

1258276

Registered provider: Achieving Aspirations Community Interest Company

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is one of three private children's homes operated by this provider. It is registered to provide short breaks for up to six children who have learning and physical disabilities. The provider also offers a residential holiday scheme for children who have disabilities as well as a selection of services for adults with learning disabilities.

Inspection dates: 23 to 24 October 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: first inspection

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection:

none

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- The home provides a comfortable, calm and suitable environment.
- The children have fun and enjoy their short-break stays.
- The children are nurtured. They trust and value the relationships that they have with the staff.
- Good partnership working means that the children and their families are able to access the support they need.
- Professionals and parents are complimentary about the service. They highlight that this highly valued short-break service makes a difference to the children.
- Caring staff provide child-centred, individualised care to the children.
- The service is well managed. Some areas for development have been identified, but these do not impact on the high-quality experiences that children and their families enjoy.

The children's home's areas for development:

- Ensure that consistently robust medication arrangements are in place.
- Review the use of any environmental restraints.
- Risk-assess any bedroom doors that are held open at night and conduct a night-time drill.
- Ensure that communication systems are used effectively.
- Ensure that children's views are sought and views are used to help drive service improvement.
- Ensure effective recruitment and induction of agency staff.
- Ensure that all of the staff receive suitable training and practice-based supervision.
- Ensure that all of the children's case records are kept to a suitable standard and contain all of the required information.
- Ensure that all staff complete a suitable professional qualification in working with children.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
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This is the first inspection		
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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
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person must only employ an individual to work at the children's home when full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32(1)(2)(a)(3)(d)) In particular, ensure that the checks specified are completed for agency staff working in the home.	27/11/2017
The registered person must ensure that an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification, the level 3 diploma in residential childcare (England) ('the level 3 diploma'), within two years of working in a care role in a children's home. (Regulation 32 (3)(b)(4)(a)(5)(a))	29/01/2018
The registered person must ensure that each employee completes an appropriate induction, undertakes appropriate continuing professional development and receives practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33(1)(a)(4)(b)(c))	29/01/2018
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child. (Regulation 36(1)(a)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that a copy of any education, health and care (EHC) plan prepared in relation to the child is and held and details of the statutory provision (if any) under which the child is provided with accommodation are documented.	29/01/2018

Recommendations

- Ensure the children's home is a homely, domestic nurturing and supportive environment that meet the needs of the children. Children's homes must comply with relevant health and safety legislations (alarms, food hygiene etc.); however in doing so, homes should seek as far as possible to maintain a domestic rather than 'institutional' impression. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

In particular, ensure that the home is heated at a suitable temperature for the comfort of the children. Furthermore, ensure that all fire doors remain closed in the absence of a risk assessment and undertake a night-time fire drill.

- Consult children regularly on their views about the home's care, to inform and support continued improvement in the quality of care provided. Due consideration should be given to the child's cognitive ability in the development and implementation of any consultation processes. Children should be able to see the results of their views being listened to and acted upon. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.11)
- The home should work in partnership with relevant people as appropriate to ensure that each child is provided with support (appropriate to their age and understanding) to communicate their views, wishes and feelings and participate as fully as possible in all aspects of their care planning and daily care. This may include the use of and support to use communication aids, equipment and/or any necessary language support. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.6)
- Regulation 23 requires the registered person to ensure that they make suitable arrangements to manage, administer and dispose of any medication. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.15)
- In some cases, such as children's homes caring for children with complex care needs, restraint may be necessary as a consequence of a child's impairment or disability. A child's EHC plan or statement of special educational needs may contain detail about planned and agreed approaches to restraint or restraint techniques to be applied in the day-to-day routine of the child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 47, paragraph 9.43)

In particular, review the use of any environmental restraints, such as wheelchair lap straps. Where the use is deemed necessary to safeguard the child, ensure that the details of the use are documented as agreed with the child, their family and other professionals, and included in the child's EHC plan or the home's short-break plan.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The setting provides short breaks to children who have learning disabilities and associated complex communication, health and behaviour support needs. Many of the children have enjoyed short breaks at the service for a significant proportion of their lives. When asked about their short break one child said, 'I love coming; all the staff are nice.' As a result of these positive relationships, the staff know the children well and the children trust them. The staff work effectively with parents and partner agencies. Parents say:

- 'He [the child] is fussy, but he loves to come here. There's lots of clapping and happy expressions. As soon as I walked in the door, he pushed me out.'
- 'He [the child] is having a good time. If not, he wouldn't let me go.'
- 'She [the child] loves coming. She likes being part of something busy and enjoys watching the other young people and staff.'
- 'She [the child] likes the staff; they're always lovely with her.'

