

# 1227335

Registered provider: Exceptional Care Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

This privately run children's home provides care and accommodation for up to two young people who may present with a range of complex needs and functioning difficulties.

There has not been a registered manager at the home since January 2018.

**Inspection dates:** 10 to 11 October 2018

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,</b> taking into account	<b>inadequate</b>
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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:** 8 February 2018

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** improved effectiveness

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
08/02/2018	Interim	Improved effectiveness
26/04/2017	Full	Good
13/10/2016	Full	Requires improvement

## 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 children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who–</p> <p>develop positive relationships with them;</p> <p>engage with them; and</p> <p>take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to–</p> <p>ensure that staff–</p> <p>ascertain and consider each child's views, wishes and feelings, and balance these against what they judge to be in the child's best interests when making decisions about the child's care and welfare;</p> <p>help each child to express views, wishes and feelings;</p> <p>help each child to understand how the child's views, wishes and feelings have been taken into account and give the child reasons for decisions in relation to the child.</p> <p>(Regulation 7(1)(a)(b)(c), (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii))</p>	06/12/2018
<p>The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure–</p> <p>that staff–</p> <p>help each child to achieve the child's education and training targets, as recorded in the child's relevant plans;</p>	06/12/2018

<p>support each child's learning and development, including helping the child to develop independent study skills and, where appropriate, helping the child to complete independent study;</p> <p>understand the barriers to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child to overcome any such barriers;</p> <p>help each child to understand the importance and value of education, learning, training and employment;</p> <p>help a child who is excluded from school, or who is of compulsory school age but not attending school, to access educational and training support throughout the period of exclusion or non-attendance and to return to school as soon as possible;</p> <p>help each child to attend education or training in accordance with the expectations in the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 8(1)(2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(viii)(x))</p>	
<p>The health and well-being standard is that–</p> <p>the health and well-being needs of children are met;</p> <p>children receive advice, services and support in relation to their health and well-being.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure–</p> <p>that staff help each child to–</p> <p>achieve the health and well-being outcomes that are recorded in the child's relevant plans;</p> <p>understand the child's health and well-being needs and the options that are available in relation to the child's health and well-being, in a way that is appropriate to the child's age and understanding. (Regulation 10(1)(a)(b), (2)(a)(i)(ii))</p>	06/12/2018
<p>*The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on–</p> <p>mutual respect and trust;</p> <p>an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and</p>	06/12/2018

<p>positive responses to other children and adults.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure–</p> <p>that staff–</p> <p>meet each child’s behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child’s relevant plans;</p> <p>help each child to develop socially aware behaviour;</p> <p>encourage each child to take responsibility for the child’s behaviour, in accordance with the child’s age and understanding;</p> <p>help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone;</p> <p>communicate to each child expectations about the child’s behaviour and ensure that the child understands those expectations in accordance with the child’s age and understanding;</p> <p>help each child to develop the understanding and skills to recognise or withdraw from a damaging, exploitative or harmful relationship;</p> <p>strive to gain each child’s respect and trust;</p> <p>understand how children’s previous experiences and present emotions can be communicated through behaviour and have the competence and skills to interpret these and develop positive relationships with children;</p> <p>de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children;</p> <p>understand and communicate to children that bullying is unacceptable; and</p> <p>have the skills to recognise incidents or indications of bullying and how to deal with them. (Regulation 11(1)(a)(b)(c), (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vii)(viii)(ix)(x)(xi)(xii)(xiii))</p>	
<p>*The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p>	<p>06/12/2018</p>

<p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure–</p> <p>that staff–</p> <p>help each child to understand how to keep safe;</p> <p>have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm;</p> <p>manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other;</p> <p>understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person;</p> <p>take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child’s welfare.</p> <p>(Regulation 12(1), (2)(a)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi))</p>	
<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–</p> <p>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–</p> <p>lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home’s statement of purpose;</p> <p>ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate;</p> <p>ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child;</p> <p>ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child;</p> <p>ensure that the home’s workforce provides continuity of care to each child.</p> <p>(Regulation 13(1)(a)(b), (2)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e))</p>	06/12/2018
<p>*The care planning standard is that children–</p> <p>receive effectively planned care in or through the children’s</p>	06/12/2018

