

2650950

Registered provider: Alternative Approach Care Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned by a small private company. The home's statement of purpose states that it provides care for up to two children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

The manager registered with Ofsted in October 2021.

Inspection dates: 27 and 28 July 2022

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: not applicable

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
Not previously inspected		

Inspection judgements

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

At the time of the inspection, there were two children living in the home. Children moving into the home are welcomed sensitively and in a planned way. However, one child recently left the home immediately following police intervention. Consequently, not all children have a positive experience of leaving the home.

Children's progress in education, health and well-being is variable. One child has excellent attendance and has made good progress. However, this has not been evidenced for all children. Staff support children in registering for universal health services. However, not all children have engaged with health professionals and have therefore not attended relevant appointments. As a result, not all children are achieving positive outcomes.

The staff team promotes the importance of family time. Children have regular time with people who are important to them, in line with their plans. Staff have been proactive in rebuilding relationships with family members to provide support to the children. The children feel valued and maintain a sense of belonging.

Children in the home feel listened to. Staff encourage children to discuss their wishes and feelings, and children say that they trust staff. Regular discussions take place in the form of direct work sessions and group discussions, which are well recorded. Children living in the home feel respected and cared for.

Children who are moving on to independence are well supported. Moves are planned and take place gradually. Visits are arranged to new properties and children are supported to move their belongings. One child said, 'Staff have helped me learn how to cook and wash clothes.' As a result, children feel confident and able to live independently.

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

Safeguarding practices in the home need to be strengthened. Children living in the home say that they feel safe; however, improvements are required in safeguarding practices.

Staff are not adequately trained to keep the children safe. Staff have a good understanding of the children's identified risks. However, there are gaps in staff training, specifically child sexual exploitation, online safety and mental health awareness. Children are not adequately supported by suitably skilled staff to help them manage their complex needs.

Positive behaviour is not consistently promoted. There have been occasions where staff have been unable to de-escalate a child's behaviours effectively. As a result, staff found it necessary to call the police to help manage some incidents in the home.

Some missing-from-care risk assessments are not clear and specific. Although staff are knowledgeable of the actions they should take, these are not adequately recorded. Children are not sufficiently protected from harm. Furthermore, children have not consistently received return home interviews following incidents when they have gone missing. When these interviews have taken place, the recording is often confusing and unclear.

Recruitment procedures and practices are safe and effective. All staff are checked and vetted prior to starting work. These checks ensure that only suitable adults are employed to work with children in the home.

Staff are suitably trained in administration and recording of medication. There is safe storage of medication. Furthermore, when it has been necessary to complete room searches, these have been respectively carried out and recorded appropriately.

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

The home is led by a suitable registered manager who is currently working towards her level 5 management qualification. There is a stable staff team that has been in place since the home opened. The manager and staff care for the children. Inspectors observed warm and caring interactions between the children, staff and manager. As a result, children are receiving continuity of care and feel cared for by those around them.

The manager's monitoring systems require improvement. Not all staff have been trained in specific issues relating to children living in the home. There are identified gaps in attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, identity and specific health needs. Furthermore, the review of the quality of care report does not include feedback from the children and there is no action plan in place to show where improvements are to be made.

Care planning arrangements for children moving into the home are not sufficiently robust. Impact assessments are poor. They lack evaluation and do not demonstrate that the staff team has the skills, knowledge and ability to manage the risks presented. Additionally, the manager has not considered the impact of other children and the matching of their needs. As a result, children's placements have ended in an unplanned manner and positive outcomes for all have not been achieved.

Complaints have not been handled effectively, despite the provider having a complaints procedure. When a third party made a complaint, leaders and managers did not record their response and the outcome of the complaint was unclear.

Therefore, it is not evidenced that complaints are being fully investigated and that learning from them is identified.

The manager has failed to notify Ofsted of all serious incidents in the home. There have been two occasions where emergency services were called to manage children's behaviours and no notifications were received. This prevents the home's regulator from monitoring safeguarding practice, which weakens children's welfare and safety.

The manager ensures that the staff team is supported. Staff report that they find the manager approachable and supportive. Regular good-quality supervision sessions and team meetings take place. Professionals have provided positive feedback about the manager's commitment to the children they are caring for.

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; 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; 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. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(v)(vi)(vii)(b)) This specifically relates to ensuring that there are detailed risk assessments in place for when children go missing from the home which contain all necessary information and guidance for staff to follow. Additionally, ensure that all staff have the necessary skills to safeguard children effectively.	2 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— 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; 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; 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; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. This specifically relates to ensuring that all staff have the appropriate training to meet all the children's needs. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(h))	2 September 2022
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and 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—	2 September 2022

that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home's statement of purpose; that arrangements are in place to— ensure the effective induction of each child into the home; manage and review the placement of each child in the home; and plan for, and help, each child to prepare to leave the home or to move into adult care in a way that is consistent with arrangements agreed with the child's placing authority; that each child's relevant plans are followed. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(i)(ii)(iii)(c)) This specifically relates to ensuring that robust impact assessments are carried out and that a careful matching process is in place which is clearly demonstrated with the child's plans.	
The registered person must ensure that a record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of any investigation. (Regulation 39 (3))	2 September 2022
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 any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(a)(b)(e))	2 September 2022
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality of care review") at least once every 6 months.	2 September 2022

In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating—

the quality of care provided for children;

the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and

any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. (Regulation 45 (1) (2)(a)(b)(c))

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that all records are accurate. Rotas should include when staff are on leave as well as all actual hours worked by staff in the home. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)
- The registered person should ensure that all children receive the opportunity to have an independent return home interview and that the interview is clearly recorded. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)

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: 2650950

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Alternative Approach Care Limited

Registered provider address: 228 Rice Lane, Liverpool L9 1DJ

Responsible individual: Michael Jeffs

Registered manager: Veronica Dodd

Inspectors

Judith Birchall, Social Care Inspector

Rose Maddocks, Social Care Inspector

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