The children's needs are assessed prior to their first short break and they are helped to feel more comfortable in staying away from their families through well-planned transitions. These include accessing daytime and holiday clubs which run in the same building. This means that the children are comfortable with the staff and setting before undertaking an overnight stay.

The staff are in the process of reviewing children's short-break plans to ensure that they contain the required information to guide staff in meeting the child's changing needs. Currently the plans do not consistently contain information, such as the child's legal status, culture and religion; nor is there always a copy of the child's education, health and care plan. This has not negatively affected the children, as most of the staff are familiar with the children's personalities, support needs, and any challenges they may present.

Due to the nature of the short-break service and the health needs of many children, medication arrangements are complex, and the risk of error is increased. While otherwise good systems are in place to manage medication, the recording of the medication is not always sufficiently robust. For example, on two occasions, the records of medication received by the home and returned to the parents after their child's short break did not correlate with the record of medication administered. On one occasion, this was a recording error and on the second the child did not receive their correct prescribed medication. The staff took appropriate action regarding this situation and the manager has planned further medication training for all staff to reduce future risk.

The children enjoy activities that they might not easily do at home; for example, one parent described their child enjoying go-karting, trampolining, and arts and crafts. At the time of the inspection, the children's Halloween artwork was displayed around the home,

giving a clear seasonal theme. The staff are good at balancing social and quiet time, recognising when the children want to be on their own. There is some access to the local community and the manager has plans to further promote this. One child spoke to the inspector about their sadness at the loss of the unit car, which means he does not go out for drives any more. The child was delighted with a subsequently devised plan to go out in future with staff using buses and trains. However, opportunities to seek children's views, such as this, are currently very limited, which potentially undermines the ability to help drive improvement and ensure that all of the children enjoy a fulfilling short break.

Inclusion is central to the organisation's philosophy of care and the manager has aspirations and some plans to upskill the staff team to promote more effectively the use of communication systems. Consultation and communication are not currently thoroughly embedded into the support that the children receive. The staff do attempt to seek the children's views through discussion and observation of their non-verbal communication. However, many of the children use sign language, pictorial symbols and information technology to support their communication. There is, however, no effective integration of such systems in the service. For example, there are some symbol communication aids but these are stored in a locked cupboard and so are inaccessible to the children. Some of the children bring in their own schedule boards to prompt their daily plans and these have on occasion been mislaid. There is no suggestion that the staff do not try to encourage choice; indeed, one child was observed to be given five breakfasts before he settled on one he liked. However, in order to develop the children's communication and skill base effectively, it is essential that the home promotes children's effective communication in all its diversity.

The children benefit from a spacious well-maintained and bright environment which is equipped to meet the needs of the children, many of whom have limited physical mobility. It is, however, difficult to maintain a comfortable temperature in the home, which the manager describes as either cold or overbearingly hot. This has the potential to impact on the comfort and well-being of children with complex health and communication needs.

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

While there are some areas for improvement that have been identified, the home ensures that the children are safeguarded effectively. The children receive supportive, caring responses from individual staff. The children communicate to their families that they feel safe, giving the parents confidence in the staff team. For example, parents' comments included:

- 'I have no worries about his safety. He [the child] doesn't cry or get anxious like he does in other places.'
- 'They're caring people'.
- 'She [the child] gets really excited, rocking and clapping. She runs up the driveway, full steam ahead.'

The staff are conversant with the home's safeguarding and whistle-blowing procedures.

They are aware of the additional vulnerabilities of children and young adults who have disabilities and their core duty to protect them. There have been no safeguarding concerns since the registration of the home. Local authority social work managers say that they were impressed with the manager's response to a complex situation which occurred immediately prior to registration. The designated officer for safeguarding said, 'They [the provider] didn't have to step in but they did. It's to their credit that they acted as they did to keep the children safe.' This demonstrates a rigorous approach to safeguarding children.

Behaviour management is appropriate and the staff are clear on the threshold for use of physical intervention and restraint. Consequently, there have been no incidents of physical restraint by staff. Due to the complex needs of some of the children, environmental restraints, such as lap and leg straps, are regularly used. There is no information to suggest that these are used with any intention other than to protect the children. However, there are no written agreements around the use of these measures. This means that there is not clear transparency of use in agreement with all relevant parties and that children's freedom to move is not being inappropriately curtailed.

