

1232650

Registered provider: Friends Together Care Homes Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The children's home is owned and managed by a sole provider. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to three children or young people who have emotional and/or behaviour difficulties.

Inspection date: 2 May 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	inadequate
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	inadequate
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	inadequate
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There are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded, and the care and experiences of children and young people are poor and they are not making progress.

Date of last inspection: 17 January 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is inadequate because:

- There have been serious safeguarding incidents due to the failure of staff to provide safe care to children and young people.
- Risk management at the home is poor and ineffective.
- Safeguarding procedures have not been followed resulting in a delay in reporting concerns to the placing authority.
- Children and young people regularly go missing with no clear, preventative strategy to stop them from absconding.
- The lack of open communication and sharing of concerns between staff and other professionals is placing children and young people at risk.
- The children and young people are not in full-time education.
- Staff's recording is not clear and lacks consistency, making it difficult to monitor children and young people's progress or the quality of care provided by staff.
- Children and young people have little structure and routine in the home.
- The managers and staff members at the home are not working together effectively to support children and young people and keep them safe.

The children's home's strengths:

- The appointment of a consultancy company has resulted in improved systems and processes in the home. Children and young people have developed relationships with staff members, enabling them to speak about sensitive issues.
- Children and young people want to remain living at the home.
- Staff take children and young people out on enjoyable activities including short break holidays.
- There is an improvement in staff morale since the employment of the new manager.
- Since the last inspection, the home now receives rigorous scrutiny from the independent visitor. However, staff are unable to address the level of concerns in a timely way.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
17/01/2017	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 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 must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>6: The quality and purpose of care standard</p> <p>(1) The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who—</p> <p>(b) use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. Particularly, to provide structure and routine to young people's daily lives.</p> <p>The registered person should ensure that the downstairs toilet is working, and locks are replaced on young people's bedrooms to protect their personal belongings.</p> <p>2(b)(vii) to provide to children living in the home the physical necessities they need in order to live there comfortably.</p>	20/06/2017
<p>9: The enjoyment and achievement standard</p> <p>In order to meet the enjoyment and achievement standard, particularly in respect of ensuring good relationships with neighbours,</p> <p>(2)(a)(iii) the registered person should ensure that staff help each child to make a positive contribution to the home and the wider community.</p>	20/06/2017
<p>12: The Protection of Children Standard</p> <p>In order to meet the protection of children standard, specifically in relation to promoting and monitoring children's safety and welfare effectively and ensuring that all risk assessments are completed, robust in clarity and detail, embedded in practice and regularly reviewed, the registered person must ensure:</p>	20/06/2017

<p>(2)(a) that staff—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) 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; (ii) help each child to understand how to keep safe; (vi) take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and (vii) are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies; <p>(b) that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm.</p>	
<p>13: The leadership and management standard</p> <p>(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> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and (b) promotes their welfare. <p>(2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (b) ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate; (c) ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; (e) ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child; (f) 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; (g) demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— (i) research and developments in relation to the ways in which the needs of children are best met. 	<p>20/06/2017</p>
<p>The registered person must comply with requests by the child's placing authority to provide the placing</p>	<p>20/06/2017</p>

<p>authority with information relating to the child. (Regulation 17(3)(a))</p> <p>Specifically, keep the placing authority and other professionals such as the youth offending worker informed and updated on the child's progress or any incidents involving the child to assist with their care planning. Recording should also be accurate, especially when two records are made of the same incident.</p>	
<p>The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety.</p> <p>The registered person may only employ an individual to work at the children's home if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3).</p> <p>The requirements are that full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32(1)(2)(a)(b)(3)(d))</p>	20/06/2017
<p>The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers serious; or if there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40(4)(b)(e))</p>	20/06/2017
<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 six months.</p> <p>In order to complete a quality of care review, the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the quality of care provided for children; and the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it. <p>The system referred to in paragraph (2) must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff. (Regulation 45(1)(2)(a)(b)(5))</p>	20/08/2017

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

The home is judged inadequate for help and protection, and for leadership and management. This means that the overall experiences of children and young people are also inadequate.

Children and young people have made little progress since moving to the home. They are not in full-time education or training. One young person has not attended education since living at the home, while another is excluded for fighting. There has been no educational progress for the third young person due to their imminent move to another placement. There are plans for two of the young people to start training programmes; however, their commitment and motivation is currently untested.

While children and young people remain at home during the day, staff do not engage them in informal educational opportunities to develop their knowledge and insight. There is little structure and routine in the home, which results in boredom and negative behaviour from children and young people. Consequently, the number of complaints by neighbours has increased. These relate to damage to a neighbour's property, loud noise inside and outside the home, and a congregation of young people at the property.

Recent staff changes have caused instability in the home. One staff member left the home suddenly without providing the resident children and young people with any notice. A young person said, 'I didn't know he was leaving. He just went. I saw him one minute and he was gone the next.' This disruption of relationships with children and young people means they have to start building new relationships again.

Staff are reactive in their key working with children and young people with discussions following on from negative behaviours. Staff demonstrate little understanding of the wider issues, for example dealing with discrimination and prejudice. There are missed opportunities for staff to educate children and young people, parent them effectively and influence them to take some control in the running of the home and in their care plans.

Repairs to the home are not completed quickly or thoroughly. The downstairs toilet has had ongoing plumbing issues. This leaves only one working toilet in the home, which causes inconvenience for the children, young people and staff living there. Replacement locks on bedroom doors are not effectively repaired, leaving children and young people's rooms insecure and accessible to others. Theft of personal items has occurred on several occasions, leaving children and young people's personal space invaded.

