

1233899

Registered provider: Active Ark Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned by a private company. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to two children or young people, irrespective of gender, who have social and/or emotional difficulties and/or learning disabilities.

Inspection dates: 24 to 25 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 **requires improvement to be good**

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

Date of last inspection: 16 July 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: Inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection:

Three compliance notices were issued following a judgement of inadequate on 16 July 2018. The compliance notices were monitored on 5 September 2018 and all but one were found to have been met. Consequently, one compliance notice was re-issued following this monitoring visit. This has now been met.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
16/07/2018	Full	Inadequate
14/03/2018	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
06/09/2017	Full	Good

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 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</p> <p>promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child. (Regulation 13(1)(a)(b)(2)(e))</p>	28/12/2018
<p>A responsible individual must have the capacity, experience and skills to supervise the management of the home, or the homes, in respect of which the responsible individual is nominated. (Regulation 26(7)(b))</p> <p>Specifically, this refers to ensuring that the registered manager is provided with regular professional supervision.</p>	28/12/2018
<p>For the purposes of paragraph (3)(b), an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification if, by the relevant date, the individual has attained—</p> <p>the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England) ("the Level 3 Diploma"); or</p> <p>a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the Level 3 Diploma.</p> <p>The relevant date is—</p> <p>in the case of an individual who starts working in a care role in a home after 1st April 2014, the date which falls 2 years after the date on which the individual started working in a care role in a home; or</p> <p>in the case of an individual who was working in a care role in a home on 1st April 2014, 1st April 2016. (Regulation 32 (4)(a)(b)(5)(a)(b))</p>	28/12/2018

<p>The registered person must ensure that all employees— undertake appropriate continuing professional development; and</p> <p>have the performance and fitness to perform their role appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (4)(a)(c))</p> <p>With respect to continuing professional development, this particularly refers to all staff having an awareness and understanding of child exploitation and online protection and criminal exploitation through county lines.</p>	<p>28/12/2018</p>
<p>The registered provider must appoint, at the registered provider's expense, a person ("the independent person") to visit and report on the children's home carried on by the registered provider.</p> <p>If the registered provider carries on more than one home, the registered provider may appoint the same person as the independent person for all or any of those homes.</p> <p>The independent person must declare any actual or potential conflict of interest (whether of the type mentioned in paragraph (3) or otherwise) to the registered provider without delay and, if reasonably practicable, before conducting a visit to the home.</p> <p>If the registered provider becomes aware of a potential conflict of interest in relation to the independent person before or during the independent person visiting the home (see regulation 44), the registered provider must—</p> <p>make arrangements to cancel the visit without delay; and appoint a different independent person to visit the home. (Regulation 43(1)(2)(6) and (7)(a)(b))</p>	<p>28/12/2018</p>

Recommendations

- Children should be supported to understand how to build friendships with other children. They should be able to spend time with your friends in the local community, in the home area, and by having friends visit them at the home, in line with the child plans, age and understanding. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 38, paragraph 8.7)
- The registered person must demonstrate every effort to achieve continuity of staffing so that children's attachments are not overly disrupted, including ensuring that the employment of any temporary staff will not prevent children from receiving the continuity of care that they need. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 51, paragraph 10.1)
- The registered person should have a workforce plan which can fulfil the workforce-related requirements of regulations 16, schedule 1 (paragraph 19 and

20). The plan should be updated to include any new training and qualifications completed by staff while working at the home, and used to record the ongoing training and continuing professional development needs of staff – including the home’s manager. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 53, paragraph 10.8)

- The registered person is responsible for deciding what each review should focus on, based on the specific circumstances of the home at that particular time and any areas of high risk to the children that the home is designed to care for, such as missing or exploitation. There is no expectation that the registered person will review the home against every part of the quality standards every 6 months – registered persons should use their professional judgement to decide which factors to focus on. The review should enable the registered person to identify areas of strength and possible weakness in the home’s care, which will be captured in the written report. The report should clearly identify any actions required for the next 6 months of delivery within the home and how those actions will be addressed. The whole review process and the resulting report should be used as a tool for continuous improvement in the home. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 65, paragraph 15.4)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Staff at this home are warm and caring. They create a nurturing environment that helps young people to feel safe and well cared for. Because of this, young people settle quickly at this home, enjoy positive relationships with staff and make good progress from their starting points.

Young people’s placement planning is comprehensive and takes good account of all their needs and the strategies to be followed to achieve good outcomes. Staff encourage young people to take part in the planning and review processes to ensure that their views, wishes and feelings are heard and understood. For one young person, this support and inclusion gave him the confidence to attend his first looked after review meeting.

Staff support young people to lead healthy lifestyles and ensure that they receive healthcare support when required. Young people are registered with local health practitioners immediately they are placed to ensure that they have good access to routine healthcare and can have their health needs monitored. For one young person, this has included staff helping him to significantly reduce a smoking habit that he has had from an early age. Staff have also been proactive in promoting a healthy diet for the young person which has resulted in some healthy weight loss. He has taken pride in this achievement and it has positively improved his self-esteem.

One young person at this home is currently not engaged in education despite the registered manager’s efforts to establish this with his placing authority. Staff understand the importance of education and include some educational content in the young person’s daily activities to enhance his informal learning and provide him with some additional

skills.

