

2817732

Registered provider: Surety Care Limited

Assurance inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is registered to provide care for up to three children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

The registered manager post has been vacant since July 2025.

At the time of the inspection, one child was living in the home.

Inspection date: 7 October 2025

Date of last inspection: 10 June 2025

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Information about this inspection

At this inspection, the inspector evaluated:

- the care of children
- the safety of children
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers.

The inspector has looked closely at the experiences and progress of children, using the social care common inspection framework. This assurance 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'.

Findings from the inspection

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

Pre-admission documentation is of a poor standard and fails to demonstrate that children's needs are carefully considered before they move into the home. Records do not show how the compatibility of children has been assessed, nor do they evidence any consideration of the staff team's skills and experience in meeting the specific needs of new children. This represents a significant weakness in the care planning process.

For one child, leaders state that limited information was provided by the placing local authority. However, a transition plan was in place that identified known risks following the child's first visit to the home. Despite this, and despite clear indications that the child's needs presented significant challenges, the decision was made to proceed with the placement. This demonstrates poor professional judgement and a failure to act in the best interests of children living in the home.

As a result of this inadequate assessment and decision-making, a child moved into the home whose needs the staff team was unable to meet. This led to a marked increase in serious incidents, including assaults on staff and significant property damage. The other child in the home was directly affected by this instability, with a deterioration in their own behaviour and increased levels of risk. The placement of the new child ended after only two weeks, following the issuing of immediate notice. This abrupt ending had a negative impact on the child's emotional well-being and sense of security.

Children are not being kept safe. There are serious and widespread failures in risk assessment, behaviour management and staff practice that place children at significant risk of harm. Leaders and staff do not demonstrate the skills or understanding required to identify, assess and manage risks effectively.

Risk assessments are of poor quality. They do not provide clear, detailed or practical guidance for staff on how to manage or reduce risks. Although some documents include brief updates following serious incidents, these lack essential information about how staff intervened, how children were kept safe or what action should be taken if similar behaviour occurs again. This leaves staff without the necessary direction to respond effectively to emerging risks.

In one example, the risk assessment for a child who regularly goes missing from care instructs staff to 'follow the child for as long as possible'. However, it provides no guidance about what actions staff should take while following the child, how to maintain the child's safety or how to protect themselves. As a result, staff have, at times, become passive observers of unsafe situations, inadvertently being complicit in the child's risk-taking behaviour. On occasion, staff have observed children

consuming alcohol or associating with others using drugs but have failed to intervene. The lack of clear direction in risk assessments, combined with insufficient staff understanding, means that children are not being protected from harm.

Since the admission of another child to the home, one child's missing-from-care episodes have significantly increased. This change was not adequately risk assessed before the child moved into the home. The increased frequency and seriousness of incidents have included the child travelling to different cities, maintaining contact with older peers and engaging in substance misuse. These behaviours have escalated into aggression towards staff and members of the public, leading to frequent police involvement.

There have been multiple incidents where children accessed restricted areas by taking staff keys, including gaining access to controlled medication and car keys, and attempting to drive a vehicle. Such incidents demonstrate serious failings in supervision and a lack of awareness of basic safeguarding practices.

Leadership and management of the home are ineffective. The home has been without a registered manager since 1 July 2025. The acting manager, who has now resigned, stated that he does not have the skills or experience required to fulfil the role effectively. Despite this lack of management stability and expertise, leaders made the decision to admit a new child into the home. This demonstrates poor judgement and a failure to prioritise the welfare and safety of children already living in the home.

Staff do not possess the necessary skills or experience to manage complex or crisis situations. They lack confidence in making decisions to keep children safe and are unsure about when and how to intervene when children display risky behaviours. This lack of competence has resulted in unsafe practice and inconsistent responses to children's needs. The responsibility for these failings lies with leaders, who have not ensured that staff receive adequate training, guidance or supervision.

Feedback from external professionals highlights significant concerns about the capability of the staff team and the way it manages children's behaviours. Professionals report having to repeatedly chase staff for incident reports and describe delays in the sharing of important information. They have expressed concern about the seriousness of incidents that have taken place in the home and the apparent lack of robust managerial oversight.

Feedback from family members reflects similar concerns. While one family member spoke positively about the acting manager and the responsible individual, they also stated, 'Some of the staff team were really poor; some were very poor at any basic de-escalation skills.' Such comments highlight a widespread lack of competence and consistency within the staff team.

Leaders and managers have failed to establish effective oversight, ensure accountability or promote a culture of learning and improvement. The absence of stable and experienced management, combined with an inexperienced staff team,

has led to serious and widespread shortfalls in the quality of care and the safety of children. Leaders and managers have failed to ensure that staff are equipped, supported or guided to provide safe and consistent care. As a result, children have been placed at risk of harm.

As a result of this inspection, the regulator has issued two compliance notices and a restriction of accommodation notice, preventing any further children from living at the setting.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/06/2025	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, 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 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; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(v)) This relates to ensuring that staff have a clear understanding of children's risks and how to manage these. This also relates to ensuring that staff identify and respond appropriately to risk.	16 November 2025
*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—	16 November 2025

lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; 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; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(c)(d)(f)(h)) This specifically relates to ensuring there is consistent and appropriate oversight of the home to ensure that children are receiving quality care. This also relates to ensuring the staff in the home have the knowledge, skills and experience to meet the needs of children.	
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b)) This specifically relates to ensuring that new arrivals to the home are adequately risk assessed against the needs of the child living in the home and that when a child leaves the home, this is a positive experience for them.	16 November 2025
The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— mutual respect and trust; an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults.	16 November 2025

In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone; de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children; that each child is encouraged to build and maintain positive relationships with others. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(iv)(xi)(b)) This specifically relates to ensuring that the reactions of staff to children’s behaviour are appropriate and that staff have the skills to form and sustain meaningful relationships with children in order to support them with their behaviour.	
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 specifically relates to ensuring a suitable manager is appointed and applies to register with Ofsted in the appropriate timescales.	16 November 2025
A responsible individual must— have the capacity, experience and skills to supervise the management of the home, or the homes, in respect of which the responsible individual is nominated. (Regulation 26 (7)(b)) This specifically relates to ensuring the responsible individual is effective within the home.	16 November 2025

*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2817732

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Surety Care Limited

Registered provider address: Surety Care Limited

Responsible individual: Mark Higginson

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Lauren Barwell, Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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