<p>home; and</p> <p>have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure–</p> <p>that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home’s statement of purpose; and</p> <p>that arrangements are in place to–</p> <p>manage and review the placement of each child in the home; and</p> <p>plan for, and help, each child to prepare to leave the home or to move into adult care in a way that is consistent with arrangements agreed with the child’s placing authority. (Regulation 14(1)(a)(b), (2)(a)(b)(ii)(iii))</p>	
<p>The registered person may only use devices for the monitoring or surveillance of children if–</p> <p>the monitoring or surveillance is for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child concerned, or other children;</p> <p>the child’s placing authority consents in writing to the monitoring or surveillance; and</p> <p>the monitoring or surveillance is no more intrusive than necessary, having regard to the child’s need for privacy. (Regulation 24(1)(a)(b)(d))</p>	06/12/2018
<p>The registered provider must appoint a person to manage the children’s home if–</p> <p>there is no registered manager in respect of the home. (Regulation 27(1)(a))</p>	06/12/2018
<p>The registered person must–</p> <p>ensure that each employee completes an appropriate induction; and</p> <p>The registered person must ensure that all employees–</p>	06/12/2018

<p>undertake appropriate continuing professional development;</p> <p>receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33(1)(a), (4)(a)(b))</p>	
<p>The registered person must ensure that–</p> <p>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”)–</p> <p>has spoken to the user about the measure. (Regulation 35(3)(b)(i))</p>	06/12/2018
<p>The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children’s home at least once each month.</p> <p>When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the independent person–</p> <p>if they consent, to interview in private such of the children, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as the independent person requires; and</p> <p>The independent person must produce a report about a visit (“the independent person’s report”) which sets out, in particular, the independent person’s opinion as to whether–</p> <p>children are effectively safeguarded; and</p> <p>the conduct of the home promotes children’s well-being.</p> <p>The independent person’s report may recommend actions that the registered person may take in relation to the home and timescales within which the registered person must consider whether or not to take those actions. (Regulation 44(1), (2)(a), (4)(a)(b), (5))</p>	06/12/2018
<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>In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating–</p> <p>the quality of care provided for children;</p> <p>the feedback and opinions of children about the children’s</p>	06/12/2018



home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and  
  
any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children.

After completing a quality of care review, the registered person must produce a written report about the quality of care review and the actions which the registered person intends to take as a result of the quality of care review ("the quality of care review report").

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; and

make a copy of the quality of care review report available on request to a placing authority, if the placing authority is not the parent of a child accommodated in the home.

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)(c), (3), (4)(a)(b), (5))

\* These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

## Recommendations

- When a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority must provide an opportunity for the child to have an independent return home interview. Homes should take account of information provided by such interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect each child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate**

The experiences and progress of young people have been compromised due to the poor quality of care, unsafe practice and ineffective management at the home.

Young people's views, wishes and feelings are not always listened to or adequately considered by the staff and managers of the home. For one young person, this led to him continually feeling intimidated by another young person living at the home. The young person remained at risk and responded by going missing from the home, placing himself at further risk of harm. The young person said, 'I told staff several times about the intimidation, yet nothing was done about it. It took me to go missing three times before anyone listened to me.' The failure of staff and managers to listen and respond to the young person's views and feelings compromised his welfare.

One young person has not been in education since moving into the home in June 2018. Staff have not taken the necessary action to address this deficit. When young people are not in full-time education, they lack sufficient structure and routine to their day and often sleep until late morning or into the afternoon. Consequently, the arrangements to support young people to overcome barriers to learning and to take part in any meaningful educational activities are ineffective.

There are shortfalls in how well the health and well-being needs of young people are met. For example, in March 2018 one young person had a statutory health assessment that identified the need for his weight to be regularly monitored, and that he should see his general practitioner (GP). Records indicate that monitoring did not happen until four months later, and he has yet to see his GP. In addition, the young person's healthcare plan does not include information relating to this significant issue. As a result, the health and well-being of the young person are not being fully met.

Care planning for young people is poor. For example, the referral information for a young person who moved into the home included important information about his involvement in bullying and the impact of his behaviour on other young people in his previous children's home. There was no evidence to show how this information was considered during the matching and compatibility process. Consequently, it placed at risk another young person, who was vulnerable to bullying.

Placement plans for some young people do not accurately reflect their individual needs, such as their contact and education arrangements. When young people have temporarily moved to another provision, such as to a caravan, this information is not included in their placement plans. Neither are risk assessments of these unplanned moves undertaken. Furthermore, there is no plan in place for one young person's transition from the home when he becomes 18 years of age in a few weeks' time. This does not demonstrate effective care planning for young people to facilitate a successful transition into and from the home.

The conditions at the home are poor, and it is in an unacceptable state. Young people's bedrooms are unclean, with dirty bedding, mattresses and surfaces. Furniture is worn and damaged. During the inspection, there was evidence that young people had been smoking in their bedrooms, as well as playing computer games that are inappropriate to their age. Alarms on young people's bedroom doors are routinely activated at night without due consideration to whether this promotes their welfare or compromises their privacy, or whether the risk factors are such that they warrant such monitoring. There is no consent for the use of the alarms for the young people. These shortfalls do not provide young people with a safe, supportive and nurturing home environment.

