

2555505

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This privately run home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to 12 children who have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder, and/or atypical autism, learning disabilities, global development disorder and associated difficulties.

A manager was registered in April 2020 when the home opened but has not been in charge of the home since September 2020. An acting manager is in post, but has not applied to be registered.

Visit dates: 15 to 16 December 2020

Previous inspection date: Not previously inspected

Previous inspection judgement: Not previously inspected

Information about this visit

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), Ofsted suspended all routine inspections in March 2020. As part of a phased return to routine inspection, we are undertaking assurance visits to children's social care services that are inspected under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF).

At these visits, inspectors evaluate the extent to which:

- children are well cared for
- children are safe
- leaders and managers are exercising strong leadership.

This visit was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000, following the published guidance for assurance visits.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills is leading Ofsted's work into how England's social care system has delivered child-centred practice and care within the context of the restrictions placed on society during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Findings from the visit

We identified the following serious and widespread concerns in relation to the care and protection of children at this assurance visit:

- There are very poor risk assessments and risk management strategies for each child. This limits the ability of staff to keep children safe.
- Staff do not understand the complex needs of children. Consequently, the quality of care is poor.
- Managers have not properly monitored the quality of care. Poor practice has not been identified or addressed.
- Managers have failed to report safeguarding matters and other important issues to the designated officer, placing social workers, parents and Ofsted. This lack of transparency does not provide confidence that children are protected from harm.
- Restraint practice has not been monitored effectively by managers. This lack of scrutiny does not provide confidence that all restraints are necessary or proportionate.
- Very poor restraint records contribute to the lack of effective management scrutiny.
- An independent person has not visited the home each month. Consequently, an independent evaluation of children's welfare and well-being has not taken place as required.

Following this assurance visit, an immediate suspension notice was issued to the registered persons on 18 December 2020. Ofsted believes that the care afforded to children is not meeting their needs and is placing them at risk of significant harm.

The care of children

Staff do not understand the needs of children. As a result, staff have provided poor quality care. Due to weak risk assessments and behaviour management plans, staff do not respond with confidence or competence to complex behaviours. There is no clear strategy to reduce or eliminate concerning behaviours. This significantly reduces the progress that children are able to make.

Staff and managers have failed to share important information with parents, placing social workers or Ofsted. This lack of transparency indicates that staff and managers do not understand the legal requirements associated with caring for children looked after.

Children have not been offered medical attention following the use of restraint. This places them at risk of harm and injury.

Children are not provided with important information about how to raise concerns or seek independent advice. There is little evidence of children's views being sought or

acted upon. One child was not aware of how to make a complaint. Children were not provided with a copy of the home's children's guide until this assurance visit. Although children do now have access to this document, it is of a poor quality because it does not provide information about the home's complaints procedure.

Not all children are provided with education packages. In one case, an increase in serious incidents has led to plans for a child's home tuition to be delayed. Poor education arrangements undermine children's ability to develop, learn and make progress.

The safety of children

Risk assessments are of an extremely poor quality. They do not accurately reflect risks, particularly in relation to self-harm and going missing from home. Risk assessments provide little information about what actions staff should take to reduce risk. Risk assessments also contain inaccurate or out-of-date information. For example, one child's risk assessment included information from a previous placement and referred to agencies from a different local authority. Such poor-quality risk assessments mean that staff are not given the information that they need to prevent harm to children.

Managers have failed to report safeguarding concerns to the designated officer, placing social workers or Ofsted. This lack of transparency has the potential to place children at risk of serious harm.

Managers have consistently failed to ensure effective management oversight of restraints. This has the potential to place children at serious risk of harm. Extremely poor recording of restraints contributes to the poor management oversight. One child has been subject to 13 restraints since moving to the home. Only four of these were recorded appropriately.

Staff have not responded appropriately to concerning or harmful behaviours. The police have been called several times when staff have not had the confidence or competence to support children effectively. One police officer expressed concern about the inability of staff to manage children's complex behaviours and needs. There has been an escalation in concerning and risky behaviours for one child. The routine use of the police to manage behaviour is not appropriate and has the potential to further escalate situations.

