

2529331

Registered provider: Assure Care Homes Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home cares for up to five children. The home's statement of purpose states that it provides care for children with learning disabilities, including children with autism spectrum disorder and other associated diagnoses.

The home has been without a manager since 5 February 2021.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

We last visited this setting on 17 December 2020 to carry out an assurance visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 August 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
---	--

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers	inadequate
---	------------

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

This inspection was brought forward to address specific concerns received by Ofsted. The inspector considered the actions taken by the setting in response to the concerns raised, alongside other evidence available at the time of the inspection visit.

Changes in the management team have led to shortfalls in the management oversight at the home. This has undermined the overall quality and experience of care for some of the children, particularly in relation to keeping some children safe.

Children enjoy spending time with staff and have fun in their company. The staff provide child-centred care and support which has a positive impact on their lives. Relationships between the staff and the children are respectful and accepting.

Staff provide the children with encouragement and opportunities to voice their views and feelings. This includes planning of menus and choosing activities but is extended to cover wider matters. For example, the children contribute to the staff recruitment process. Consequently, the children learn to recognise that they can positively influence the world around them, and they feel valued and listened to.

Staff ensure that the children's educational needs are identified and effectively promoted. Staff work creatively to encourage and support the children to sustain or regain, their confidence in education. This is evident in the excellent results that the children sitting exams received this summer.

Children are supported to keep in touch with family, friends, and other people who are significant to them. The open and inclusive culture at the home helps to remove stigma and supports family and other important relationships to develop, in line with the children's plans and their wishes.

The children enjoy a homely, child-centred and warm environment. The home is spacious, clean and tidy. However, some parts of the home are a little tired. For example, the stairway carpet and some walls require repainting.

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

Some aspects of safeguarding are managed well. However, in one serious incident, staff did not follow the child's safety plan. As a result, the child's distress worsened. This may have contributed to the serious safeguarding incident that then occurred.

Staff learning from serious incidents, such as children dangerously attempting to access a nearby motorway, has not sufficiently informed future risk planning. Initial matching assessments do not sufficiently reflect the significant level of risk posed to some children with specific vulnerabilities.

Staff have not amended the home's location risk assessment to consider emerging risks, following incidents. In addition, the location risk assessment lacks local knowledge of current trends relating to gangs, radicalisation and exploitation. This means that the manager and staff are not able to fully evaluate risks beyond the home.

Children said they felt safe living at the home. Interactions observed between the staff and the children were open, warm and friendly. Staff and managers promote an inclusive culture in the home. This helps the children to explore their individuality and develop a positive self-view.

Staff support the children to develop independence and life skills in preparation for adult life, at a pace right for them. For one child, this has involved the staff breaking down skills into small steps, to enable her to become confident to buy milk at a local shop. Staff take time in teaching all the children cooking and food preparation skills. The informal teaching of cooking, budgeting and planning helps the children learn responsibility and self-reliance.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Since the last inspection, the previous registered manager and deputy manager have left the organisation. As a result, the home has not been effectively managed by an accountable, permanent registered manager.

Leaders and managers have failed to ensure effective oversight and monitoring of the quality of care. The standard of supervision records is inconsistent. Some are of poor quality, specifically concerning the development and performance management of the staff. This shortfall impacts on the manager's ability to appraise practice and ensure safe practice.

The responsible individual was unaware of a potential conduct concern that took place outside work, which was discussed in a supervision meeting. There was no record of an investigation with other safeguarding agencies, risk assessment or rationale recorded. Consequently, the organisation cannot be confident that the staff member is suitable to work with children. This was addressed at the time of the inspection.

Managers and leaders have not ensured a consistent vetting process for the use of agency staff. This means that agency workers may not have the appropriate experience, training or skills to meet the needs of the children.

Staff did not complete accurate and timely records of a recent serious safeguarding incident. This reduced Ofsted's ability to understand and scrutinise the actions taken by the staff and leaders to safeguard the children. Following this incident, managers did not take timely action in following health and safety requirements in reporting.

In-house risk assessment about what to do if an incident involving a hazardous substance has not been completed. This does not meet requirements of the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002.

An interim manager is overseeing the running of the home. The responsible individual has taken steps to address some of the immediate concerns identified by the inspector at this inspection.

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 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; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; 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; that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(v)(b)(d)) This relates to the registered person ensuring learning from serious incidents informs future risk planning. This relates to the registered person ensuring staff follow safeguarding procedures. This also relates to the registered person ensuring the premises are safe from avoidable hazards, and that there is suitable guidance for staff to follow which meets the requirements of the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002.	28 September 2021

The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which— are kept up to date. (Regulation 36 (1)(b))	28 September 2021
The registered person must review the appropriateness and suitability of the location of the premises used for the purposes of the children's home at least once in each calendar year taking into account the requirement in regulation 12 (2)(c) (the protection of children standard). When conducting the review, the registered person must consult, and take into account the views of, each relevant person. (Regulation 46 (1) (2))	28 September 2021
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children's home; or if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that— the individual is of integrity and good character; the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform. (Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3)(a)(b)) This relates to the registered person ensuring a robust and consistent vetting process for agency workers.	28 September 2021
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—	28 September 2021

use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(b) (2)(h))	
The registered provider must appoint a person to manage the children's home if— there is no registered manager in respect of the home. (Regulation 27 (1)(a)) This relates to the registered person ensuring the appointment of a manager to the home, and registration with Ofsted without delay, to meet the requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000.	28 September 2021

Recommendation

- The registered person must ensure that the children's homes is a nurturing and supportive environment that meets the needs of the children and is a homely, domestic environment. In particular, ensure that the home environment is consistently maintained to a high standard and damage and wear and tear is repaired quickly. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

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: 2529331

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Assure Care Homes Limited

Registered provider address: Unit 4, Northbrook Industrial Estate, Hollybrook Road, Southampton, Hampshire SO16 6PB

Responsible individual: Luencina Zankl

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Anne-Marie Davies, 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 2021