

2576346

Registered provider: Achieving For Children Community Interest Company

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately run children's home provides care and accommodation for up to five children with social and emotional difficulties.

The home and the manager were registered in September 2020. The first child was admitted on 16 November 2020.

This inspection was conducted on site and involved meetings with children and several staff. Email contact was held with a parent, placing authority social workers and other professionals, including a psychologist allocated to the service. A staff questionnaire was also shared for those staff who were not working but wished to contribute their views.

Inspection dates: 23 to 24 August 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **inadequate**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **inadequate**

The children's home is not yet effective in delivering consistent and 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.

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

There were two children living in the home at the time of this inspection.

The quality of children's care, experiences and progress is restricted by poor safeguarding practice implemented by an inexperienced staff team who experience limited management support and oversight. This has resulted in an inadequate inspection judgement.

One child was able to leave the home on several occasions without the knowledge of staff. Furthermore, staff failed to supervise children as outlined in their care plans, which resulted in a serious safeguarding allegation. This demonstrates that children are not safeguarded effectively.

The home is a large purpose-built home situated close to children's respective local areas. The location of the home offers children the opportunity to spend positive time with their friends and family and to continue at the same school. The positive time that children spend with their family allows them to rebuild important relationships. Staff understand the anxieties that disrupted time with family may cause and work in close partnership to ensure that children enjoy well-managed time with those closest to them. This positive impact is evidenced by a reduction in aggressive behaviours and the comments by a placing social worker who described staff as 'meticulous and supportive'.

Children work with staff to expand their horizons and enjoy a broader range of experiences. This helps to improve children's self-esteem. Recently, this included a trip to the cinema for the first time and learning to look after a pet.

Staff know the children well. The inspector observed children actively seeking out staff for outings and long conversations. Children form trusting relationships with staff and speak to them about things that are concerning them, such as contact with inappropriate adults.

Staff are inventive in their desire to support children. On recently contracting COVID-19 (coronavirus) and being placed in isolation, staff brought a teddy bear for a child and placed their respective photos on the bear. This allowed the child to be reminded of their support during a difficult period.

Children achieve in education, encouraged by strong staff support. A child recently completed mock GCSE examinations, which marks a positive achievement. Another child has improved their attendance and engagement at their education provision.

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

Safeguarding practice is inadequate. The home failed to implement appropriate safeguards following an allegation of peer-on-peer abuse. During the subsequent period of police investigation, the home failed to provide sufficient risk management, oversight and support, particularly around bedtime routines.

Practice when children go missing from the home is not safe. A child informed staff that he had been absent from the home during the late evening on three separate occasions and had met with inappropriate adults without the knowledge of staff. Despite this disclosure, staff did not follow the required missing procedure. This meant that the child was not offered an independent return-to-care interview and an important source of support at a vulnerable time.

Risk assessments are not reviewed and updated appropriately. At present, risk assessments are stored for agency workers in the office to ensure accessibility. During the inspection, one missing-from-care risk assessment did not address the concerning pattern of missing behaviour of a child. This is of particular concern given the high use of agency staff and that the assessment was not up to date.

Despite this concern, other risk assessments that were available electronically to permanent staff were found to be detailed and clear. These assessments offer strategies suggested by a clinical psychologist commissioned by the home and incorporate the home's strengths-based approach. Children respond well to these strategies.

The use of agency staff is too high and presents inconsistencies in the behavioural management and care provided to children. A male member of staff recently supported a child during a severe crisis when the child's risk assessment required the intervention of a female staff member. The female agency member of staff present during the incident, failed to intervene appropriately. This posed a serious potential risk to the child and to the member of staff concerned.

The supervision and awareness of children by staff is lacking. Despite children being subject to one-to-one supervision, children were left unsupervised on one occasion. The resulting brief absence of staff supervision resulted in a serious safeguarding allegation made by one child against another.

Staff have not undertaken relevant training to help them to meet the needs of the children in their care. Despite one child exhibiting extremely high-risk self-harmful behaviour, staff have not received any specialist training in this area. This limits a safe and effective response to children when they are in crisis.

Collaborative work with partner agencies is good. One child enjoys the support of a specialist worker who supports children at risk of child sexual exploitation. Staff also have access to the placing local authority's computer information system. This ensures easy access to the local authority risk assessments and case notes. Ofsted was not informed of a recent serious incident, despite the high levels of risk involved. Other notifications of serious incidents are often received late and lacking

key information. This limits Ofsted's oversight of the home and limited the preparation for this inspection.