Some children continue to enjoy short breaks past their 18th birthday and the manager is sensitive to appropriately matching the groups of young people, ensuring that risk is appropriately managed.

The recruitment of substantive staff is appropriate. However, the vetting of agency staff is not as thorough. For example, other than documentation of a completed criminal record check, there is little evidence of suitability checks undertaken in respect of agency staff. This means that there is potential for information that may affect suitability to go unidentified.

The manager reviews any accidents, incidents or near-misses effectively, ensuring that the children are better safeguarded. For example, a child was hurt while using a piece of equipment. The manager has reviewed the suitability of the equipment and the way in which the child is supported, and as a result identifying that the equipment and the care management approaches have failed to keep up with the child's changing needs. In response, the manager instigated a full assessment of need, a review of the suitability of equipment and a staff skills audit. The manager is initiating a review of all of the children's moving and handling needs and the staff have received updated training in moving and handling.

The building is suitable, and health and safety arrangements are generally well managed. However, a small number of children's bedroom doors are held open by approved devices at night without an appropriate risk assessment in place and no night-time fire drill has been undertaken. This has the potential to impact on the staff's ability to act competently and swiftly in the event of an emergency.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The experienced and suitably qualified registered manager and responsible individual have newly registered this service, which was previously operating under different ownership. While leadership is good, the home is not yet fully meeting its aims and objectives. For example, the statement of purpose refers to promoting inclusion and promoting the use of communication systems, yet recommendations have been set regarding these areas.

The staff are caring and committed to the children. Parents value the level of care their child receives, often using terms such as 'brilliant' when describing the service. One parent said, 'I have nothing but respect for the staff'. Another described how the manager has developed this parent's confidence to allow their child to have overnight breaks. This parent said, 'They [the staff] have been incredibly patient with me; nothing is too much trouble.' When there have been concerns raised, these have in the main related to changes in the times that short breaks are run. The manager has appropriately managed any concerns raised.

Staffing levels are suitable and meet the children's individual needs. Due to restructuring, there have been some staffing changes which have meant that on occasion agency staff have been used. Documented induction systems, specifically for agency staff, are weak. There are no records to show that the agency staff are given information about the children's needs, how to evacuate the building safely or whom to contact regarding any safeguarding concerns. This has the potential to undermine the quality of care they provide and their ability to respond to emergency situations effectively. The potential negative effect is reduced as agency staff are used infrequently and always work with experienced members of staff.

The manager is undertaking a training audit to understand exactly what training the staff have completed while employed by the previous provider. The manager has begun a training programme to ensure that all staff have the required competencies, to improve the staff's understanding of behaviour management, complex care tasks and effective communication. Most, but not all staff who have been working with children in a children's home for over two years have completed their level 3 diploma. It is essential that all staff are provided with the knowledge and skills to fulfil the roles assigned to them effectively.

The majority of staff have not received sufficiently regular practice-based supervision. The impact of this is reduced as they are an experienced staff team and the team meetings help to keep staff focused on the progress of the service. Local social work team managers reflect that there is a distinct shift in the culture within the home. One said, 'We are very pleased with it. There's a feeling the approach to supporting children is changing to helping, rather than doing to or for the children.'

Recording systems in the home are generally sound. However, on occasion suitably detailed records of care are not maintained. For example, records do not always contain all of the required information, such as the child's legal status, culture or religion, or a copy of the child's education, health and care plan. Such shortfalls do not directly affect

the child, but potentially undermine clarity of information and the ability of the manager to have robust oversight to ensure that the care provided is in accordance with the child's education, health and care plan.

Although some areas for improvement have been identified, these do not place the children at risk of harm and the vast majority of the children, placing authorities and families rate the home as good to excellent. The provider took over the service at short notice to prevent closure. The manager has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the service. The commissioning local authority is positive about the transparent working relationship established with the new manager and responsible individual which help drive this improvement. The provider has clear plans for service development and an established history of delivering good-quality services. Therefore local professionals and parents have confidence that the service will continue to improve under current management arrangements.

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: 1258276

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Achieving Aspirations Community Interest Company

Registered provider address: Achieving Aspirations Community Interests Company, Suffolk House, 7 Hydra Orion Court, Addison Way, Great Blakenham, Ipswich IP6 0LW

Responsible individual: Anna Boulton

Registered manager: Michelle Gill

Inspector

Joanna Heller, social care inspector

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