

2588753

Registered provider: Acorn Homes (UK) Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home provides care for up to six children who may experience social, emotional and/or mental health difficulties. The home is run by a private organisation that operates several registered children's homes.

This home has not had a registered manager since 8 March 2021.

Inspection dates: 10 to 11 August 2022

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 requires improvement to be good

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

Date of last inspection: 9 June 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection:

On 11 June 2021, a restriction of accommodation notice and three compliance notices were issued. At a monitoring visit on 14 July 2021, it was found that two of the compliance notices had not been met. On 16 July 2021, an urgent notice to suspend the home's registration was issued. On 27 July 2021, a notice of proposal to cancel the home's registration was issued. This did not proceed to a notice of decision to suspend the home's registration. On 7 October 2021, a further notice of suspension of the home's registration was issued. This period of suspension was lifted on 7 December 2021.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
09/06/2021	Full	Inadequate

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

At the time of this inspection, there were no children living at the home and no staff working there. The inspection was facilitated by the responsible individual and the organisation's area manager. Since Ofsted undertook a monitoring visit to the home in December 2021, one child has been admitted. This child lived at the home between February and the middle of April 2022. A child from another of the organisation's homes stayed at this home for two periods of three days and eleven days respectively, in June 2022, but was not formally admitted to the home.

Despite some initial difficulties, the child who was admitted formed positive relationships with some of the staff. These staff worked creatively to support the child to settle at the home despite the child expressing the view that the home was not a suitable placement. Over time, the staff demonstrated increasing commitment to ensuring that the child's voice was being heard, and an independent advocate was subsequently allocated to the child.

A strong emphasis was placed on supporting the child to access mental health support. This resulted in the child receiving increased levels of therapeutic intervention. The organisation provided an initial assessment of needs, and an interim manager at the home was able to engage the child in individual work focused on maintaining a safe and healthy lifestyle.

Managers and staff liaised with education professionals to secure appropriate educational support for the child. This resulted in some engagement from the child, which was a positive step forward.

Despite there being early indications that the child was benefiting from some aspects of the care being provided, leaders and managers concluded that the staff would ultimately not be able to ensure the child's safety.

The child who stayed temporarily at the home became more settled during these periods, although the staff who worked with the child are not those who will be working at the home in the future.

The home provides a comfortable, homely environment. The children's bedrooms are suitably maintained and well furnished.

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

The needs and vulnerabilities of the child were understood by the staff. Thorough planning took place to maximise the potential for preventing the child coming to harm. This planning did not always have the positive outcomes that were being sought, but there were indications that the child was becoming safer following their move to the home.

The child developed a positive, trusting relationship with the home manager and this became a strong protective factor. The manager facilitated high-quality key-work meetings with the child which were focused on raising the child's awareness of harmful relationships and supporting the child to keep themselves safe. A sensitive approach was taken to challenging misconceptions regarding the severity of the risks the child may experience in the community.

There have been some shortfalls in the standard of risk management. For example, stronger efforts could have been made to identify an unsafe address where the child may have visited, and there was no record of the steps taken in response to the child implying that they would cause the vehicle they were travelling in to crash. There was also a shortfall in the risk assessment for the child who lived in the home temporarily, as it did not anticipate how the staff would safely use physical intervention techniques if this became necessary, as it did on one occasion.

Other aspects of risk management have been stronger and more effective. The safety plan for the child was thorough and provided staff with detailed guidance on how to reduce the risk of the child coming to harm.

There was a coordinated response to the child going missing from the home. The staff were tenacious in their efforts to maintain contact with the child during episodes of going missing. Consequently, the staff were often able to speak to the child, although they were not in the home. This enabled the staff to assess, to some degree, the well-being of the child and their likely whereabouts. This information was then shared with the relevant safeguarding professionals.

