

2529331

Registered provider: Assure Care Homes Ltd

Interim 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 registered manager since 5 February 2021.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection date: 27 October 2021

Date of last inspection: 19 August 2021

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: not applicable

This inspection

The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection

This home was judged requires improvement to be good at the last full inspection. At the interim inspection, Ofsted judges that it has sustained effectiveness.

Since the last inspection, a new manager has been appointed and is being supported well in her new role by the responsible individual and the deputy manager. Although early days, the manager has quickly identified areas of improvement and has prioritised these areas for development. The improved management oversight has enhanced the quality of care that the children receive.

Leaders and managers have taken actions to address shortfalls identified from an in-house investigation following a serious incident that occurred at the home. New learning has informed future risk planning to ensure that the day-to-day care at the home is arranged and delivered to keep the children safe.

Improved management monitoring ensures that the children's records and safeguarding information are kept up to date. This ensures that concerns can be shared quickly and appropriately so that prompt decisions can be made to protect the children.

Children experience warmth and responsive care from the staff. One child described how his key worker recognises from his behaviour when he may need some extra support or help. Children said that they have good relationships with the staff, who listen and respond to any worries that they may have.

Staff provide the children with reassurance and encouragement for them to express their views and wishes. One child has recently contacted the Children's Commissioner's office and senior manager in his local authority to make a complaint relating to his care plan. Through the staff's support, the children develop a greater sense of agency and self-esteem. Consequently, the children learn to recognise that they can have a positive influence on the people and the environment around them.

The children's safety is central to the staff practice. Children said that they feel safe living at the home. Staff are aware of any potential worries in the local community about children being targeted for sexual exploitation or being drawn into gang crime. When children leave the home without discussing their plans or where they are going, staff are alert to the potential risks and take actions to reduce the risk of any harm.

The location risk assessment contains local agency intelligence. Managers have made good links with a local police community officer who helps to ensure that the staff's safeguarding knowledge of the local area is current.

A social worker commented on her confidence in how the staff manage risks. Responsive and regular multi-agency discussions help the staff provide holistic child-centred care. The staff's communication with other professionals is good. This has helped ensure joined-up action to safeguard one child who is currently experiencing an increase in risks while out in the community.

Staff are thoughtful about the transitions and adjustments that the children need to make, such as in preparation to live more independently. Staff plan and prepare the children for these transitions, and are currently providing outreach support for one child that is no longer living at the home. The manager and responsible individual advocate for the children, to ensure that others play their role and deliver the high-quality support that is needed.

The home is well maintained and provides a safe environment for the children. It has been redecorated since the last inspection and presents as homely and child-centred. The home is well resourced with books and games. Arts and craft materials have been put to good use, particularly by one child, who has created a fantastic mix of Halloween decorations throughout the home. Staff ensure that any damage to the home, or required maintenance tasks, are completed quickly.

Managers are working hard to improve the quality of supervision records to ensure accountable practice and effective performance management. Although some headway has been made, some supervision records remain weak and do not identify clear expectations for staff.

The quality assurance processes are not yet good enough in relation to the vetting process for agency workers. There remain gaps in some of the agency worker profiles. This means that the registered provider cannot be confident that all the staff hold the appropriate experience, qualification and skills required for their role.

The registered manager and leaders promote an inclusive ethos at the home. Staff are mindful of children's individuality and celebrate diversity. Bullying is not accepted, and swift action is taken by the staff to address unkind comments or actions. Consequently, children develop an understanding of equality and tolerance of others. This assists the children to develop a positive self-view and a sense of their unique identity.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
19/08/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good

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 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. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is repeated.	20 December 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—	20 December 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))

This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.

This relates to the responsible person using effective monitoring systems to ensure consistent staff supervision and safe practice.

Information about this inspection

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full 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 Ltd

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

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