

2537801

Registered provider: Exceptional Care Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is operated by a private company. It currently provides care and accommodation for up to three children.

There is no registered manager in post. A new manager has been appointed but has not yet applied to Ofsted for registration.

Inspectors were aware during this inspection that a serious incident that had occurred at the setting since the previous inspection is under investigation by the appropriate authorities. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate incidents of this kind, actions taken by the setting in response to the incident were considered (where appropriate) alongside other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform inspectors' judgements.

Inspection dates: 10, 11 and 18 August 2022

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 are not safeguarded.

Date of last inspection: 23 June 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
23/06/2021	Full	Good
18/02/2020	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

Significant shortfalls identified in respect of safeguarding and leadership and management have hindered the experiences and progress of children living in this home.

Children have not made good progress since the home was last inspected. Some children have experienced disruption to their lives due to shortfalls in the care provided to them by staff. This has resulted in a placement breakdown for one child. Another child has had to temporarily move out of the home.

Children's relationships are not always positive, either with each other or with staff. On some occasions, children have influenced others to engage in disruptive behaviour. They have caused significant damage to the home as a result. Some staff have been assaulted during incidents when children have been unable to regulate their emotions or behaviour.

Outcomes and experiences for two children have been disrupted in several areas, including attendance at school and engagement with staff. There has also been a significant escalation in missing-from-home and self-harm incidents.

Some positives were identified, in relation to the direct work that staff provide for children. This helps children to learn and understand information which is relevant and important to them.

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

There are significant shortfalls relating to staff pre-employment and suitability checks. Gaps in employment history are not explored or scrutinised. There are weaknesses in relation to risk assessments which consider staff's criminal offences. Risks relating to these are not accurately assessed. Inspectors found a lack of information-gathering and investigation in respect of employees' previous referrals to safeguarding partners. This means that those working with children in the home have not been thoroughly assessed as safe to do so. Appropriate safeguards to protect children from harm are not being implemented.

There were two occasions when concerns were raised in respect of a staff member's conduct. Sufficient action was not taken to investigate these concerns and staff practice in the home. Additionally, managers and staff have not recognised signs of potential abuse, misconduct or breaches of professional boundaries. This has had a direct impact on children's safety, well-being and progress in the home.

An absence of professional boundaries has led to staff not knowing or understanding what acceptable professional practice looks like. This has resulted in children not being safeguarded effectively on several occasions.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

There is no registered manager in post. At the time of the inspection, the previous manager had decided to withdraw her application to register. A new manager has been employed but has not yet started work.

Written communication between staff and children is not well monitored or reviewed. Children's risk assessments identify the use of handwritten notes by children to staff as a strategy to support them to share their feelings. However, processes in place to document and review written communication are not clear and are not implemented by all staff. This has allowed inappropriate and unprofessional communication to occur.

Leaders and managers have failed to take appropriate action following concerns raised by people external to the home. Leaders and managers did not thoroughly investigate concerns raised. Nor did they implement appropriate monitoring or put the necessary safeguards in place to protect a child. This has been detrimental to the child's safety and welfare.

Managers and staff have failed to recognise and act on signs of misconduct and potential abuse. This does not demonstrate that staff have the correct skills and knowledge to identify and act on warning signs or concerns. This puts children at increased risk of harm and hinders staff's ability to protect children.

On some occasions, leaders and managers have demonstrated the ability to reflect, analyse, explore and understand children's behaviours, needs and feelings. This is particularly apparent in respect of behaviours arising from self-harm, suicidal ideation and missing-from-home incidents. Action plans formed as a result have helped staff to support children and provide an individualised response.

Inspectors deemed that sufficient progress had been made to meet the requirements and recommendations from the previous inspection.

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 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; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; 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; 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; that the effectiveness of the home's child protection policies is monitored regularly. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(v)(vi)(vii)(b)(e))	25 September 2022
*The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that—	25 September 2022

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; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; 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)(a)(c)(g)(ii)(h))	
The care planning standard is that children— have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that each child’s relevant plans are followed. (Regulation 14 (1)(b) (2)(c))	25 September 2022
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children’s safety. The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children’s home; or if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that—	25 September 2022

the individual is of integrity and good character;

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)(b) (3)(a)(d))

*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

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: 2537801

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Exceptional Care Limited

Registered provider address: Exceptional Care Limited, Malthouse Business Centre, Southport Road, Ormskirk L39 1QR

Responsible individual: Susan Rolfe

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Natalie Bennett, Social Care Inspector

Charlie Bamber, Social Care Compliance Inspector

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