

SC453726

Registered provider: Aston Children's Care Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home provides care and accommodation for up to four young people, aged between eight and 18, who have complex behaviours due to childhood trauma. The home is privately owned.

The home does not have a registered manager. The previous registered manager left the home in April 2019. The new manager has yet to apply to register with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 15 to 16 May 2019

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account

requires improvement to be good

How well children and young people are helped and protected

requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

requires improvement to be good

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: 3 January 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
03/01/2019	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
20/06/2018	Full	Good
12/09/2017	Full	Requires improvement to be good
21/03/2017	Interim	Declined in effectiveness

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 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 an explanation is given to each child as soon as reasonably practicable after the child's arrival about— how to make a complaint or representations in relation to the home or the care the child receives and how any such complaint or representations will be dealt with. (Regulation 7(1)(c)(2)(d)(ii))	28/06/2019
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; and 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)(v))	28/06/2019
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— ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; and	28/06/2019

use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13(1)(b)(2)(c)(h))	
The care planning standard is that children receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that arrangements are in place to— plan for, and help, each child to prepare to leave the home or to move into adult care in a way that is consistent with arrangements agreed with the child's placing authority. (Regulation 14(1)(a)(2)(b)(iii))	28/06/2019
If the registered provider appoints a person to manage the home, the registered provider must, without delay, give HMCI notice of— the name of the person so appointed; and the date on which the appointment takes effect. (Regulation 27(2)(a)(b))	28/06/2019
A person may only manage a children's home if— full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the person in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 28(1)(c))	28/06/2019
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— full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32(2)(a)(b)(3)(d))	28/06/2019
The registered person must keep under review and, as necessary, revise the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 34(6))	28/06/2019

This is with specific reference to ensuring that internal child protection policies take account of statutory guidance.	
The registered person must keep the behaviour management policy under review and, where appropriate, revise it. (Regulation 35(2))	28/06/2019
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— details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure; a description of the measure and its duration; details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure; the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and 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. (Regulation 35(3)(a)(ii)(iv)(v)(vii)(b)(i)(ii))	28/06/2019
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. (Regulation 36(1)(a))	28/06/2019
The registered person must— maintain in the home the records in Schedule 4. (Regulation 37(2)(a)) This is with specific reference to admission and discharge information and staff rotas.	28/06/2019

Recommendations

- The registered person should undertake a review that focuses on the quality of the care provided by the home, the experiences of children living there and the impact the care is having on outcomes and improvements for the children.

Reviews should be underpinned by the Quality Standards as described in regulations 5 to 14. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.2)

- The registered person is responsible for deciding what each review should focus on, based on the specific circumstances of the home at that particular time. The registered persons should use their professional judgement to decide which factors to focus on. The review should enable the registered person to identify areas of strength and possible weakness in the home's care, which will be captured in the written report. The report should clearly identify any actions required for the next 6 months of delivery within the home and how those actions will be addressed. The whole review process and the resulting report should be used as a tool for continuous improvement in the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.4)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Children receive care that supports their progress. Staff work with children to identify achievable targets and celebrate their accomplishments when they reach their goals. This approach helps children to grow in confidence and self-esteem. However, managers and staff do not make sure that all children's case files include all necessary information. This means that internal support plans for some children do not consistently reflect the aims and objectives of the placing authorities.

Relationships between children and staff are mostly positive. Children said that they enjoyed spending time with staff and felt 'cared for'. Staff regularly remind children how to make a complaint if they are unhappy. Nevertheless, there is no complaints guide for children to explain how managers or others will address their concerns.

Staff continually encourage children to maintain a healthy way of life and diet. They use one-to-one sessions to help children to understand the benefits that regular exercise has on their physical, emotional and mental health. Children have access to the information they need to make positive lifestyle choices. This helps them to learn to take responsibility for their own health needs.

Children make noteworthy progress in education, taking account of their starting points. Staff work with schools, key education staff, social workers and children to identify and address any barriers to learning. Consequently, children realise how important education is in helping them to achieve their future ambitions.

