

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	22/08/2016
Unique reference number	SC423617
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Acorn Children's Homes Limited
Responsible individual	Waheed Ashiq
Registered manager	Post vacant
Inspector	Pete Hylton

Inspection date	22/08/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Inadequate
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Requires improvement
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.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Inadequate

SC423617

Summary of findings

The children's home provision requires improvement because:

- The home has been without a manager registered with Ofsted since January 2016.
- Staff do not capture key information required to promote young people's safety and well-being. This means that risk management plans lack sufficient detail to support young people's day-to-day care.
- Young people's care plans do not consistently provide for comprehensive, detailed or integrated care.
- Protocols for responding to incidents of missing do not include the need for young people to access an independent interview following their return.
- Not all staff hold all relevant level qualifications as required.

The children's home strengths

- Young people benefit from working with a stable and consistent staff team. This means that they develop suitable relationships with others.
- Young people are involved in decisions about their care. Their views and opinions shape the ongoing development of the home.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that must be taken so that the registered person/s meet(s) 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
12. The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standard, with particular reference to the safety of young people, the registered person must ensure (2)(b) 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.	31/10/2016
14. The care planning standard In order to meet the care planning standard, the registered person must ensure that children (1)(a) receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home.	31/10/2016
The registered person may only employ an individual to work at the children's home if the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform. An individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification if, by the relevant date, the individual has attained the level 3 diploma for residential childcare (England) ('the level 3 diploma') or a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the level 3 diploma. (Regulation 32(2)(a)(3)(b)(4)(a)(b))	31/10/2016

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further, the service should take account of the following recommendation:

- Ensure that when a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority provides 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)

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home provides care for up to three young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home is operated by a private company.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25/04/2016	Full	Inadequate
11/12/2015	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
14/10/2015	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Requires improvement
This home was inspected in April 2016 and judged to be inadequate. 19 requirements were made at this time and subsequently judged as being met when the home had a monitoring visit in June 2016. This inspection has found that some improvement has been sustained. As a result, young people are now living in a home that better meets their needs and promotes their safety, well-being and outcomes. There remain some areas in need of improvement. The home has been without a registered manager since January 2016. Risk-assessment processes continue to steadily improve, but there remain areas of shortfall. Similarly, young people do not benefit from clearly defined plans for developing their skills and readiness for adulthood. Not all staff are trained to the required level. Young people are settled in the home. The staff team is largely unchanged and this continues to provide stability and familiarity in the home. As a result, relationships between staff and young people are positive. For some young people, there has been marked progress in their relationships with staff in the home. This is because staff have worked hard in providing routine, clear expectations and clear boundaries. As a result, young people are developing positive attachments with adults in the home. This is reflected in key-working sessions, in which young people are able to discuss a range of matters affecting their lives. Young people feel listened to and respected and that their views matter. Relationships between young people are overall developing positively. When tensions occur between young people, the staff team quickly and effectively intervene. Staff positively role model harmonious ways of living together and young people are encouraged, and supported, to discuss their feelings and views. This is further enhanced through regular key-working sessions that now follow a structure and are regularly reviewed. However, there remains a lack of cohesion in young people's care plans. For example, the manager has introduced new plans for young people, but these lack specific objectives or any indication of how these will be measured or delivered. Young people are developing a sense of self-identity and expressing themselves with more confidence. This is an improvement since the inspection in April 2016. For example, young people are appropriately challenged about any prejudiced views and are encouraged to learn about different cultures and customs. The diversity of the staff team is positively discussed with young people, and young people are developing their awareness, and tolerance, of each other. The staff team is clearly motivated, and this has led to improvements in young people's	

access to the local community. For example, young people now enjoy a range of hobbies and interests, including fishing, swimming and socialising with friends. Similarly, young people are better engaged in education and for those young people who have previously been without a school place, the situation is now resolved. There are clear plans in place for September 2016, and young people are now better encouraged to develop their academic progress.

Young people's health needs are appropriately met. Medication is safely administered, and regular audits of young people's medication ensure that any mistakes are swiftly rectified. Young people are appropriately supported in accessing further services of support, should these be required.

The home is well presented, and recent redecoration has enhanced the environment. Young people are encouraged to personalise their bedrooms, and the communal areas of the home reflect the decor choices of young people. This ensures that young people feel that they have ownership in the home and that the environment is one where they feel comfortable. A parent commented, 'The home is very clean and has a calm atmosphere.'

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
Young people are safe and feel safe in the home. Incidents of challenging behaviour are rare, and, since the last inspection, there have been no significant incidents in the home. Young people do not go missing or engage in other forms of risk-taking behaviour. Protocols for responding to incidents of missing are in place. However, these protocols do not detail all procedures to follow in the event of a young person going missing. For example, the independent interview with the young person is not mentioned in the home's policies. There is the potential, should a young person go missing, that the full procedure is not correctly adhered to. There is, to date, no demonstrable impact on the outcomes for young people. There has been no use of physical restraint since the last inspection. Recording systems remain appropriate, and staff are trained in the home's chosen method of intervention, should physical restraint be necessary. Similarly, the use of sanctions is also rare. Since the last inspection, there has been one appropriate sanction given. Young people are praised for displaying socially acceptable behaviour and are given age-appropriate rewards. This promotes a culture where young people are learning socially appropriate behaviours and, in doing so, are reducing their	

challenging behaviour.

Risk assessment has improved since the April 2016 inspection. Staff are now clearer about the potential risks and vulnerabilities that young people may face. However, when concerns are noted in direct work with young people, these are not always reflected in up-to-date risk assessments. This means that key information is not captured in young people's risk management plans.

Fire safety is appropriately promoted in the home. Regular checks of fire equipment are in place, and young people take part in regular fire drills. Similarly, health and safety checks are regularly completed and any shortfalls quickly identified and rectified. As a result, young people live in a home that is safely maintained.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Inadequate
The organisation has taken positive steps to improve the home following the April 2016 and June 2016 inspections. There are now improved monitoring systems in place, and a newly appointed consultant manager is overseeing the work of the manager. Furthermore, the manager is in the process of applying for registration with Ofsted. The manager has a good understanding of the previous shortfalls, and has ensured that appropriate actions have been taken to meet all identified regulations. However, the home has been without a registered manager since January 2016. The majority of staff are appropriately trained, although one member of staff, who has worked in the home since 2012, is yet to complete the required qualification at level 3. Staff are up to date with their core training, including child protection, fire safety, food safety and physical intervention. This means that staff who possess the relevant skills and knowledge care for young people. New staff have joined the home since the last inspection. Recruitment processes are appropriate, and all required checks are made prior to their working in the home. The induction process for new staff has been improved, and new staff are now better prepared for working with young people. All staff are now better supervised and are encouraged to discuss their practice and developmental needs. The manager ensures that young people's views are sought, recorded and acted on. There have been no complaints since the last inspection, and regular feedback from young people, parents and placing services is positive. This is used to identify areas of strength and potential areas to develop. For example, when young people have expressed a desire to complete voluntary work, this has been actively sought and arranged. As a result, the manager is developing a service that is responsive to	

the needs, views and wishes of young people.

The statement of purpose is up to date and contains all required information. Similarly, the home's development plan is comprehensive and clearly, sets out what further improvements are needed to ensure that the home provides a good level of care.

The staff team is clearly managed and is accountable for key tasks and responsibilities. Regular visits to the home by an independent person note that improvements are being made. These visits support the organisation in quality checking its service.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of children looked after is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place. However, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or that result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference that adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service 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'.

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