

# 2817732

Registered provider: Surety Care Limited

Full 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 manager registered with Ofsted in December 2024.

At the time of the inspection, one child was living in the home and one child left the home on the same week as the inspection.

**Inspection dates: 10 and 11 June 2025**

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| <b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,</b> taking into account | <b>requires improvement to be good</b> |
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| How well children and young people are helped and protected | requires improvement to be good |
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| The effectiveness of leaders and managers | inadequate |
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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**

Children's experiences in the home are variable. One child chose not to engage with the inspector. However, observations indicated that they appeared comfortable in their environment and had formed some relationships with staff.

The home is generally well presented in communal areas, contributing to a welcoming environment. However, there is a lack of personalisation, such as photos or displays that reflect the children's identities and experiences. This does not help children to develop a sense of belonging. Standards of cleanliness are inconsistent. While some areas of the home are maintained to a good standard, one child's bedroom was found to be extremely dirty, and the bathroom was in an unhygienic condition. This does not promote the dignity or well-being of children living in the home.

Placement considerations are not consistently effective. A risk assessment completed to assess the compatibility of the two children currently living in the home was of poor quality. This has contributed to a negative experience for one child and has also impacted the other child, whose participation with education has deteriorated and for whom incidents within the home have increased. As a result, both children's progress and experiences have been adversely affected.

There is a lack of robust planning for children's moves. Following a period of instability, notice was served on one child's placement. Planning for this move was inadequate. The child was not informed of their move until the day it happened and no clear moving-on plan was in place. This child had arrived at the home in crisis and left in similar circumstances. This practice is not consistent with the provider's stated commitment to child-centred planning and co-production as set out in their statement of purpose.

Key-work sessions with children require improvement. Records of these sessions are brief and lack evidence of meaningful conversations with children. They do not capture reflective discussions or learning from serious incidents, including episodes where children have gone missing from the home. This represents a missed opportunity to demonstrate how children are supported to understand and learn from their experiences.

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

The arrangements to safeguard children require improvement. While risk assessments are reviewed and updated, they frequently contain outdated or contradictory information. This means they do not accurately reflect the current risks to children. The assessments often lack depth, presenting as lists of incidents rather than detailed

analyses that consider patterns, triggers or effective responses. For one child, the language used in risk assessments is negative and does not support a strength-based or child-centred approach.

Incident reporting is weak. Many records are overly brief and fail to describe the incidents in sufficient detail, particularly in terms of the steps taken by staff to de-escalate challenging situations. The language used in some reports is not child friendly and managerial oversight is inconsistent, with some incidents lacking any management review. This undermines the home's ability to learn from incidents and take appropriate action to reduce risks.

The response to children going missing from the home is not robust. As incidents of children going missing from the home increase, the quality of recording declines. Several records show limited or no management oversight. There is insufficient professional curiosity about where children have been or why they went missing. Records often lack context about events leading up to the incident, actions taken to locate the child and meaningful debrief discussions with either the child or the staff involved. This significantly hinders opportunities to safeguard children more effectively and to improve practice.

Complaints made by children are not always responded to appropriately. In one case, a child's complaint was not formally investigated, the staff involved were not spoken with and there was no evidence of reflection or learning from the concern raised. This does not support children to feel listened to or reassured that their concerns are taken seriously.

Recruitment practice does not consistently meet safer recruitment standards. In several cases, staff files did not contain two verified references including one from the most recent employer. This is a breach of Schedule 2 requirements and creates potential risk, as the reasons for leaving previous employment in settings involving children are not always explored. This compromises the safety and protection of children in the home.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate**

The leadership and management of the home are inadequate. Although the manager has shown openness and honesty in recognising areas for improvement, he has been unable to provide effective leadership to ensure the safety and well-being of children. The manager identified a lack of experienced staff and competing responsibilities as key barriers to fulfilling his management role. He described feeling overwhelmed and expressed that his professional views were not always considered in decision-making processes within the home.

The manager had a recent period of absence, during which the leadership team failed to provide sufficient oversight of the service. This lack of contingency planning and monitoring has contributed to a decline in the quality of care and support provided to children during a critical time.

The responsible individual acknowledged the significant challenges facing the home and accepted that the placement of one child was not well considered. He recognised that a more robust impact risk assessment should have been carried out. While the responsible individual expressed a willingness to learn and improve, the failure to act promptly and effectively has had a detrimental impact on the children's experiences and progress.

Although staff report that they enjoy working at the home and demonstrate passion for the children's care, this has not translated into consistently safe or effective care. Staff lack a clear understanding of the home's stated model of care as described in the statement of purpose. This weakens the home's ability to provide a coherent approach.

Staff take the time to get to know the children and have some awareness of their vulnerabilities. However, they have not been equipped with the necessary skills or support to manage challenging behaviour effectively. This has led to a deterioration in the quality of care and an increase in significant incidents.

Supervision discussions and team meetings are inconsistent and do not provide sufficient opportunity for reflection or professional development. Records show long gaps between supervision sessions, including for new staff, which limits oversight and support. Furthermore, there is little evidence of follow-up or reflective learning from serious incidents. This significantly limits opportunities to improve practice and safeguard children.

The failure of leaders and managers to ensure appropriate oversight, staffing and adherence to the home's model of care has resulted in significant shortfalls in the quality of care provided to children.

## 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       |
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| <p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>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.<br/>(Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i))</p> <p>This relates to ensuring that risk assessments are up to date and reflect all current risks for the child.</p>                                                                                                                                        | 12 August 2025 |
| <p>The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that—</p> <p>helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>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;</p> <p>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;</p> | 12 August 2025 |

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| <p>demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on—</p> <p>feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received; and</p> <p>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)(f)(g)(ii)(h))</p> <p>This specifically relates to ensuring the quality of care is monitored in the home. This also relates to ensuring children's complaints are adequately responded to and that there is clear management oversight on all areas in the home.</p>                                                                   |                |
| <p>The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who—</p> <p>understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>understand and apply the home's statement of purpose;</p> <p>ensure that staff—</p> <p>understand and apply the home's statement of purpose. (Regulation 6 (1)(a) (2)(a)(b)(i))</p> <p>This specifically relates to ensuring the home is being run in line with the statement of purpose and that the staff team is aware of the approach the home takes to working with children.</p> | 12 August 2025 |
| <p>The care planning standard is that children—</p> <p>receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and</p> <p>have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b))</p> <p>This specifically relates to ensuring that for any new arrivals to the home, adequate risk assessments are made against the</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 12 August 2025 |

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| needs of the child already living in the home and that when a child leaves the home this is a positive experience for them.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                |
| <p>The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety.</p> <p>The registered person may only—</p> <p>employ an individual to work at the children's home; or if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3).</p> <p>The requirements are that—</p> <p>full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a) (3)(d))</p> <p>This specifically relates to ensuring that safer recruitment is followed, with two written references for new staff including their most recent employer.</p> | 12 August 2025 |
| <p>The registered person must ensure that all employees—</p> <p>receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (1) (4)(b))</p> <p>This specifically relates to ensuring all staff members receive regular supervision in line with the supervision policy.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | 12 August 2025 |

## 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)

## **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:** 2817732

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** Surety Care Limited

**Registered provider address:**

**Responsible individual:** Mark Higginson

**Registered manager:** Dean Cooper-Sewell

## **Inspector**

Lauren Barwell, Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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