

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 to provide care for up to three children who may have social or emotional difficulties. Two children were living in the home at the time of the inspection.

The manager registered with Ofsted in October 2024.

Inspection dates: 27 and 28 January 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 12 November 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/11/2024	Full	Inadequate
14/11/2023	Full	Good
29/11/2022	Full	Good
15/03/2022	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Since the last inspection, two children have remained living here. There has been an increase of one child going missing from home and drug and alcohol misuse since the last inspection. Plans are regularly reviewed and updated. However, these have been ineffective in the reducing risk.

Staff are supporting one child to live independently. Staff are proactive in supporting the child to develop their life skills and support networks, and to search for housing and prepare for setting up their new home. This means children are well prepared for adulthood.

Staff understand the importance of education. Older children who are not in education or employment are encouraged to maintain daily routines and structure, which incorporates learning activities. Staff support children to seek employment opportunities, including applying for jobs and preparing for interviews.

Children's health needs are met, and they are registered with the GP, dentist, and opticians. There has been an increased risk of child sexual exploitation and drug and alcohol misuse. Staff support children to access external resources, such as the sexual health clinic and substance misuse. However, staff have been unable to engage the child in order to attend appointments consistently and so the risk remains.

Children have access to a range of activities of their choosing, including go karting, shopping and visits to local museums. Staff arranged hiking activities in the local area for one child who enjoys walking.

Children are supported and encouraged to spend time with their family and friends. Staff have positive relationships with family members and work cooperatively to offer support when required. This enables the child to maintain relationships with people who are important to them.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Staff have a good understanding of risks, and risks assessments identify the children's vulnerabilities. Staff educate children about any risks present so as to enable them to develop a good understanding of how to protect themselves in the community. However, this has been ineffective, as risks for children have increased and some shortfalls have been identified.

When children go missing from the home, staff follow the missing-from-home protocol. Staff proactively search and try to contact children who are missing from home.

However, staff do not always document the steps they have taken to a good standard. This means that it is not consistently clear what actions staff have taken to locate and bring children home safely.

The manager and staff have good relationships with other professionals. One child has had an increase in missing-from-home incidents. The manager challenges effectively the local authority to ensure that strategy meetings take place. A contextual safeguarding worker said, 'Communication has improved significantly. This has enabled more coordinated and joined up working.' This improves collaborative working between professionals and ensures that plans are regularly reviewed to safeguard children.

The home uses external and internal monitoring systems. The use of these is referred to in the statement of purpose. The internal door sensors are used proportionately and to safeguard children. However, the manager has not ensured that there is a clear plan in place, with signed agreement from the placing authority. In addition, it is not clear if this has been discussed with children.

The home is well maintained. Any damage is repaired in a timely manner. At the previous inspection, actions identified in the fire risk assessment were not completed. These have now all been actioned.

Staff act effectively when children present as under the influence of alcohol and/or substances. Staff act promptly to either seek medical advice or take children to the hospital. When children are discharged from hospital, staff continually check on their well-being. However, there is no clear guidance to support staff to identify what they should be looking for dependent on the substances taken, or what to do if they have concerns.

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

The manager is currently completing the required leadership and management qualification. They are keen to continue their professional development and open to new ways of learning to enhance the quality of care provided. The manager has additional support from a more experienced manager, who regularly visits the home and supports with monitoring the quality of care being provided.

Records demonstrate that the manager reviews incidents. Serious incidents are reported to the regulator, as well as other professionals working with the children. However, the manager does not always provide a thorough evaluation of these incidents so as to ensure that any shortfalls are identified, and so staff can make continuous improvements to practice. This is particularly in relation to risks in the community.

The home is staffed by permanent staff members. Agency staff are not used. The manager is currently recruiting a second deputy manager. Any gaps are covered by bank staff who know the children, which helps to minimise disruption.

The manager works with a range of professionals and requests children's up-to-date education, health, and care plans from their local authorities. The manager has made requests for all plans to be up to date. However, the manager does not escalate this effectively when they are not received.

The manager ensures that there is a varied range of training available to staff. Staff are well supported to carry out their roles and work well together as a team. Additional training is available to support staff to meet the specific needs of the children the staff are caring for.

The staff say that they feel supported by the manager. They are receiving regular supervision sessions, which they find helpful. Team meetings are regular, well attended, and detailed notes are taken for those who cannot attend. The meetings are used as an opportunity to discuss the children alongside development opportunities for the staff.

Not all the requirements from the last inspection have been met, and these have been restated.

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; and understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(v)) Specifically, the manager should ensure that there are clear plans for staff checking the welfare of children who are under the influence of substances and/or alcohol. Managers should ensure that staff know what to look for and what action to take.	17 March 2025
The registered person may only use devices for the monitoring or surveillance of children if— the child's placing authority consents in writing to the monitoring or surveillance; and so far as reasonably practicable in the light of the child's age and understanding, the child is informed in advance of the intention to do the monitoring or surveillance. (Regulation 24 (1)(b)(c))	17 March 2025

Specifically, the manager should ensure that they have written agreement for the use of internal door sensors from the child's local authority. The child should be made aware that these are being used.	
The registered person must ensure that— the privacy of children is appropriately protected. (Regulation 21(a)) Managers and Leaders must ensure that any sensitive and confidential information shared between staff on mobile phone devices is in line with the providers policy. This requirement has been restated.	17 March 2025

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that she continues to escalate the lack of an up-to-date education, health, and care plan for the child. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 21, paragraph 4.2)

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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