Communication with external agencies has been good. Child protection procedures were followed when new information indicated that the child may have come to harm, and the manager sought regular updates on how the concerns were being addressed. In one case, the advice given by the child's social worker, following a child protection referral being made, had not been recorded.

The recruitment interview process has recently been reviewed and some amendments have been made. This has strengthened practice in relation to ensuring that unsuitable adults are not employed in the home.

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

Since Ofsted carried out a monitoring visit to the home in December 2021, two managers have left the home. An interim manager from another of the organisation's homes also managed the home for a short time during this period. The day-to-day management of the home is now being undertaken temporarily by the organisation's area manager while more permanent arrangements are being explored.

The process for admitting children to the home has not been effective. Managers or staff did not have a conversation with the child before the child moved into the home and no attempts were made to visit the child before the move. Consequently, the child did not have the opportunity to speak to anyone from the home about the reservations they had about the move. Had this conversation taken place, the managers would have been able to make a more informed decision regarding the appropriateness of the proposed admission.

The child who stayed at the home on two occasions was not formally admitted to the home, the responsible individual describing the arrangement as a period of 'respite, short break or a holiday'. The child's time living at the home is not recorded in the home's register of children. However, a child moving into a registered children's home constitutes an admission.

Leaders and managers have identified a group of staff who are all currently working in different children's homes run by the organisation. It is intended that these staff will transfer to this home in the coming weeks. There is an appropriate level of collective experience and knowledge in this proposed staff team, although most have not undertaken any training relating to alcohol and substance misuse. The staff have not yet met as a team. It is therefore not possible, at this time, to analyse how the team will work collaboratively to meet the needs of children moving into the home.

There are established procedures for monitoring the quality of care being provided at the home. These were implemented in practice during the period the child was living at the home. Reflection has taken place regarding the breakdown of the child's placement. The responsible individual acknowledged that the reflection process would have been strengthened by taking a wider view of the circumstances relating to the child's time at the home.

The staff working at the home when the child was living there received good-quality, regular supervision. The requirement made at the monitoring visit in December 2021, relating to staff supervision, has therefore been fully met.

Leaders and managers strive to maintain professional working relationships with local authority staff. The previous interim manager and the responsible individual have made appropriate representations to local authority staff and managers when they have perceived other professionals to not be working in the best interests of children.

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
<p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff—</p> <p>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. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i))</p>	<p>26 September 2022</p>
<p>The care planning standard is that children—</p> <p>receive effectively planned care in or through the children’s home; and</p> <p>have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that arrangements are in place to—</p> <p>ensure the effective induction of each child into the home. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(i))</p>	<p>26 September 2022</p>
<p>The registered provider must appoint a person to manage the children’s home if—</p> <p>there is no registered manager in respect of the home; and</p> <p>the registered provider—</p> <p>is an organisation or a partnership;</p> <p>does not satisfy regulation 28; or</p>	<p>26 September 2022</p>

<p>is not, or does not intend to be, in day-to-day charge of the home. (Regulation 27 (1)(a)(b)(i)(ii)(iii))</p>	
<p>Schedule 4 sets out the other information that the registered person must keep in relation to a children’s home.</p> <p>The registered person must—</p> <p>maintain in the home the records in Schedule 4;</p> <p>ensure that the records are kept up to date. (Regulation 37 (1) (2)(a)(b))</p> <p>This is with specific reference to ensuring that children who live at the home are formally admitted and their details are recorded in the home’s register of children.</p>	<p>26 September 2022</p>

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs. This is with specific reference to ensuring that staff receive training in relation to drug and alcohol misuse. (‘Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards’, page 53, paragraph 10.11)
- 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. The is with specific reference to ensuring that child protection records specify the content of discussions with the relevant safeguarding professionals. (‘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: 2588753

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Acorn Homes (UK) Ltd

Registered provider address: Unit 73 And 74 Maple Leaf Business Park,
Manston, Ramsgate CT12 5GD

Responsible individual: Keith Riley

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Stephen Collett, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022