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

Safeguarding practice at the home is poor, because the managers and staff fail to identify, manage and minimise risks to young people. When there is a serious concern about young people's welfare, prompt action is not always taken to protect them from harm. For example, when concerns were identified about the bullying towards one young person, there was a significant delay before action was taken to safeguard the young person. Staff did not identify or implement strategies to manage the risk and keep the young person safe.

In another instance, a young person's safety was potentially compromised when he was allowed to get into the company car, alone, at a time when his behaviour had become heightened. This action had not been risk assessed and was not an agreed strategy to assist in reducing his escalating behaviour. Although the young person did not have the keys to the car and was told not to use the handbrake or do anything to place himself at risk, he did release the handbrake and the vehicle began to move backwards off the drive before staff were able to intervene. The young person refused to get out of the car. Staff told him that if he did not get out of the car then he would not be allowed to be in the car alone again to 'relax'. This approach to supporting and managing a young person's behaviour led to an unsafe situation and showed a lack of judgement by the staff.

On two separate occasions, a young person managed to access a knife and threaten staff. In the first incident, the young person had acquired the knife from the top of a cabinet in the office and on the second occasion staff 'assumed' that the young person had taken the knife from the kitchen drawer. Another young person told staff that he was frightened of being harmed, having witnessed the threats towards staff. The fact that a young person was able to access a knife on two occasions without the apparent knowledge of staff of how it happened demonstrates that safeguarding practice at the home does not help and protect young people.

When young people go missing from the home, staff report this to the police and local authorities. Staff search for the young person and pass on any relevant information to the police so that the young person can be located as quickly as possible. However, independent return home interviews are not routinely undertaken in line with statutory guidance for young people who go missing from care. This limits the opportunity to obtain important information from the young person about why they went missing from

the home and to plan to reduce the ongoing risks associated with going missing.

Young people's safety is further compromised, because discussions do not take place between the manager and staff following the use of physical intervention. The lack of reflection and analysis fails to show whether the interventions used have been carefully considered to check that they are appropriate and have been used only as a last resort to protect the young people involved.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate**

The leadership and management at the home are inadequate. The home has not had a registered manager since January 2018. The interim management arrangements do not demonstrate how leaders and managers lead a culture that helps young people to aspire to fulfil their potential and that fully promotes their welfare. Leaders and managers have failed to take appropriate action in response to the significant impact that an inconsistent staff team is having on the care and safety of the young people living in the home.

The monitoring and review systems at the home are weak. Managers have failed to recognise some of the shortfalls identified during this inspection and have therefore been unable to take decisive action to resolve them. As a result, young people are not receiving the right support and intervention to meet their needs. The monthly reports from the independent person do not provide rigorous assessment of the home's arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the well-being of young people. As a result, the quality and standard of care have fallen to unacceptable levels.

Not all staff working at the home are suitably qualified. Furthermore, staff who have worked at the home for some time have either not completed the relevant qualification in the required timeframe or have not been enrolled to take the qualification, despite agreement from managers. This does not demonstrate that staff are taking responsibility for their professional development or that leaders and managers are sufficiently rigorous in their monitoring to ensure that this is promoted.

Staff do not receive regular supervision that provides them with an opportunity to reflect on their practice and the needs of the young people in their care. A newly appointed staff member, who is required by the home's own policy to have supervision every two weeks, has had supervision on only one occasion since starting work at the home almost two months ago. The lack of effective supervision does not give staff the opportunity to reflect on their practice and identify any further training that they may need so that they can promote better outcomes for all the young people in their care.

Staff responses to Ofsted surveys and discussions during the inspection reveal that staff feel unsupported. They do not feel that leaders and managers provide sufficient resources for them to meet the needs of the young people. For example, on at least two occasions the business payment card for shopping has been declined when staff have been to buy the weekly shopping. Also, when young people have been placed at other provisions the staff there have repeatedly had to ask for the money to fund activities and shopping. This inability to finance basic shopping fails to demonstrate appropriate planning so that the welfare needs of the young people are promoted in a timely

manner.

Leaders and managers have failed to ensure that there is a stable team with sufficient staff to meet the needs of young people. Currently, there is an over-reliance on staff from other homes in the organisation, because there are not enough permanent staff for this home. This does not ensure that the young people receive a consistent level of care and that care plans are consistently followed. This has had a negative effect on the young people's overall care and experiences.

## **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:** 1227335

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** Exceptional Care Limited

**Registered provider address:** 147 Moss Delph Lane, Aughton, Ormskirk, Lancashire  
L39 5BH

**Responsible individual:** Susan Rolfe

**Registered manager:** Post vacant

## Inspectors

Lisa Mulcahy, social care inspector

Karen Wilson, social care inspector

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