

2614999

Registered provider: GAC Family Services Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home registered in February 2021. The home provides care for up to two children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties or learning disabilities.

The manager is registered with Ofsted and she is undertaking the required qualification.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of state, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

Inspection dates: 4 to 5 August 2021

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: this is the first full inspection of this home

Overall judgement at last inspection: n/a

Enforcement action since last inspection: n/a

Recent inspection history

Inspection date

Inspection type

Inspection judgement

This is the first inspection of this home.

Inspection judgements

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

Children have made progress since moving to this home. However, there are concerns about the safety of the children living together. One child is struggling to contain their emotions and displays aggression toward staff. The impact of this is a concern for the other child in placement.

Children have also described times when they have felt less safe. This largely relates to when children present with challenging behaviours. Staff have introduced various strategies to address this, including extra staffing. Staff recognise that they are struggling to meet children's needs, especially in relation to challenging behaviour.

Both children speak positively about the home. One described it as the best place they have ever lived. The child went on and listed the things that have improved in their life since moving in. They then went on to say that 'no other staff team has fought for me as hard as this one'. This helped the child feel valued and cared for.

Family members are positive about the care their children receive. They praise staff for their work with the children and the support provided to them. These relationships have led to positive developments in approaches to caring for the children. Parents and family members felt that information sharing could be improved further, with more regular updates from staff. This would enhance their knowledge of what else is happening in the child's life.

The team places importance on the children's emotional well-being. Staff support the children to attend specialist and routine health appointments.

Children's views, wishes and feelings are not consistently gained or acted upon by managers or staff. This means that children's views are not being used to shape their lives while living in this home.

One child has had a remarkable change in their approach to education. They have secured a college placement, having successfully completed the school year and exams. The child's teacher described the child's improved attendance and participation in education, since moving to the home. The teacher praised the care staff for their input and support. Staff have supported another child with more structured days, which have helped the child engage in home tuition. This indicates good progress for both children.

Children are supported to learn independence skills, as would be expected in a supportive family. For the older child, this includes budgeting and preparing meals. This is enabling the child to develop their knowledge and the skills that will support them into adulthood.

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

The manager has not reviewed the suitability of both children living together, despite an increase of concerning incidents. This has impacted on the stability of a child in the home and has the potential to disrupt their progress.

The unpredictable behaviour of one child is placing the other child and staff at risk. Recent incidents have left staff physically harmed. Internal property has been damaged and police assistance has been required to maintain order. This has, at times, made both children feel unsafe.

Staff recording of incidents is often incomplete and/or not signed by the manager. This means it is unclear what action has been taken by the manager and staff following incidents. Additionally, it prevents Ofsted from being confident that the manager is reviewing all such incidents thoroughly.

The manager has not notified Ofsted in a timely manner of safeguarding incidents. This prevents Ofsted from being aware of incidents and the actions taken by managers to ensure children's safety.

The manager failed to evidence that the relevant checks were undertaken before a senior leader took a child out alone. Furthermore, the child's records contain conflicting information about the required staffing ratios. These omissions fail to safeguard children or staff.

The responses from managers and staff to incidents of concern is variable. Many incidents are managed effectively. However, incidents have occurred whereby children and staff have been unsafe. Risk assessments for children are not updated with current and/or known risks. This impedes staff in understanding what actions they should take to keep children safe.

The manager has not reviewed or updated the locality risk assessment, following incidents of concern in the local area. This missing information prevents staff from understanding the risks to children from the local area and taking steps to keep children safe.

The staff are proactive in trying to locate children if they go missing from care. Staff follow procedures and protocols and try to get children home safely. One parent described being reassured by the quick and decisive actions taken by staff.

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

The registered manager is working hard to establish a stable team, with a good balance of experience and skills. The team currently consists of experienced staff and those who are new to residential care. The manager ensures that staff undertake a wide range of training and she monitors this through a training matrix.

The manager is very visible and spends much of her time working with the children. While this is positive and enables her to work with children and support staff directly, it hampers her in completing her managerial tasks. This has caused delay in her review of incidents, to assure herself that staff managed these incidents safely. The manager and leadership team are developing plans to improve this.