Staff work with social workers to help children to maintain or develop positive relationships with their families, when this is appropriate. They recognise how significant these relationships are to children and to their progress. This ensures that children are not isolated from the people who are important to them.

Children have access to a range of activities, such as bike-riding and football sessions. These help them to develop new hobbies and leisure interests, and to expand their social circles and friendship groups.

When children are ready to leave the home, staff support them to learn practical independent living skills. However, staff do not sufficiently document children's progress to show whether children are able to take care of themselves or whether they need additional support. This means that children may not have the correct support services in place when they move to their next placement.

The environment is generally welcoming and homely. Staff encourage children to decorate their bedrooms to their own personal taste, and consult with them regarding the decoration of communal areas.

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

Managers and staff do not consistently ensure that children's risk assessments include all relevant information. For some children these documents provide staff with clear strategies to help them to manage children's dangerous behaviours. However, for other children specific behaviours that potentially place them or others at risk of harm are not included. This means that staff are unsure how to manage these risks.

Since the last inspection there has been a reduction in the frequency of children going missing from the home. This is because staff work with children to help them to understand the risks associated with this behaviour. When children do go missing, staff liaise with police teams and other agencies to quickly locate them and return them to the home. This prompt action helps to reduce the potential for children to be harmed.

Staff use physical restraint to prevent children from harming themselves or others. The use of this measure of control continues to reduce because staff prioritise building positive relationships with children. This also means that the use of sanctions is rare. Nevertheless, when staff do use restraint or sanctions, they do not always ensure that the records of these incidents include all necessary details. This makes it difficult for senior managers to ensure that the use of these practices is proportionate and necessary.

Managers appropriately refer allegations of abuse or harm to relevant agencies and work in partnership with these agencies to keep children safe. However, some care staff do not have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children. There was one occasion when staff did not inform managers of an incident of concern in a timely manner, leading to an unnecessary delay in addressing this matter.

Internal safeguarding procedures, including child protection and behaviour management policies, are out of date. Managers do not review these documents to incorporate new legislation or statutory guidance. This means that not all staff are well informed of any

changes that may have an impact on their practice.

In contrast to the organisation's implementation of internal recruitment procedures, the recruitment of temporary agency staff, or the employment of staff through a recruitment agency to fill a vacancy, is not always safe. This includes the recent employment of a manager to oversee the day-to-day running of the home. The registered provider does not ensure that it has access to all relevant employment references or full employment histories for these staff. Consequently, children may not be supported by staff deemed suitable to do so.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The registered manager left the home in April 2019. The registered provider appointed a new manager at this time but did not inform Ofsted of this appointment. The new manager has yet to apply to register with Ofsted.

Internal monitoring is generally poor. The manager and senior staff evaluate some children's records to highlight children's progress. However, they do not use this information to make continuous improvements to the quality of care provided by the service. Currently, the quality of care review process does not help managers to identify service strengths or highlight areas for improvement. This means that the quality of care review report does not accurately reflect the service.

Managers do not ensure that all essential records are kept up to date. For example, admission and discharge records do not include information of when children moved out of the home or where they moved to. Staff rotas only specify proposed working patterns and shifts and do not confirm which staff worked in the home, when they worked or for how long. This missing information is required for the safe day-to-day operation of the home.

Staff receive regular, practice-related supervision. They said that they feel supported in their role. However, most staff do not have the skills, experience or qualifications to meet children's more complex needs. Since the last inspection, a number of staff have left the home. The majority of staff are new to the service and have little experience of working in children's residential care. These staff rely on a small number of qualified staff to manage children's more challenging behaviours.

Managers and staff work well with families and professionals. Partnership working is central to practice in the home. Social workers say that they attribute children's progress to these positive relationships. One social worker said, 'Managers keep me up to date. We are working together to provide [name of child] with the best care and it's making a difference to his life.'

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives

of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: SC453726

Provision sub-type: children's home

Registered provider: Aston Children's Care Ltd

Registered provider address: 181 Penn Road, Wolverhampton WV3 0EQ

Responsible individual: Mahesh Mehan

Registered manager: post vacant

Inspector

Jo Stephenson, social care inspector

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