Behaviour management is effective. Staff use the home's strengths-based approach to allow children the time to think through behaviour and reflect prior to addressing incidents. Rewards work well, including working towards earning a mobile phone.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Leaders and managers of the home are not visible enough. The registered manager works in the home for only half of the working week and is contactable by telephone during other times when she is working from home. Ofsted was not informed formally of this important change in working practices.

The consistent presence of the registered manager is of particular importance given the inexperience of the management and staff team. This is the deputy manager's first experience of management in a regulated children's home and both he and the registered manager are limited to office hours only. In addition, only one of three senior members of staff has previously held a management position in a regulated children's residential setting. None of the senior staff members are undertaking any form of management training despite acting as 'shift leaders' outside of office hours.

Despite the concerns, staff morale is positive. Leaders and managers have recruited an enthusiastic and child-centred staff team who consistently refer to a 'strong team dynamic' in the home. Staff report that formal supervision is both supportive and effective.

The home's statement of purpose requires updating as it does not reflect the support offered to children. Door alarms in the home are not currently operational as indicated in the statement of purpose. In addition, the referral criteria for children is not accurate. This presents a confusing picture for placing professionals.

The home's risk assessment of the local area lacks an evaluation of potential child sexual exploitation and gang activity locally. This limits the manager's ability to assess the suitability of new children moving into the home and the ability of staff to effectively safeguard children.

The registered manager's quality of care report fails to contain an action plan. This limits an assessment of the home's improvement plan.

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
A responsible individual must— have the capacity to supervise the management of the home. (Regulation 26 (7)(b)) In particular, the registered manager must provide a more visible presence in the home.	1 October 2021
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))	1 October 2021

In particular, ensure that the safeguarding practice ensures that children are safeguarded effectively, and risk assessments include all known risks and strategies to help staff to manage risks effectively.	
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. The registered person must— keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it. Subject to paragraph (6), the registered person must ensure that the home is at all times conducted in a manner which is consistent with its statement of purpose. (Regulation 16 (1) (3)(a) (5)) This specifically refers to providers ensuring that the statement of purpose fully reflects the times of referrals that the home will accept, and the safeguards offered to children in the home, including door alarms.	1 October 2021
The registered person must ensure that all employees—undertake appropriate continuing professional development. (Regulation 33 (4)(a)) In particular, ensure that all staff have training to ensure that they are aware of the complex needs of the children resident in the home.	1 October 2021
The registered person must review the appropriateness and suitability of the location of the premises used for the purposes of the children's home at least once in each calendar year taking into account the requirement in regulation 12 (2)(c) (the protection of children standard). When conducting the review, the registered person must consult, and take into account the views of, each relevant person. (Regulation 46 (1) (2)) This is with reference to the specific risk posed by gangs and child sexual exploitation in the local area.	1 October 2021

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 promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child. (Regulation 13) (2)(d)) In particular, that the home provides overnight awake support when concerns arise. In addition, provide both male and female staff who can support children when they are in crisis, in accordance with their individualised risk assessments.	1 October 2021
The registered person must prepare and implement a policy ("the behaviour management policy") which sets out— how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the children's home. (Regulation 35 (1)(a)) This particularly refers to the need for staff to have clear guidance concerning distinguishing between a safeguarding incident and when children are missing from care and the respective procedures to follow.	1 October 2021
The registered person must maintain records ('case records') for each child which; are kept up to date. (Regulation 36 (1)(b)) This particularly refers to case recordings accurately reflecting the child's time in the home, and to ensure that care plans and risk assessments are regularly updated.	1 October 2021
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to; sexual exploitation;	1 October 2021

an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious;

there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there;

a child protection enquiry involving a child — is instigated; or

concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry); or

there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious.
(Regulation 40 (4)(a)(b)(c)(d)(i)(ii)(e))

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that when a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from home without permission, the responsible local authority must provide an opportunity for the child to have an independent return-home interview. Homes should take account of information provided by such interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect each child. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)
- The registered person should ensure that no more than half of the staff on duty at any one time should be from an external agency. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.17)
- The registered person should have a system in place so that all serious events are notified within 24 hours to the appropriate people. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.13)
- The registered person should ensure that the management monitoring report clearly identifies any actions required for the next six months of delivery within the home and how those actions will be addressed. In particular, to ensure the improvement plan contains details and specific timescales with regards to when progress will be reviewed and measured. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.4)
- The registered person should ensure all managers working in a children's home must have the qualification in regulation 28 (2), within the relevant timescales listed in regulation 28 (3). ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards (2015)', page 52, paragraph 10.12)

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: 2576346

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Achieving For Children Community Interest Company

Registered provider address: 42 York Street, Twickenham TW1 3BW

Responsible individual: Matthew Edwards

Registered manager: Hannah Phillips

Inspector

Barnaby Dowell, Social Care Inspector

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