

# 1183936

Registered provider: Acorn Homes (UK) Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

This privately operated home provides care and accommodation for up to six children. The home's statement of purpose states that the home offers placements for children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. Placements are generally medium to long term.

The registered manager has been registered since March 2018.

**Inspection dates:** 13 to 14 May 2019

<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 failures that mean children are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded and the care and experiences of children are poor.

**Date of last inspection:** 1 May 2018

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
01/05/2018	Full	Good
24/05/2017	Full	Good
06/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
09/11/2016	Full	Good

## Inspection judgements

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

Since the last inspection, several children's placements have ended because staff could not meet the needs of the children or keep them safe. A combination of poor placement matching and an inexperienced staff team resulted in an extremely unsettled and disruptive period for children. Half of all the children who have lived in the home in the past 11 months have either experienced unplanned moves out of the home or have left after being taken into police custody following incidents at the home.

Monthly independent visitor reports have revealed further concerns. In February 2019, the independent visitor wrote, 'The level of challenging behaviours, assaults and threats towards staff has increased', and the following month he wrote, 'An accumulation of issues remains and the staff's ability to safeguard children remains limited.'

The registered manager said that she acknowledged the challenges that the home had experienced. She said that she had terminated placements because children's behaviour and attitudes were having a negative impact on the other residents. However, despite recognising these concerns, the registered manager had agreed to extend the notice period given to two children even though staff were not able to manage their behaviour. As a result of allowing these children to stay longer, further disruption and instability occurred in the home.

Children have caused a substantial amount of damage to their home. Bedroom furniture has been destroyed, doors have been kicked off their hinges, the office windows have been broken and fire extinguishers have been used as weapons. The home's maintenance staff have provided a prompt service, and they repair and replace items when necessary.

The progress of children is poorly recorded. Although there is some evidence of children improving their family relationships, increasing their school attendance and reducing the number of incidents of going missing from the home, a number of records were out of date, undated or unsigned.

Children can earn activity and financial rewards for individualised targets such as attending school every day or settling down for the night on time. Children enjoy rewards such as go-karting, paintballing, golfing and manicures.

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

The ability of staff to protect children from harm is inadequate. Children living in the home have deliberately hurt each other on several occasions in fights and serious physical assaults.

During episodes of increasingly challenging behaviour in the home, one child said, 'It

wasn't nice, I didn't feel safe, I had to hide under my duvet all night', and another child expressed concern about their own safety within the home.

Children living in the home have injured staff. Staff have been kicked, punched, spat at and threatened with a screwdriver. Two staff required minor treatment in hospital as a result of their injuries. Children have been arrested for actual bodily harm, criminal damage and common assault in the home.

Staff do not follow strategies to minimise risks for children. A strategy put in place to reduce the risk of a child stealing the home's car keys was not followed. As a result, the child stole the car keys on two separate occasions and was able to drive away with two unknown males in the car. This placed the child at considerable risk of harm.

Children who have moved into the home have had a negative impact on the children already living at the home. Older children have pressurised vulnerable younger children to engage in antisocial behaviour, such as barricading themselves in their bedrooms. Young children have also been encouraged by older children to take part in criminal activities.

Behaviour management is ineffective. Sanctions, such as loss of free time or time-limited internet access, fail to reduce challenging behaviours. The measures used to mitigate and respond to the risks of children running away from the home are inappropriate. In particular, the registered manager instigated a 'locked front door' strategy to prevent a specific child from running away. On another occasion, a number of staff restrained and guided a child back into the home.

Staff do not treat every child with dignity and respect. A child complained that staff come into her bedroom with little notice or warning. The child said that on one such occasion she had been getting ready for a bath, and hid behind her bedroom door to protect her dignity.

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

Leaders and managers have failed to ensure that staff can meet the needs of children admitted to the home. Furthermore, leaders and managers have neglected to fully assess or consider the impact of new admissions on the existing group of children. Staff expressed concern about pressure on the home to take placements, which results in an inappropriate mix of children.

The home's statement of purpose sets out the range of children's needs that can be supported by staff, such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), oppositional defiance disorder (ODD) and conduct disorder. However, it was unclear if the staff have received any training to meet the needs of children in the home with these diagnoses.

Staff expressed concern about what they would encounter when they came on shift, and commented on the strain of managing the children's behaviour. Staff were concerned that some children's needs were being neglected as a result of responding to the

demands of other children.

As a result of children's challenging behaviour and the general disruption in the home, staff have not had the time to complete all of their administrative tasks. This includes important records, which have not been updated in a timely manner.

