

SC453726

Registered provider: Aston Children's Care Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately owned home provides care for up to four children, aged between eight and 18 years, with complex behaviours due to childhood trauma.

The registered manager's post is vacant.

Inspection dates: 16 and 17 November 2021

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 **inadequate**

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: 7 September 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: Inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection:

This children's home was judged inadequate at the full inspection on 7 September 2021. As a result of the inspection, five compliance notices were raised, under regulations 11, 12, 13 (two notices) and 32. A notice restricting the number of children who can live in the home was also issued.

A monitoring visit was undertaken on 6 October 2021. This was to review the action taken to meet three of the compliance notices, under regulations 11, 13 (in relation to ensuring there is sufficient staff to meet the needs of children) and 32. Inspectors

found that compliance notices for regulation 11 and 13 were met. However, regulation 32 had not been met and this compliance notice was reissued.

A further monitoring visit took place on 18 October 2021 to review action taken to meet compliance notices under regulations 12, 13 (in relation to staff training, staff qualifications and monitoring) and 32. Inspectors found that the compliance notice for regulation 12 was met. However, two compliance notices, under regulation 13 and regulation 32, were not met and were therefore reissued. In addition, a further compliance notice was issued under regulation 26.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
07/09/2021	Full	Inadequate
15/05/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good
03/01/2019	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
20/06/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

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

Three children live in the home and have lived here for approximately a year or more. Since the last full inspection, one child has moved out of the home. This move was not in line with the child's plan. The home has been subject to a restriction of accommodation notice throughout this period. The provider has complied with this and no new children have moved into the home.

Children are now making more progress due to the action taken by leaders and managers to improve. Children spoke positively to inspectors about the changes in the home. They said they feel happy and safe living in the home and it is now more settled. Some weaknesses still remain in the leadership and management of the home. This influences children's overall experiences and progress.

Staff now have positive relationships with children. They know them well and understand how to provide them with the best care to meet their needs. Children are at ease in the company of staff. They seek them out to talk to them and enjoy spending time with them.

Children attend school and are making progress. One child who has been out of education for some time has started a new school. Staff supported the child with the new routine and helped teachers to understand the child's individual needs. This joined-up approach to his care has meant the child has settled in well and enjoys going to school.

Staff support children to develop their independence skills. This includes helping them cook, wash their clothes, budget and meet their personal needs. This helps children build on their self-esteem and confidence, and supports a sense of pride.

One child recently celebrated their birthday. The staff had a party for him with a cake and a meal out. The child spoke positively about this experience. Staff took photos of the celebration that will contribute to the child's life story and memories.

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

Children benefit from positive relationships and staff who now understand their needs better than before. Children have become safer since the previous inspection and risks have minimised. Children do not go missing from home or engage in other risky behaviours. Staff still engage children in meaningful conversations to help them increase their understanding about staying safe.

Restraint is only used as a last resort to prevent children from harming themselves or others. Staff use a range of strategies to try to de-escalate incidents prior to

restraint being needed. One record of restraint does not state the staff member's name. This means that the manager is unable to review these incidents to identify actions individual staff members have taken.

When children make complaints, these are taken seriously. Staff contact the relevant professionals to escalate concerns. This has included working with the police, who have visited the home to talk about bullying and positive relationships. As a result, children know their feelings matter and that staff take their concerns seriously. However, staff are not supported to know what to do when an allegation of bullying is made, as the policy does not set out a procedure for staff to follow.

Staff have implemented rules that offer children more structure and consistency. Children are benefiting from these new routines. As a result, children are eating together at the table, and understand when they can access the internet.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

A new manager joined the team in October 2021. She is yet to submit an application to register. She has high aspirations for children and plans to make improvements. She has already been instrumental in working with professionals to secure a school place for one child who has been out of education for several months.

Some weaknesses in leadership and management remain. The responsible individual has failed to have sufficient oversight of the management of the home to ensure regulatory compliance. They consistently fail to take sufficient action to meet compliance notices. As a result, a further compliance notice has been raised under regulation 26.

The responsible individual has taken some steps to improve safe recruitment processes. However, gaps remain, and this continues to breach the requirement to ensure staff working in the home are subject to the necessary checks. This means children are cared for by staff who have not been checked effectively and places children at risk of harm. A further compliance notice has been made under regulation 32.

Staff told the inspectors that they feel supported by managers and have received training to develop their skills. However, this is not reinforced through regular supervision and annual appraisals. This is a missed opportunity to formalise and review staff development.

The manager's quality of care review fails to acknowledge the concerns that led to the home receiving an inadequate judgement. In addition, there is little reflection on incidents, or views of children, carers and professionals. The action plan fails to address requirements or identify areas for improvement in the quality of care. These omissions mean that the review fails to demonstrate accurately the quality of care offered at the home or what action is needed to drive forward improvements.

Ofsted will undertake a further monitoring visit to review the action taken to meet the compliance notices raised. The notice restricting the number of children who can live in the home is no longer in force.

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 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. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home's statement of purpose. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)) This specifically relates to ensuring that the provider only admits children into the home when they fully understand their needs and can confidently meet those needs. Due to the restriction notice, this was not reviewed at the inspection. This requirement is therefore restated.	19 December 2021
*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 the registered individual having oversight of the management, staff and care afforded to children. It also relates to ensuring that regulatory compliance is achieved within the given time frame. Also,	19 December 2021

that staff who oversee safer recruitment have completed training to do so.	
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)) This specifically relates to managers being subject to the appropriate checks to ensure they are considered to be safe to work with children.	19 December 2021
*The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. 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 (1) (3)(d)) This specifically relates to ensuring that staff are safely recruited as required.	19 December 2021
The registered person must ensure that all employees— receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience; have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (4)(b)(c))	19 December 2021
The registered person must prepare and implement a policy for the prevention of bullying in the home, which must in particular set out the procedure for dealing with an allegation of bullying. (Regulation 34 (3))	28 December 2021
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality of care review") at least once every 6 months.	1 May 2021

In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating—

the quality of care provided for children;

the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and

any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children.

The system referred to in paragraph (2) must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff.

(Regulation 45 (1) (2) (a)(b)(c) (5))

This specifically relates to the quality of care review being a true reflection of the quality of care afforded to children, including children's and professionals' feedback and an effective and measurable action plan.

*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that records of restraint must be kept and should enable the registered person and staff to review the use of control, discipline and restraint to identify effective practice and respond promptly where any issues or trends of concern emerge. The review should provide the opportunity for amending practice to ensure it meets the needs of each child. ('Guide to the children's home regulations, including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.59)

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: 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

Inspectors

Jodie Lewis, Social Care Inspector
Karen Gillingwater, Social Care Inspector

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