For instance, activities can include shopping tasks, baking, and use of board games that will stimulate literacy and numeracy skills. However, despite being encouraged to take part in other activities outside the home, those activities do not promote positive involvement with peers. This means that the young person has little opportunity to socialise.

Young people are supported to stay in touch with their family and friends. As well as encouraging regular phone calls, staff work flexibly to enable young people to have visits both at the children's home and in their own home area, which at times is often some distance from the children's home. This helps young people maintain and develop those relationships that are important to them.

Feedback from professionals and those with parental responsibility for young people currently at the home was positive regarding the staff team and the care provided. One professional commented, 'Overall, this is a positive nurturing placement. His behaviour had significantly improved. The one-to-one time with staff is what he needs. The combination of routines, boundaries and nurturing has proved to be of real benefit to him.'

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

Staff are committed to promoting young people's safety and well-being. They understand the nature of risks to young people and the support required to protect them. A variety of environmental and individual risk assessments are established. These are reviewed regularly to reflect any changes in behaviour or circumstances. These successfully influence the care that the young people receive, while promoting their safety and well-being.

Young people are provided with a safe, comfortable environment. The home is furnished and maintained to a good standard. The registered manager carries out regular checks to ensure that all areas of the home and equipment, such as fire safety equipment, are fit for purpose. This helps to maintain young people's safety.

Young people have rarely been missing since the last full inspection. Staff are clearly familiar with local protocols and will follow any young people that leave the home without permission, only reporting them as missing when out of sight. During one recent incident, staff followed a young person for a considerable period, making sure he was safe until he was ready to return to the home and talk about what was worrying him. Staff ensure that all relevant parties are kept informed when such incidents occur.

Staff favour small incentives and regular praise to promote positive behaviour. Sanctions are very occasionally used; however, when they are, they are effective and related to the concerning behaviour. Staff receive training on a range of behaviour management techniques including restraint, should it be necessary. However, they have not had reason to need to use this. Staff identify their skill and knowledge of distraction and de-escalation techniques as key in avoiding the use of restraint that could further compromise young people's safety.

Staff recruitment arrangements are robust. All staff are appropriately checked and vetted prior to working in the home. This significantly reduces the likelihood of unsuitable adults working in the home that would harm children or compromise their safety.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

Since the last inspection, the home's manager has successfully applied and been approved by Ofsted to be the home's registered manager. She is suitably qualified and experienced, having previously managed children's homes owned by the company in Scotland.

The registered manager has a clear understanding of young people's needs. She is a good advocate for young people and appropriately challenges external services if there are concerns about the quality of support or advice a young person receives. This helps to ensure that young people are not disadvantaged by their circumstances and feel supported in raising concerns.

The registered manager has taken appropriate action to deal with the requirements and recommendations made at the last full inspection of the home in July 2018. Because of this, a marked improvement has been identified in the care, safety and progress of young people living at this home.

The manager has considerably improved the content of young people's records and other relevant documentation. This promotes greater communication between staff in the home and provides comprehensive records that detail young people's plans, their activities and achievements while at the home. Monitoring systems are now well established, enabling the registered manager to plan improvement and have a better understanding of how the home is operating.

Future external monitoring arrangements are unclear following the recent resignation of the home's independent person. This perhaps should have been anticipated and alternative arrangements put in place to avoid delay in providing external scrutiny.

Despite some good progress made by the registered manager to improve the home since the last inspection, the effectiveness of leadership and management overall still requires improvement to be good.

The registered manager has recently reviewed the statement of purpose to ensure that it reflects the home's aims and objectives. Staff show a good understanding of what the home aims to achieve and their role within it. However, although the statement of purpose generally provides up-to-date and current information about the service, the registered manager is again in the process of updating this to reflect further changes in staff.

Since the monitoring visit on 5 September 2018, there have been further changes to the home's core team. A significant number of additional staff, who are contracted by the company but not part of the core team, have been caring for the young person currently accommodated. While this is not best practice in providing continuity of care, surprisingly this so far does not appear to have unsettled the young person currently living at the home.

Staff say that they feel well supported by their registered manager. However, the company's current staffing arrangements make the tasks of monitoring supervision, training and development needs very onerous. This is because staff often work in two or more homes operated by the company, with their supervision shared between managers.

Despite the assurance of regular discussions taking place between the registered manager and responsible individual, the registered manager was unable to provide dates or records to indicate that she is being appropriately supported with regular supervision.

In addition, staff annual appraisals have not taken place. The absence of a workforce plan in the home meant that the registered manager could not easily check and monitor her staff's training and development needs. The registered manager was unaware until this inspection that one member of staff working in the home had not yet completed the level 3 diploma qualification within the required timescale. This is contrary to regulation.

Staff are not routinely kept up to date with current practice and issues that concern children and young people that will help to promote their safety and well-being. For example, the inspector identified that staff had little knowledge and awareness of county lines and the exploitation of young and vulnerable people in trafficking drugs. The current training and development plan does not yet identify this as a learning need.

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: 1233899

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Active Ark Limited

Registered provider address: Birbeck House, Duke Street, Penrith CA11 7NA

Responsible individual: Louise Matthews

Registered manager: Heather Rooke

Inspector

Gillian Walters, social care inspector

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