The registered manager said that she had not been able to attend the organisation's mandatory refresher training on safeguarding due to the demands of the children at the home.

The home's health and well-being team joins the regular staff team meetings. The health and well-being team provides support and advice to staff to help them to understand and meet the children's needs. However, when staff are unable to attend a team meeting there is no consistent record to ensure that these staff are kept up to date with the welfare and progress of children living at the home.

The home's statement of purpose is not an accurate depiction of the home. For example, the home does not use the provider's education provision, the current staffing structure is not set out correctly and staff names and qualifications are missing. In addition, children's bedroom doors are electronically alarmed day and night, contrary to the home's statement of purpose.

The home's quality assurance process includes a quality of care review by the registered manager. However, the review does not include the feedback and opinions of professionals, parents and staff. This is a missed opportunity to develop the service further.

Despite the significant shortfalls identified at the inspection, a visiting social worker was complimentary about the home. She said that staff communicate well with her. A child who had left the home wrote that she had had an enjoyable stay.

In recent weeks, and following several children leaving the home, the remaining children have started to settle and there have been no reported incidents or safeguarding concerns. Children who spoke to the inspector said that they are happy and have no current concerns.

## 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–</p> <p>understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to–</p> <p>understand and apply the home's statement of purpose;</p> <p>ensure that staff–</p> <p>treat each child with dignity and respect. (Regulation 6(1), (2)(a)(b)(iii))</p>	01/07/2019
<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 in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure–</p> <p>manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other.</p> <p>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. (Regulation 12(1), (2)(a)(iv)(b))</p> <p>In particular, staff must provide young people with levels of supervision as identified in their care plans, and the registered person must ensure that effective strategies are both in place and followed by staff to manage any risks to children in the home.</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</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), (2)(e))</p> <p>In particular, when staff are unable to attend team meetings, a record is kept that staff have read the team meeting notes.</p>	01/07/2019
<p>The care planning standard is that children–</p> <p>receive effectively planned care in or through the children's 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. (Regulation 14(1)(a), (2)(a))</p> <p>In particular, leaders and managers must ensure that staff have the knowledge and skills to provide care and support to children in the home that is in line with the home's Statement of Purpose.</p>	01/07/2019
<p>The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ("the statement of purpose") which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1.</p> <p>The registered person must–</p> <p>keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and</p> <p>notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16(1), (3)(a)(b))</p>	01/07/2019
<p>Restraint in relation to a child is only permitted for the purpose</p>	01/07/2019

<p>of preventing—</p> <p>injury to any person (including the child);</p> <p>serious damage to the property of any person (including the child).</p> <p>Restraint in relation to a child must be necessary and proportionate. (Regulation 20(1)(a)(b), (2))</p> <p>In particular, staff must not deprive children of their liberty unless authorised by a court order, and the number of staff used to restrain children must be proportionate to any risk of harm.</p>	
<p>The registered manager must undertake such continuing professional development as is necessary to ensure that the registered manager has the skills needed for managing the home. (Regulation 29(4))</p>	01/07/2019
<p>The registered person must ensure that all employees—receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(b))</p> <p>In particular, staff must receive regular supervision.</p>	01/07/2019
<p>The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which—</p> <p>include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child;</p> <p>are kept up to date; and</p> <p>are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36(1)(a)(b)(c))</p>	01/07/2019
<p>Schedule 4 sets out the other information that the registered person must keep in relation to a children's home.</p> <p>The registered person must—</p> <p>maintain in the home the records in Schedule 4; and</p> <p>ensure that the records are kept up to date. (Regulation 37(1), (2)(a)(b))</p> <p>In particular, the registered person must keep the register of children up to date.</p>	01/07/2019



<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 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.</li> <li>2. In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating–</li> <li>3. the quality of care provided for children;</li> <li>4. the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and</li> <li>5. any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children.</li> <li>6. 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").</li> <li>7. The registered person must–</li> <li>8. 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</li> <li>9. 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.</li> <li>10. The system referred to in paragraph (2) must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff.</li> <li>11. (Regulation 45(1), (2)(a)(b)(c), (3), (4)(a)(b), (5))</li> </ol>	<p>01/07/2019</p>
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## **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:** 1183936

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

**Registered provider:** Acorn Homes (UK) Ltd

**Registered provider address:** 424 Margate Road, Ramsgate CT12 6SJ

**Responsible individual:** David Knowles

**Registered manager:** Coleen Ashman

## Inspector(s)

Victoria Jones, social care inspector

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