.

The registered manager has a very clear ethos which she role models to her team effectively. Through her leadership, she has created a passionate and committed workforce. Staff retention levels are high, and this provides consistency of care for children at the home.

The registered manager develops effective relationships with external agencies to ensure that children have access to the widest support networks possible.

The registered manager is a powerful advocate for the children in her care. She will fight hard to ensure that children's rights are met. She has managed to imbue this spirit in the rest of the team, who all provide excellent advocacy for children.

Children at the home have experienced a range of important personal issues this year, including gender and identity questions and finding out about family culture and heritage. The staff support this well. Children are free to express themselves in any way they wish in the safe and supportive environment of the home.

Children have a strong voice at the home. They manage and run their own regular consultation meetings. All agenda items and outcomes from these meetings are decided by the children in the home. Children say that they feel listened to and have no doubt that staff take their views seriously, acting on them quickly where necessary.

The registered manager had completed a quality of care review within the specified timescales. However, the organisation had not submitted this to Ofsted within the 28 days allowed after completion.

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: SC023646

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Acorn Homes (UK) Ltd

Registered provider address: Acorns Homes (UK) Ltd, 424 Margate Road, Ramsgate, Kent CT12 6SJ

Responsible individual: Carol Bradley

Registered manager: Tiffany Healy

Inspector

Peter Jackson, social care inspector

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