Leaders and managers

Management oversight of the home is poor. The registered manager has not been in day-to-day control of the home since September 2020. The former deputy manager is now running the home. This has not been notified to Ofsted. The acting manager has not applied to register with Ofsted.

An independent person did not visit the home for several months after it was registered. When visits have taken place, the visitor has not spoken directly with the

children. The visitor has also failed to consult regularly and effectively with parents, family members and placing social workers. This undermines the effectiveness of the independent visitor. Recommendations set by the independent visitor have not been properly addressed by managers. For example, the independent visitor's concerns about restraint practice have not been addressed.

The registered manager has failed to properly monitor the quality of care. Management monitoring provides little analysis or evaluation of staff practice. Poor and potentially harmful practice has not been identified. Such poor management significantly reduces the capacity of the home to make the improvements that are required.

Records relating to staff training are unclear. It is of serious concern that managers are not clear about the training provided to staff. There is the potential for children to be cared for by staff who do not have the necessary skills and training.

Staff supervision records are similarly unclear. In some cases, records are so poor that it is not possible to confirm whether staff have received any guidance or support through supervision. Given the widespread concerns about this home, the need for staff to receive regular, good-quality supervision is of paramount importance.

Children's case records do not include full information. This undermines the ability of staff to plan and provide good-quality care to children.

Managers have responded poorly to complaints. For example, a complaint made by a child was not recorded properly. As a result, it is not known whether the complaint was addressed or resolved. Records of a complaint received from a parent also failed to identify whether the matter was resolved appropriately.

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 children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who— develop positive relationships with them; engage with them; and	1 February 2021

take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that each child— has access to the home's children's guide, and the home's complaints procedure, when the child's placement in the home is agreed and throughout the child's stay in the home. (Regulation 7 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(b)(ii))	
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; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(v)(vi)(vii))	1 February 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— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—	1 February 2021

understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home; demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— feedback on the experience of children, including complaints received; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(f)(g)(ii)(h))	
The registered person must— keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and notify Ofsted of any revisions and send them a copy of the revised statement of purpose within 28 days of the revision. If a home has a website, the registered person must ensure that a copy of the statement of purpose is published on that website unless the registered person considers that such publication would prejudice the welfare of children in the home. (Regulation 16 (3)(a)(b)) (4))	1 February 2021
The registered person must ensure that all employees— undertake appropriate continuing professional development; receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(a)(b))	1 February 2021
The registered person must ensure that— within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes— the name of the child;	1 February 2021

details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure; the date, time and location of the use of the measure; a description of the use of the measure and its duration; details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the use of the measure; the name of the person who used the measure ("the user"), and of any other person present when the measure was used; the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and a description of any injury to the child or any other person; and any medical treatment administered, as a result of the measure; within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(b)(i)(ii)(c))	
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which— include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child; are kept up to date; and are signed and dated by the author for each entry. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c))	1 February 2021

The registered person must ensure that a record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of any investigation. (Regulation 39 (3))	1 February 2021
The registered person must notify Ofsted and each other relevant person without delay if— an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious; there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(b)(c)(e))	1 February 2021
The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children’s home at least once each month. When the independent person is carrying out the visit, the registered person must help the independent person— if they consent, to interview in private such of the children, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as the independent person requires; and to inspect the premises of the home and such of the home’s records (except for a child’s case records, unless the child and the child’s placing authority consent) as the independent person requires. The independent person may recommend actions that the registered person may take in relation to the home and timescales within which the registered person must consider whether or not to take those actions. (Regulation 44 (1) (2)(a)(b) (5))	1 February 2021
The registered person must give notice in writing to Ofsted, as soon as it is reasonably practicable to do so, if any of the following events take place or are expected by the registered person to take place— a person other than the registered person carries on or manages the children’s home. (Regulation 49 (a))	1 February 2021

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2555505

Registered provider: Aspiration House Ltd

Registered provider address: 2nd Floor, 9 Portland Street, Manchester M1 3BE

Responsible individual: Lorraine Miranda

Registered manager: Helen Whittleton

Inspector

Tracy Murty, Social Care Inspector

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