

1250287

Registered provider: Acorn Children's Home (Branston) Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately owned children's home is registered to provide care for up to four children and young people who have moved following a breakdown in their fostering and/or a residential placement. The registered manager resigned in October 2018. Since then, there have been two managers in post. The first applied to be the registered manager but withdrew his application in November 2018. The current manager came into post in February 2019. He has not yet applied to be the registered manager.

Inspection dates: 14 to 15 May 2019

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **inadequate**

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 July 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
17/07/2018	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 quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children’s home’s overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children’s needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard requires the registered person to ensure that staff treat each child with dignity and respect. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b)(2)(b)(iii))</p> <p>With particular reference to all staff speaking to children appropriately at all times.</p>	01/07/2019
<p>The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children’s home’s overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children’s needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard requires the registered person to ensure that staff help each child to understand and manage the impact of any experience of abuse or neglect. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b)(2)(b)(v))</p> <p>With particular reference to undertaking key work with a young person who experienced an abusive relationship with a staff member.</p>	01/07/2019
<p>The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on mutual respect and trust. In particular, the standard requires the registered person to ensure that staff help each child to understand, in a way that is appropriate according to the child’s age and understanding, personal, sexual and social relationships, and how those relationships can be supportive or harmful. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(2)(a)(vi))</p>	01/07/2019

<p>With particular reference to young people who have spent time alone away from the home with any employee of the company who is not a member of the care staff team.</p>	
<p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard requires the registered person to ensure that staff understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(v))</p> <p>With particular reference to maintaining a professional curiosity about any situation where children could potentially be placed at risk of harm by people they are associating with.</p>	01/07/2019
<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— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard requires the registered person to 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. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(2)(a))</p>	01/07/2019
<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— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard requires the registered person to ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(2)(c)) *</p> <p>In particular, that staff are trained in autism, safeguarding and first aid.</p>	01/07/2019
<p>The care planning standard is that children receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home.</p> <p>In particular, the standard requires the registered person to ensure 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. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(2)(a))</p>	01/07/2019
<p>The registered provider must appoint a person to manage the children's home if there is no registered manager in respect of the home. (Regulation 27 (1)(a))</p>	01/07/2019
<p>The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The requirements are that the individual has the appropriate</p>	01/07/2019

<p>experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform; an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification if, by the relevant date, the individual has attained the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England) (“the Level 3 Diploma”); or a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the Level 3 Diploma. The relevant date is 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 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 (1)(3)(b)(4)(a)(b)(5)(a)(b))</p>	
<p>The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children’s safety. 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)(3)(d)) *</p>	<p>22/05/2019</p>

* These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendations

- Many children placed in homes may undergo a difficult transition and what should be simple aspects of their care take on a substantial significance in this context. Staff should provide a nurturing environment that is welcoming, supportive, and which provides appropriate boundaries in relation to their behaviour. Homes must also meet children’s basic day-to-day needs and physical necessities. 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)

This is in reference to the decoration and furnishing of the entrance hall and stairway of the home.

- The design of the home should, where appropriate, enable children to develop independence skills within the supportive environment of the home, including through encouraging independent use of kitchen and laundry areas. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 17, paragraph 3.25)

This is in reference to the washing machine and dryer. They should be kept where children can use them without having to go out of the house and into the garden.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

A decision was made to admit a young person who has a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. This decision was made despite the staff not having any training in understanding how they would meet his complex needs.

Another young person was able to form a relationship with a member of staff who was seen to be verbally abusive towards him. Other staff were aware of how the member of staff spoke to the young person but accepted the behaviour as the norm. They did not intervene to stop this abuse and failed to report the matter to the manager. When the manager eventually became aware of this abusive behaviour, the member of staff was disciplined and subsequently dismissed. Following the dismissal, no member of staff or the manager considered that the young person might need help after being verbally abused.

All the young people have spent time alone with the head of operations for the company. He has frequently taken young people out and bought them expensive clothes and gifts. This practice has not been questioned.

Staff do not challenge young people's placing authorities. This has resulted in one young person missing out on a trip aboard. The lack of having a designated social worker resulted in him not having a passport in time to travel. Staff failed to raise their concerns about delays and did not secure an advocate for the young person so that his views were escalated within his placing authority.

