

1227335

Registered provider: Exceptional Care Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is run by a private provider and offers care for up to three children who may experience social and/or emotional difficulties.

At the time of this inspection, two children were living in the home.

The manager registered with Ofsted in October 2024.

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 November 2024

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 failures that mean children and young people are not protected and their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded.

Date of last inspection: 14 November 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/11/2023	Full	Good
29/11/2022	Full	Good
15/03/2022	Full	Outstanding
30/07/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

Since the last inspection, three children have moved into the home and three children have moved out. The manager failed to identify risks for each child. In addition, shortfalls in staff practice have not been identified to ensure that children are kept safe. As a result, children have been left at risk of harm.

When children move into the home, there is a lack of robust planning. The manager did not request key documentation from the placing authority to make an informed decision about the risks for each child. There was also no consideration of the children's compatibility as a group living together or if the staff had the skills and knowledge to keep children safe. As a result, children's risks increased, and their safety was compromised. For one child, this impacted on their stability as a decision was made to move the child out of the home to keep them safe.

Despite the safeguarding concerns, one child who reached adulthood was successfully supported to move into their own home in a carefully planned way. Staff were proactive in preparing the child to become independent and involved them in setting up their first home. The manager successfully advocated for the young adult to secure a home near to their network of support to prevent them becoming isolated.

Children's health needs are met. They are registered with a doctor, dentist, and optician. When children request support for their health, staff listen to them and ensure that they have access to support from additional services, such as child and adolescent mental health services.

Children are encouraged and supported by staff to attend school and higher education. When children are not in education, staff ensure that they have structure to their day and encourage them to take part in activities. Staff support children to enjoy a range of hobbies and interests.

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

The manager and staff do not follow safeguarding procedures to keep children safe. Managers and staff do not show professional curiosity about who children are spending time with outside of the home. Staff do not always actively search for children or check known addresses, and they do not report them as missing from home to the relevant agencies within the time frames detailed in their risk assessments. Children have been harmed in the community.

Missing-from-home records lack management oversight, and plans are not updated following each incident. There is a lack of insight into why children go missing from home. This means that managers are ineffective at reducing the risk and keeping children safe.

The manager does not have sufficient understanding of child exploitation and has failed to identify the risk that children pose to each other. In addition, staff have not received support to understand and develop ways to minimise the risk for children. Staff do not have appropriate plans in place to keep children who live together safe. Children have not been educated about the risk of exploitation and have suffered harm.

Allegations are not reported in a timely manner. Staff do not consistently inform the manager when they are aware of serious safeguarding concerns. In addition, when the manager is aware of safeguarding concerns, they do not report the information to the relevant agencies without delay. This means that children have been left at a risk of harm and have not been listened to when raising concerns.

Actions identified in the fire risk assessment have not been addressed. Fire doors did not close properly to prevent the risk of fire and smoke spreading, and they were held open by door wedges. These issues were addressed during the inspection.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The manager does not have sufficient oversight of serious incidents, including missing-from-home incidents and disclosures of abuse. The manager does not have a thorough understanding of the risks and shortfalls in staff practice. As a result, there are missed opportunities to learn and improve from practice or identify significant safeguarding concerns. This has meant that children have been left at risk.

The manager does not provide strong leadership or give consistent guidance and direction to staff. Consequently, staff do not understand the actions they need to take to keep children safe. Risk assessments are not reviewed, and the manager does not arrange reflective discussions following incidents with staff to ensure that they are aware of their roles and responsibilities in keeping children safe. As a result, risks of harm are not well managed.

Staff have regular supervision sessions and training. The manager and staff regularly communicate with each other, using daily logs and staff meetings. They also use an instant messaging app on their personal mobile phones to share information as a group. However, staff have breached the provider's privacy policy, which states that staff must not use their personal mobile phones to take photos of the children.

The manager ensures that the home is adequately staffed. There have been some recent changes in staff; however, the two members of staff who left have now returned to the team. Any gaps in the rotas are covered by regular bank staff who the children are familiar with to minimise disruption.

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, The 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
*The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— 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; help each child to understand how to keep safe; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)) The registered person must ensure that staff understand their roles and responsibilities to keep children safe. The registered person must ensure that the staff have the skills to identify and act on signs that children may be at risk of harm.	2 December 2024

The registered person must ensure that staff practice is consistent throughout the team and that the team of staff work consistently together to keep children safe.	
*The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires, and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) 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; 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; demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received; and use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(b) (2)(b)(f)(g)(ii)(h)) The registered person must ensure that when disclosures are made, these are reported without delay. The registered person must review and evaluate all safeguarding incidents to identify any learning to support the development of staff and to keep children safe.	2 December 2024
The registered person must ensure that— the privacy of children is appropriately protected. (Regulation 21 (a)) The registered person must ensure that any sensitive and confidential information shared between staff on mobile phone devices is in line with the provider's policy.	1 January 2025

After consultation with the fire and rescue authority, the registered person must— take adequate precautions against the risk of fire, including the provision of suitable fire equipment in the children's home. (Regulation 25 (1)(a)) The registered person must ensure that actions identified in the fire risk assessment are addressed promptly. This specifically relates to ensuring that fire doors close fully on release and door wedges are not used to hold doors open.	1 January 2025
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*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that staff have training in representing a child, when required to act as an appropriate adult. This recommendation was not reviewed during this inspection and is therefore restated. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 43, paragraph 9.12)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, 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: Exceptional Care Limited, Malthouse Business Centre,
48 Southport Road, Ormskirk L39 1QR

Responsible individual: Post vacant

Registered manager: Karen Atkinson

Inspector

Sarah Probert, Social Care Inspector

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