

2529331

Registered provider: Assure Care Homes Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the Social Care Common Inspection Framework

Information about this children's home

The home provides care for up to five children with learning disabilities and social communication difficulties. At the time of the inspection, there were four children living in the home.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since August 2024.

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 January 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 17 May 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
17/05/2023	Full	Good
10/05/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
27/10/2021	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
19/08/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

All children have made positive progress since moving to the home, particularly in relation to developing their verbal communication. Staff are aspirational and provide sensitive and well-informed care to children. Several external professionals commented on the significant progress that children have made with their preferred communication methods since moving to the home.

Children are happy and settled. They benefit from a range of positive experiences and personalised care that promotes a strong sense of fulfilment for them. Staff are keen to ensure that children are exposed to a wide range of different opportunities and environments to increase their social engagement.

While staff respect children's preferred methods of communication, they continually support children to develop their communication skills in a sensitive and child-focused manner. Staff recognise that any improvements in children's acquired language and vocabulary will support their ability to communicate in a predominately speaking society.

Children benefit from regular one-to-one support, which enables them to build positive relationships with staff. Children can identify preferred adults who they can go to when they need additional support.

Children have regular contact with their families, and this is well supported by staff. Where appropriate, parents visit the home to see children, and this promotes a sense of belonging for them. Staff also provide direct support for children when they have family time in the community.

Staff support children to learn about diversity and difference in an everchanging world. This includes themed events and monthly topics. Staff carefully plan targeted work to provide additional learning opportunities for children and promote their understanding of other cultures.

Children's health needs are well supported, and staff ensure that children's educational needs are met. The management team has developed positive working relationships with children's schools, and positive working together promotes care that is focused on supporting children's attainment and progress.

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

While children are kept safe and protected from harm most of the time, on two separate occasions, one child has managed to leave the home unsupervised and enter a busy road. One of these occasions was a near miss and the child could have experienced significant harm if not for the alertness of member of the public driving the car. In both

incidents, staff have left exits and the main gate unlocked. These incidents could have been prevented if staff were more aware.

Staff demonstrate a good understanding of safeguarding, and children benefit from well-informed care by staff who know them well. The response from staff and the management team in relation to one incident did not fully consider the safeguarding and legal implications that may occur, despite the best of intentions.

Staff provide sensitive and empathetic care to children when things do not go to plan, and any physical interventions are proportionate. Children always benefit from practical and emotional support following these incidents. The management team is focused on trying to embed more natural consequences for children following incidents, although, sometimes, consequences are not suitably linked back to the original incident. This does not support children to understand the impact of their behaviour on themselves and others.

Staff continually support children to develop their independence and self-care skills. They encourage children to have increased autonomy in their lives by making incremental changes to their day-to-day lives, or supporting them to participate in everyday decisions and fine motor tasks.

Staff frequently adapt the way they care for children, to respond to their changing needs and overall development. One professional said, 'Staff demonstrate a commendable ability to manage challenging situations and behaviours effectively. They are proactive in strategizing and advocating for [name of child], ensuring that any measures implemented are in their best interests and child focused.'

Staff who are new to the home are carefully vetted. The management team is focused on seeking adults with transferrable skills and positive characteristics to increase the diversity in the home. Consequently, children benefit from a multi-cultural and multi-generational environment.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Since the last inspection, there has been a significant turnover of staff and a change of the entire leadership team. The impact on children has been minimal because some staff, including familiar agency staff, have remained in the home during this period. The new management team has implemented several changes to practice, and these have had a positive impact on the experience and progress of children. There has been a particular focus on developing children's communication skills.

Staff speak positively about the support that they receive from the management team, and feel that they can seek support and advice whenever they need this. Staff receive regular supervision and appraisals.

The management team has clear plans to further improve the home. For example, they plan to develop staff's understanding of the regulatory standards, further develop

communication and pro-choice strategies, and rebalance the two separate teams in the home to promote wider team development.

The registered manager has been receptive and welcoming to external feedback, although it is not always clear what actions have been taken in response to this. For example, recommendations made following the independent person's visits to the home have frequently been repeated, sometimes over several months. They have predominately related to ensuring that all records are clear and appropriately quality assured, and that the home has copies of all necessary statutory paperwork and plans.

The experiences of children are recorded in a first-person narrative, and this will support children's understanding of their day-to-day lives should they wish to understand their care journey in the future. Despite this, frequent grammatical errors and missing information undermine the generally positive record-keeping. In addition, sometimes, language is insensitive and subjective. This may impact on the positive relationships that children have built with staff should they access their records.

Staff benefit from a comprehensive range of training and e-learning opportunities, but many staff have not completed additional learning or refresher training, in accordance with the home's policies and procedures. There are currently two separate methods to record staff training, and the management team does not have sufficient oversight to accurately determine which staff have completed training.

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, The 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 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 (2)(b)(d)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that the home is appropriately secured so that children are not able to gain access to the nearby road.	24 January 2025

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that any sanctions used in the home are restorative and help children to understand natural consequences. The registered person should consistently review the effectiveness of the measures being taken. (Guide to the Children's Home Regulations, including the quality standards' page 46, paragraph 9.38)
- The registered person should ensure that all staff follow relevant statutory and legal guidance when supporting children and identifying potential risks of harm to them. The registered person should always seek to involve relevant safeguarding agencies when children present with potentially harmful behaviour. (Guide to the Children's Home Regulations, including the quality standards' page 43, paragraph 9.10)

- The registered person should actively seek independent scrutiny of the home and make best use of information from independent and internal monitoring (including under regulations 44 and 45) to ensure continuous improvement. The registered person should clearly evidence any actions they have taken following visits by the independent person. (Guide to the Children's Home Regulations, including the quality standards' page 55, paragraph 10.24)
- The registered person should ensure that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs, and should understand the key role they play in the training and development of staff in the home. This includes supporting staff to undertake all their training within the organisation's preferred timescales. (Guide to the Children's Home Regulations, including the quality standards' page 53, paragraph 10.11)
- The registered person should ensure that the home's records are accurate and transparent, underpinned by language that cares and providing a clear picture of the day-to-day lives of children, including who is involved in supporting them. (Guide to the Children's Home 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: 2529331

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Assure Care Homes Limited

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

Responsible individual: Christopher Newman

Registered manager: Stuart Horne

Inspector

Ashley Edwards, Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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