

2696593

Registered provider: Absolute Children's Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and run by a private organisation. It provides care for up to four children who may experience social and emotional difficulties. Two children were living at the home at the time of the inspection.

The manager registered with Ofsted in November 2022 and is suitably qualified.

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 April 2023

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 previously inspected

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: not applicable

Inspection judgements

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

Shortfalls in the help and protection of children and the effectiveness of leaders and managers have affected the overall experience and progress of the children. This is a new home that is experiencing some changes in the staff team, and the result is that the care provided by this home is not yet consistently good enough.

Initially, staff were able to support the children with their care needs, and the children were making progress. Currently, children are spending a great deal of time in their bedrooms. Some children stay up all night and do not wake up during the day. This leaves them without stable routines. Staff are persistent in their attempts to support the children to engage in a range of positive experiences, but this proves difficult at times.

Children living in the home said they do not feel they have been able to build trusting relationships with staff yet. Staff care about the children and are trying to build relationships with them. Some staff know and understand the children's needs well, while others are still getting to know the children. The children would benefit from additional opportunities to develop these important relationships.

Staff support the children to attend any appointments and encourage them to be as healthy as possible. However, staff have experienced challenges in being able to consistently support some children to access specialist appointments. This means some children have not had their health needs met.

Children are provided with home tuition sessions as staff are not consistently able to support them to access education. Staff value the importance of education, and one child has made progress. One education professional said that staff support the child during sessions and ensure the child has all the required equipment they need. The children would benefit from having appropriate educational placements provided that meet their educational needs.

Staff support children to have activity plans and encourage the children to access safe, age-appropriate activities. This offers the children opportunities to build their confidence.

Children are welcomed into the home in a supportive and planned way. The home is very well presented and well maintained.

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

Staff are not consistently implementing strategies in line with the children's plans. Several incidents have escalated, resulting in children harming staff. This has resulted in staff requesting support from the police to manage children's unwanted behaviours. This means that children are not consistently supported and are at risk of causing harm to themselves and others, resulting in potential criminalisation.

Physical interventions are minimal, and not all staff are trained in accordance with children's risk assessments. This means children are not effectively supported during times of crisis and in line with their care plans.

Children's risk assessments and plans are clear regarding concerns and are regularly reviewed. Managers have taken the decision to end one child's placement due to their complex needs.

When children go missing from this home, protocols are in place to ensure that all professionals are notified. Staff take actions to find children in line with advice from the police. The manager has a good understanding of the associated risks when children are missing from the home and ensures that relevant professionals are aware of potential risks.

Staff offer children key-work support and meet with them to discuss important issues. However, staff do not consistently offer support in line with children's care plans and associated risks such as criminal and sexual exploitation and online safety.

Staff support the children to develop their independence skills. Children can spend safe, planned time away from the home with friends. This means children can safely work towards building their life skills and maintaining their identity.

Staff use rewards to help support children's positive behaviours. This means children are encouraged to be proud of their achievements.

Investigations into allegations are shared with the appropriate authorities. The registered manager ensures that any child who makes an allegation is taken seriously and has someone independent to talk to.

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

The home is run by a permanent and qualified registered manager. The manager is committed and has ambitious visions for the home. Shortfalls in the effectiveness of leadership and management have been impacted by the challenges associated with having a new staff team. Because of this, the registered manager has been required to offer direct care to the children. This has resulted in important management tasks slipping.

Management monitoring systems are effective in tracking events and incidents but have not been successful in continuously reviewing the quality of care provided. This includes supporting staff to consistently implement children's individual risk assessments and plans.

Some staff have not had essential training. This means they are not able to fully meet children's needs and deliver the care detailed in the home's statement of purpose. The registered manager arranges for suitably trained staff from another home to be part of the children's care team. This impacts on the consistency of care offered to the children. One professional said, '[Name of child] doesn't manage well with change and has been introduced to lots of staff. They were initially introduced to all new carers, then experienced changes of staff because some staff have not received appropriate training.'

The registered manager ensures all safeguarding concerns are reported to the appropriate authorities. The registered manager is proactive in recruiting for vacancies. Staff also have appropriate induction activities in place.

Staff talk positively about the support offered by the registered manager. The registered manager has promoted an environment where staff feel supported. One member of staff said, 'I feel very supported by my colleagues and also by the registered manager, who will often go above and beyond her role to support the team and the children.'

The registered manager and staff have developed positive working relationships with social workers, professionals and families. The quality of communication and the commitment of the registered manager were both consistent themes among the professionals. One social worker said that the registered manager provides 'good leadership to the team'.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered persons must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards'. The registered persons 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; and have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; 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)(b))	26 May 2023
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— 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; and	26 May 2023

ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child. (Regulation 13 (1) (2)(a)(c)(e)) In particular, the registered persons should ensure that staff have the required training and provide continuity of care in line with children's individual care plans.	
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 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; and help each child to develop the understanding and skills to recognise or withdraw from a damaging, exploitative or harmful relationship. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)(vi)(vii))	26 May 2023
The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— promote opportunities for each child to learn informally; and raise any need for further assessment or specialist provision in relation to a child with the child's education or training provider and the child's placing authority. (Regulation 8 (1) (2)(a)(v)(vii))	26 May 2023

In particular, the registered persons should take action and make ongoing arrangements to support children to have appropriate educational placements and have a process in place to challenge unnecessary delays with appropriate agencies.	
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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: 2696593

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Absolute Children's Services Limited

Registered provider address: 98 Grove Street, Leek ST13 8DU

Responsible individual: Derrell Crump

Registered manager: Candiece Brown

Inspector

Gina Lightfoot, Social Care Inspector

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