The entrance hall to the home is not welcoming. The walls and furniture are dirty and worn and there is graffiti on the sofa which has not been noticed by staff. Staff made plans to put photographs on the walls of a recent seaside holiday that young people enjoyed together. Despite this commitment, staff have failed to put up the photographs. This is a missed opportunity to personalise the home and to provide young people with positive memories.

Young people have to go outside in poor weather or in the winter months to use the laundry facilities, which are located in an outhouse. This limits their opportunities to develop their life skills.

Two of the young people regularly attend school. Staff have tried to work closely with the head of the virtual school to secure the third young person a school place. Staff have supported his learning by taking the young person on shopping trips and spending time at the home's allotment.

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

When a young person went missing from the home, a staff member on duty invited her partner, who does not work for the company, to join the search for the young person.

When they found the young person, the staff member's partner used a physical intervention to guide her into the car. When another member of staff raised concerns that the staff member and her partner had been verbally abusive towards the young person, these concerns were not escalated. Records of the incident and the physical intervention show that the manager at the time did not address the conduct of his member of staff about their inappropriateness of their actions. This failure to follow safeguarding procedures leaves young people at an increased level of vulnerability and risk.

Young people are known to smoke in their bedrooms and to have cigarette lighters, which they do not always hand in to staff at night. Despite the risk of fire in the home, staff do not enforce the rules that help to keep young people and staff safe. The new manager asked the head of operations to arrange for an up-to-date fire risk assessment to be carried out for the home. This was not provided for three months despite the risks. This lack of action by senior managers fails to prioritise young people's safety.

Staff are not trained in first aid and not all staff have received training in safeguarding. This places young people at significant risk of harm as staff are not skilled in being able to identify and to take the appropriate action when safeguarding and child protection concerns are raised.

Staff carry out key-work sessions with young people. These sessions have helped young people to stay safe when accessing online social media sites and to have more insight into sexual health.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

There is a total lack of professional curiosity by managers and staff within the organisation. This poor practice has compromised the safety and welfare of young people in the company's care. Staff and the manager have allowed the head of operations to come to the home and not sign in and out of the visitors' book. Records in the log book indicate that he has frequently visited in the evenings after the manager has left for the day and taken young people out by himself. Daily records of each young person's activities do not always agree with the logs for the home. There have been occasions when the head of operations has taken young people out shopping or for a drive, but this is not recorded in the young person's daily records. Internal monitoring has failed to question these omissions.

The home has not had a registered manager for over six months. The previous registered manager had a period of illness, which the deputy manager and other temporary managers covered. The current manager has been in post since February 2019. Prior to that, the previous manager had applied to be the registered manager but withdrew his application in November 2018. The number of changes in managers has left staff feeling demoralised and stressed and young people have lacked boundaries to help to keep them safe.

The current manager, who is new to the role, has not received an induction in line with

the organisation's policy. The responsible individual has given the task of supervising the new manager to the head of operations. This brings into question the responsible individual's ability to have oversight of the home and to offer professional challenge to the manager.

Decisions around admissions are sometimes made by senior managers. These decisions override the views of the managers for the home. Prior to the admission of the young person who has a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder, the deputy manager identified that the home did not have enough staff and that the staff did not have the necessary training in understanding autism spectrum disorder to meet the young person's needs. Despite the raised concerns, the senior managers went ahead with the admission.

The new manager has made attempts to obtain a staff training matrix from the company, but no record has been provided. This has hindered his ability to monitor the staff's skills and to ensure that they have the knowledge to meet the young people's needs.

Senior managers do not ensure that they have a workforce of staff members who are qualified in line with regulation. For example, one staff member has over five years' experience in residential care and has worked for this company for the past nine months. However, he is still not enrolled on the level 3 diploma in residential childcare.

Managers do not always have access to staff recruitment files to enable them to be assured that staff are safely recruited. The operations manager frequently visits the home and takes young people out by himself. No evidence could be provided of his suitability to work with children in line with Regulation 32 and schedule 2 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2015. This leaves managers unsure if people who work directly with young people have had all the required suitability checks carried out in line with regulation.

The current manager has tried hard to bring in some order to the chaos of the record-keeping systems. Staff appreciate his input and say that he provides them with regular supervision, a staff rota and regular team meetings.

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: 1250287

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Acorn Children's Home (Branston) Limited

Registered provider address: Claremont House, 223 Branston Road, Burton-on-Trent, Staffordshire DE14 3BT

Responsible individual: Farzana Khan

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Louise Whittle: social care inspector

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