Staff are positive about the manager. They praise her for being involved in the care of the children. Staff report that they can approach her and discuss matters on an informal basis. However, staff have not been receiving individual supervision in accordance with the supervision policy. This prevents staff from being able to reflect on their practice, on incidents, or their development. Additionally, those staff still in their probationary period have not been confirmed in post or been provided with an explanation why their probation is being extended.

The manager is supported by the responsible individual. The role of the responsible individual in relation to the home is unclear to staff, families and children. Likewise, the director is often present and clarity over these various roles has not been provided to staff, children or families.

The manager has a good awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. The manager has addressed these areas in the home's development plan. The statement of purpose for the home does not currently contain the required information to meet the regulation.

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 children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who— develop positive relationships with them; engage with them; and take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff— ascertain and consider each child's views, wishes and feelings, and balance these against what they judge to be in the child's best interests when making decisions about the child's care and welfare; help each child to express views, wishes and feelings; help each child to understand how the child's views, wishes and feelings have been taken into account and give the child reasons for decisions in relation to the child; regularly consult children, and seek their feedback, about the quality of the home's care. (Regulation 7 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)) This specifically relates to obtaining and acting on children's wishes and feelings, and actively engaging children in the day-to-day decision-making in the home.	04 September 2021

The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— mutual respect and trust; an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— meet each child's behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child's relevant plans; help each child to develop socially aware behaviour; encourage each child to take responsibility for the child's behaviour, in accordance with the child's age and understanding; help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone; communicate to each child expectations about the child's behaviour and ensure that the child understands those expectations in accordance with the child's age and understanding; help each child to understand, in a way that is appropriate according to the child's age and understanding, personal, sexual and social relationships, and how those relationships can be supportive or harmful; help each child to develop the understanding and skills to recognise or withdraw from a damaging, exploitative or harmful relationship; strive to gain each child's respect and trust; understand how children's previous experiences and present emotions can be communicated through behaviour and have the competence and skills to interpret these and develop positive relationships with children;	04 September 2021
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are provided with supervision and support to enable them to understand and manage their own feelings and responses to the behaviour and emotions of children, and to help children to do the same; de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children; understand and communicate to children that bullying is unacceptable; have the skills to recognise incidents or indications of bullying and how to deal with them. (Regulation 11(1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(viii)(ix)(x)(xi)(xii)(xiii)) This specifically relates to improving the relationships between children. Helping children to regulate their behaviours and emotions to improve behaviour.	
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;	04 September 2021

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. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(b)) This specifically relates to staff ensuring that children are effectively safeguarded. That staff work to the home's safeguarding policies and that the day-to-day care promotes children's safety and welfare.	
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— 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 work as a team where appropriate; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; 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. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(c)(f)) This specifically refers to the manager maintaining oversight of the home. That staff practice promotes children's welfare and that the staff team works together. The manager understands children's progress and any blocks to this progress, and takes effective action to put things right.	04 September 2021
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.	04 September 2021

(Regulation 16(1)) Specifically, providing the details of the staff team and their relevant experience and qualifications.	
The registered person must— ensure that each employee completes an appropriate induction; ensure that each permanent appointment of an employee is subject to the satisfactory completion of a period of probation; and provide each employee with a job description outlining the employee's responsibilities. (Regulation 33 (1)(a)(b)(c))	04 September 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; 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)) This specifically refers to the manager notifying Ofsted of any serious incident without delay.	04 September 2021

Recommendations

- The responsible individual should ensure that those in a leadership and/or management role must be visible and accessible to staff and able to deliver their leadership and/or management responsibilities. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 52, paragraph 10.7)
- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. In particular, ensure that records are completed fully with attention to detail and accuracy and overseen by the registered manager. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

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: 2614999

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: GAC Family Services Ltd

Registered provider address: Unit 29a, The Link, 49 Effra Road, London SW2 1BZ

Responsible individual: Mark Easie

Registered manager: Nicola Johnston

Inspector

Sonia Hay, Social Care Inspector

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