

Acorn Independence

Registered provider: Acorn Independence Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this supported accommodation provider

This service is owned and managed by a private provider. It can accommodate up to 18 children in ring-fenced shared accommodation.

At the time of the inspection, the service was providing accommodation for 15 looked-after children and care leavers aged 16 and 17.

The service manager registered with Ofsted in February 2025. The provider registered in July 2024.

Inspection dates: 4 and 5 June 2025

The inspection was announced on 2 June 2025 and started that day. The inspector was on site on 4 and 5 June 2025.

Outcome

Consistently strong service delivery leads to typically positive experiences and progress for children. Where improvements are needed, leaders and managers take timely and effective action.

Summary of findings

Children are supported by staff who know them well. Leaders and managers show a particular strength in ensuring that children are happy and settled living alongside other children. As a result, most children do very well from their starting points. They achieve individual goals and make progress that prepares them for living independently.

Effective action is taken to help children learn to become safer and develop resilience. Children develop their independence skills and have made the accommodation their home.

Leaders and managers acknowledge the developments that are required to improve the quality of support plans and risk assessments and to ensure that the voice of the child is captured in these documents.

Overall experiences and progress of children

Children are supported by staff who know them well. Staff assist children in attending appointments and meetings, indicating progress for those children who have previously struggled to engage with health professionals. Professionals are overwhelmingly positive about children's support and relationships with the staff.

Records capture the support that staff provide to children to encourage and motivate them to engage with learning opportunities or employment. It is acknowledged that some progress has been made in assisting children who have not attended school for several years to resume their learning. This means that most children are accessing education or learning. There is good evidence that the provider has appropriately challenged and escalated the situation for children who have faced barriers to further education.

Children's support plans generally outline how they should learn to budget and eat healthily, and they capture the progress most children make and the skills they develop. Children are aware of their plans, but some lack evidence of how the child has influenced the actual support plan and associated risk assessment. Leaders and managers recognise that more needs to be done to ensure that all children actively participate in their plans as well as provide staff with clear strategies for improving behaviour. For example, for one child, the support plans do not specify how staff will reduce the child's unhealthy reliance on takeaway foods.

Children live in homes that provide them with all the essential items they need to learn how to live independently. Children say they are happy with their personalised bedrooms. Communal areas are welcoming and homely, and they provide children with places to relax and socialise.

How well children are helped and protected

The children speak positively about their experiences of living in the houses. Professionals echo children's feedback that they feel safe and overall happy. There are warm and friendly interactions between the staff and the children.

Incidents of children going missing are rare. When absences occur, the provider quickly responds and supports the child's safe return to the house. Welfare checks are carried out, and staff use them to help prevent any future incidents.

When children are upset or worried, they are supported by staff who know them well and can reassure them. Overall, risk assessments provide staff with strategies for reducing risk and improving behaviour. However, some are generic and do not sufficiently detail how staff will reduce risks, such as when a child is at risk of criminal exploitation or when a child's physical health is at risk from consuming high quantities of takeaway processed food.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

Leaders and managers are suitably skilled and experienced. They have high aspirations for children and want to ensure that they succeed. They are aware of the areas that continue to require development, and they recognise that more work is required to ensure that children's plans and risk assessments are improved.

Since the organisation registered in July 2024, there has been a steady improvement in the number of children engaging in education and employment. Statistically, children who stay with the organisation for longer do well. Unplanned endings are not a feature of concern, suggesting most placements remain stable and most endings are planned.

Staff are child centred and resilient, with diverse professional backgrounds and personal experiences. Staff are positive about the quality of management support, and they value the daily handovers, regular formal supervision sessions and peer support. Mandatory and bespoke training is provided, which helps to inform staff knowledge and practice. Staff said that they feel listened to. For example, when they identified a training need that would help them support children more effectively, managers were quick to act and source this training.

Professionals are extremely complimentary towards the organisation. The stability, security and support children receive are highly praised in the feedback. Communication is noted as excellent; staff are kind and welcoming. One professional noted that regular updates on incidents are non-judgemental and have a supportive approach towards the child. Children's feelings of safety have contributed to the progress they are reported to be making towards independence.

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