

2697062

Registered provider: Almond Care Children's Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned by an independent provider. It is registered to provide care for one child with social and emotional difficulties, physical or learning disabilities or mental health difficulties.

The manager is suitably qualified and experienced.

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 June 2023

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: not applicable

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: not applicable

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
Not previously inspected		

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The child lives in a home that is spacious and homely. The child has been supported to choose decoration in their bedroom that reflects their interests and personality. Some of the child's belongings, particularly gaming equipment, are kept in the shared living space of the house. This encourages the child to spend time with staff and enables staff to monitor their use of the internet. The upstairs hallway decoration is a little tired and would benefit from some redecoration.

Staff prioritise the child's education. Managers and staff have worked collaboratively with education providers to develop an engaging and bespoke package of education for the child. The child is now accessing a formal education setting for the first time and there are clear plans for their full-time attendance.

Complex health conditions are understood and managed well by the staff. Tailored training is offered quickly to new members of staff. Their competency in administering controlled drugs is approved and reviewed by a qualified health professional. Clear protocols and support enable staff to feel confident in meeting the child's health needs. As a result, the child's complex health conditions have stabilised since living at the home. One storage fridge for medication has a broken lock and there is a risk that the child's medication cannot be accessed.

Staff encourage the child to have age-appropriate independence skills, supporting them to administer their own medication. Staff help the child to make informed choices about their health condition and to understand the potential consequences of the decisions they make. Therefore, the child is being meaningfully prepared for adulthood.

The child's past experiences are well understood by staff. They recognise the child's social isolation and are proactive in engaging them in activities and clubs in the community. Regular key-work sessions are building trusting relationships between the child and staff and the child's confidence to interact with their peers is growing. Managers and staff are encouraging the child to access activities and facilities in the community, which is developing their confidence.

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

Staff have created an environment where the child enjoys spending time engaging with them. Warm relationships mean that staff can engage the child even during incidents of complex behaviour. As a result, there have been no incidents of the child going missing from care or physical restraint at the home.

The manager leads by example, encouraging staff to have a therapeutically informed approach with the child. Staff are encouraged to understand behaviour as a way of communicating and to be empathetic towards the child. The child's mental health is

prioritised, and they are given multiple ways to express their emotions and process their experiences. The child is benefiting from talking therapy with a clinical psychologist and a mentor.

Comprehensive plans enable staff to understand the child's behaviours and how to address them. Risks are dynamically assessed, and plans are regularly updated to reflect the needs of the child and current strategies to work with them. However, care plans are not always concise, and it can be difficult to establish which information is current.

The manager has been proactive in holistically understanding the child's recent complex behaviour, ruling out any potential health-related cause. Incidents are comprehensively recorded and have good manager reflection. This helps staff to understand the causes of certain behaviours and to plan more effectively for the child.

The manager communicates with external professionals following incidents but does not always notify Ofsted. Similarly, reports from the home's own independent visitor to the home have not consistently been received by Ofsted in a timely manner. This prevents the regulator from having oversight of events in the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home benefits from strong leadership from a committed registered manager and deputy manager. They are strong leaders who lead by example, having both developed a warm and nurturing relationship with the child. Staff feel well supported and able to approach the managers for advice. Regular team meetings allow for staff to learn from each other and to have shared aspirations for the child. Staff said that they enjoy working at the home.

Staff receive comprehensive training when they join the team. This develops their confidence and understanding of the child's needs. There are regular supervision meetings between staff and their manager. These allow for discussion about the child and about staff's personal welfare. Staff feel valued by management and are quickly enrolled onto the relevant course to achieve the necessary qualifications. Managers are keen to develop their staff and delegate appropriately. This builds a consistent approach within the home and a supportive culture within the team.

Management oversight of documentation is consistently good. The manager works in a strength-based way, offering staff balanced advice that improves their understanding and practice. The manager understands the need to track the child's progress and has several processes by which he audits the home. Consequently, the child's significant progress is evidenced. The manager remains ambitious for the child, recognising their potential to succeed. Achievable targets help to structure and guide the staff's work with the child.

There are robust checks in place to ensure health and safety within the home. However, the child has not participated in the regular fire drills at the home, which could put them at risk of harm if there is a fire.

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 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 particularly refers to an incident that the registered manager agreed should have been sent as a notification to Ofsted.	23 June 2023
The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month. The independent person must provide a copy of the independent person's report to— HMCI. (Regulation 44 (1) (7)(a)) This specifically refers to independent visitor reports not being received by HMCI every month.	23 June 2023

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff provide a nurturing environment that is welcoming and supportive, and which provides appropriate boundaries in relation to the child's behaviour. The home must also meet the child's basic day-to-day needs and physical necessities. Staff should seek to meet the child's basic needs in the way that a good parent would, recognising that many children in residential care have experienced environments where these needs have not been consistently met – doing so is an important aspect of demonstrating that the staff care for the child and value them as an individual. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.7)
- The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping, and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Staff should record information on the child in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)
- The registered person should ensure that staff take reasonable precautions and make informed professional judgements, based on the individual child's needs and developmental stage, about when to allow a child to take a particular risk or follow a particular course of action. Staff should discuss the decision with the child's placing authority where appropriate. If a child makes a choice that would place them or another person at significant risk of harm, staff should assist them to understand the risks and manage their risk-taking behaviour to keep themselves and others safe. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.7)
- The registered person should ensure that they make suitable arrangements to manage, administer and dispose of any medication. These are fundamentally the same sorts of arrangements that a good parent would make but are subject to additional safeguards. Where the home has questions or concerns about a child's medication, they should approach an expert such as a general medical practitioner, community pharmacist or designated nurse for looked-after children. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.15)

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: 2697062

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Almond Care Children's Services Limited

Registered provider address: Eliot Park Innovation Centre, 4 Barling Way,
Nuneaton CV10 7RH

Responsible individual: Julia Senah

Registered manager: Luke Buckle

Inspectors

Louise Copping, Social Care Inspector

Helen Gronhaug, Social Care Inspector

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