Care planning and risk management recording systems are now in place, but procedures are not yet embedded in staff practice. The new staff have not had time to gel as a team and are not working together to support children and young

people effectively. The new manager ensures that staff are supported to develop through regular supervision and team meetings; however, these lack focus and reflection on the young people, with missed opportunities to discuss practice issues and provide in-house training to staff. This leads to inconsistent practice and staff remain unclear about how best to manage and improve young people's negative behaviour.

The staff meet the children and young people's cultural needs. They enjoy positive relationships with some staff members, and children and young people want to remain living at the home. Staff support regular family contact and take children and young people out on activities and on short break holidays. The 'My Chats' discussions demonstrate that children and young people are positively engaging with staff and can talk to them about sensitive issues. Reward charts have recently been introduced resulting in young people getting up earlier, although their day lacks structure.

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

Staff do not keep children and young people safe and protected. Some young people are deemed to be at risk of child sexual exploitation. A young person engages in a relationship with an adult who has known risks. One young person is a daily user of cannabis. The home has seen this young person's involvement in criminal activity increase to fund this. Staff lack the skills and experience to recognise and manage these risks.

There have been serious safeguarding incidents due to the failure of staff to provide safe care. One of the placing authorities has served notice to end a young person's placement, as it did not believe staff were able to keep the young person safe. A professional from the placing authority said, 'My biggest worry is that the young person is unsafe.'

Risk management is not effective. Children and young people's risk assessments are not updated following new safeguarding concerns. Staff do not always follow the home's procedures to sign to say that they have read and understood risk assessments. This results in a lack of clarity for staff in relation to the risk and the required levels of supervision for young people. Staff do not know what action to take after a young person self-harms. They have not received specific training in this area, in spite of having a young person living at the home that is known to self-harm. Staff have recently received safeguarding training; however, they failed to make a referral to the placing authority following a serious disclosure from a young person. The failure of staff to follow risk management strategies results in children and young people's safety being compromised.

Children and young people regularly go missing, leaving the home late at night. There is no clear, preventative strategy to stop children and young people from absconding. Staff are not effective at dissuading them from leaving the home and do not make full efforts to stop them, even when a child said that they were going to run away. Furthermore, staff do not always go out looking for young

people and often rely on the police to locate the young people. Staff lack insight and do not recognise indicators when a child or young person is going to abscond, such as a young person returning to collect their mobile phone charger. The risks to children and young people who are already thought to be at high risk of child sexual exploitation are increased as a result of staff's failure to follow the missing from home procedures. An independent visitor completes return to home interviews, but young people choose not to speak to this person.

An adult known to be in a relationship with a young person living at the home was able to access the home while the children and young people were present. Although staff were suspicious of someone being present in a young person's bedroom, they did not follow this up appropriately. This resulted in a further occasion when the adult was found in a young person's bedroom. Staff are not vigilant and do not provide effective supervision and oversight of children and young people. This has led to unsafe people having access to the home and residents.

For one young person, incidents of offending behaviour have increased. Staff do not prevent children and young people from gaining access to the staff office. Young people have taken items including keys for doors and windows. This led to the theft of personal items from a young person's bedroom, including a television that was passed to an accomplice through the window. Staff's lack of vigilance has provided young people with opportunities to steal from the home and from each other. This has a detrimental effect on peer relationships in the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The previous registered manager left her position on 31 March 2017. A new manager has been in post since 1 April 2017. A completed application has not yet been submitted. The newly appointed manager holds the relevant qualification and experience to manage the home. A newly appointed deputy manager supports him in this role.

The manager has not been effective at embedding risk assessments and safeguarding procedures. This results in inconsistent and unsafe staff practice.

Since the last inspection, the provider has focused on setting up new recording and monitoring systems. This now involves paper records alongside the existing computerised records. However, staff recording on children and young people's files is not clear and lacks consistency. This makes it difficult for the manager to monitor the effectiveness of any interventions with children and young people.

Staff do not share information with the placing authorities and other professionals. They were two months late in sending a progress report about a young person. Other examples include: the substance misuse worker not being fully aware of a young person's criminality and their missing from home episodes; the youth offending worker not being updated about a young person's criminal behaviours in the home and details of their acquaintances. This lack of joined-up working and information sharing from staff at the home hampers the

effectiveness of multi-agency working and professionals' ability to keep children and young people safe.

There have been occasions when staff, children and young people at the home have been unclear about where the decision-making responsibilities lie. This is in part due to the compliance officer, who was previously the independent visitor having a very unclear role in the home. The responsible individual's limited understanding and insight in the complexities of children that are looked after has led to a blurring of boundaries. An independent reviewing officer said, 'Staff are inconsistent and quite immature as a team. They need to build [as a service] before taking complex young people.'

The manager and staff have not always notified Ofsted about serious incidents, particularly those requiring police involvement. This prevents the regulator from having adequate oversight of the current issues and to monitor the effectiveness of the home's safeguarding practice.

Recruitment practice is not robust. Checks are not always undertaken on staff employed at the home. The provider has not conducted any checks for a particular staff member. This leaves children and young people vulnerable to unsafe people and practices. This was a shortfall identified at the last inspection and monitoring visit and remains unmet.

The manager's monitoring of the home under regulation 45 is also carried forward from the previous inspection. These shortfalls do not instil confidence in raising standards and ensuring the consistent safety and security of young people.

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 who 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: 1232650

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Friends Together Care Homes Ltd

Registered provider address: 7 Tenter Lane, Warmsworth, Doncaster, South Yorkshire DN4 9PP

Responsible individual: Thomas Worthington

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Tina Ruffles, social care inspector

Jacqueline Malcolm, social care inspector

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