

SC453726

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

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

The previous manager left on 22 July 2020. A new manager is in post and is in the process of applying to register.

On 18 August 2020, a monitoring visit was undertaken following concerns raised about poor placement matching. No compliance action was taken following this monitoring visit.

Visit dates: 28 to 29 October 2020

Previous inspection date: 15 May 2019

Previous inspection judgement: Requires improvement to be good

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 did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit.

The care of children

During the COVID-19 pandemic, one young person has moved into the home. The manager ensured that the arrival was well planned and supported the young person to settle. Another young person left the home during this period, as he was assessed as presenting a risk to the other young person who was living in the home.

The young person who had moved out of the home subsequently returned to the care of the provider for a time-limited period. This was because the local authority was unable to identify an alternative placement. However, the manager assessed that it was not safe for him to live in the home. Therefore, he was temporarily placed in holiday accommodation with the day-to-day care provided by the home's staff. Although the decision to care for the young person was well intended, the decision was not in line with the home's statement of purpose.

Relationships between the young people and staff have been strained at times but are now much improved. The arrival of a new manager has been a key factor in this. The manager has promoted a more nurturing and caring culture in the home.

During the pandemic, some young people have not been able to attend their schools. However, staff have supported young people to access education tutors. This has enabled young people to continue their learning.

The staff listen to the views, wishes and feelings of young people. For example, one young person asked to change bedrooms. To accommodate this, a room used for play was converted back to a bedroom. The young person was able to decorate and furnish the room to his preference. This has helped to develop the young person's sense of belonging.

Throughout the pandemic, young people have remained in touch with their families and friends. This has included visits and telephone calls.

The safety of children

Staff have a good understanding of young people's vulnerabilities and act to reduce known risks. Staff are given clear guidance on how to keep children safe.

When young people make allegations, the manager acts on these appropriately. This ensures that investigations are undertaken swiftly, and the right action is taken to manage the risks.

The proactive staff are effective in managing young people's behaviours. Rules and boundaries are consistently applied. Staff have a firm but fair approach. Because of this, the use of physical intervention is low and young people do not go missing.

Staff continue to support young people to understand the risks associated with COVID-19. An exceptionally well-illustrated booklet has been provided to young people that gives them the information they need to know about the virus.

Leaders and managers

A new manager has been appointed and has been in post since 7 September 2020. She is suitably qualified and experienced. The manager is in the process of applying to register with Ofsted.

The manager is an effective leader. She is highly motivated and is working hard to drive forward improvements to the quality of care provided to young people. The manager's child-centred approach is mirrored by her staff team, whose confidence and skill in being able to meet the needs of young people is developing.

The manager takes a proactive approach to working with other agencies. Good communication is at the heart of this. This ensures that there is a co-ordinated approach to meeting the needs of young people.

A quality of care review has been completed by the previous home manager. However, the report does not include consultation with young people or an action plan about how the manager will improve the service. Furthermore, the report was not sent to Ofsted in a timely manner.

The manager has not reviewed the statement of purpose. Information is misleading and does not reflect what the service provides.

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 registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ("the statement of purpose") which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1. The registered person must—	30/11/20

keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. Subject to paragraph (6), the registered person must ensure that the home is at all times conducted in a manner which is consistent with its statement of purpose. Nothing in paragraph (5) or regulation 46 (review of premises) requires or authorises the registered person to contravene or not comply with— any other provision of these Regulations; or any conditions in relation to the registration of the registered person under Part 2 of the Care Standards Act 2000. (Regulation 16 (1)(3)(a)(b)(5)(6)(a)(b))	
The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month. The independent person must provide a copy of the independent person's report to HMCI. (Regulation 44 (1)(7)(a))	30/11/20
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. 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. After completing a quality of care review, the registered person must produce a written report about the quality of care review and the actions which the registered person	31/12/20

intends to take as a result of the quality of care review ("the quality of care review report").

The registered person must—

supply to HMCI a copy of the quality of care review report within 28 days of the date on which the quality of care review is completed. (Regulation 45 (1)(2)(a)(b)(c)(3)(4)(a))

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC453726

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

Michelle Spruce, Social Care Inspector

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