

SC453726

Registered provider: Aston Children's Care Limited

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 who may have complex behaviours due to childhood trauma.

The registered manager resigned from the post in September 2021. There is a new manager in post who has applied to Ofsted to be registered.

Inspection dates: 30 and 31 May 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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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	requires improvement to be good
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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: 16 November 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
16/11/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good
07/09/2021	Full	Inadequate
15/05/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good
03/01/2019	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

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

At the time of the inspection, one child was living in the home. Since the last inspection, four children have moved out of the home. Children have not left the home in line with their original plans. However, staff support positive transitions when children leave the home. As a result, children have spent time with adults from their prospective homes, and staff have continued outreach support for a child who has moved in with family members.

Children are provided with the children's guide to help them understand their new home. One child made suggestions to improve this which have been included in a new version of the guide. Consequently, the child feels involved in ensuring important documents help children, and staff have promoted her views.

Staff are not continuously mindful of children's religious dietary requirements. This impacted negatively on a child being able to have Christmas dinner as planned.

Staff support children to attend school and education settings. This includes one child returning to a school she had previously attended. As a result, she has been able to reunite with friends and teachers she knows. Education staff report that the child is making good progress, and staff communicate well with the school.

The home has undergone some redecoration. One bedroom has been turned into a sensory games room to offer children an alternative place to spend time and be creative. The home is a welcoming environment, with further plans for a new kitchen to be installed and vegetables to be grown in the garden.

Staff ensure children spend time with people who are important to them. Children also benefit from a variety of leisure activities. As a result, children learn new skills and have new experiences, and this supports them to build positive relationships with staff.

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

A serious incident occurred in which children were able to set a fire in the kitchen due to a lack of staff supervision. Staff were quick to react to the fire and ensure no one was hurt. However, this lapse in appropriate supervision had the potential to compromise the safety of children and staff in the home.

When staff practice has fallen short of expected standards, the manager has been quick to address this and share information with the relevant professionals. The local authority designated officer reports that the manager takes appropriate action.

Staff were unable to support a child's behaviour effectively on one occasion and they called police to the home. No charges were pressed against the child as a result of the incident. However, the child is working with the youth offending team to gain further support for their individual needs.

Staff respond appropriately when children go missing from home. Staff look for children and work collaboratively with others, including the police, parents and social workers, to help find children as quickly as possible. Children are welcomed home and have the opportunity to discuss the incident with an independent person.

Children receive appropriate support when there are concerns about them using substances. Staff speak to children about the dangers and the implications of the law if they use substances. Staff make referrals to the relevant professionals in a timely manner to further support children's needs.

Staff do not always have the relevant information to manage risk. Children have individualised risk assessments. However, these assessments do not always contain an appropriate level of detail to guide staff on what action to take should the risk arise. As a result of missing information, staff may respond inconsistently or be unsure how to respond appropriately.

The child's bedroom fire door was non-compliant with fire safety regulations. The manager had raised this as something to be fixed, however, some time elapsed between the damage being done to the door and it being repaired. This has the potential to compromise the child's safety in the event of a fire. Repairs were carried out shortly after the inspection.

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

There is a new manager in post. She has worked at the home since October 2021 and has applied to Ofsted to register. She is not experienced in managing a children's home, however, she has worked hard to bring some positive changes to the home since the last inspection.

The manager has positive aspirations for children, the care provided to children and the development of the home. She has implemented therapeutic parent training to support the staff to offer children good-quality care and understand their needs. There is evidence of this being used with the current child and it is having a positive impact on her experiences.

Staff feel well supported by the manager. They benefit from regular supervision which allows them to reflect on their practice and the care afforded to children. However, the manager has not carried out staff's annual appraisals. This is a missed opportunity to further review their practice and development.

Staff only use restraint as a last resort to prevent children from harming themselves or others. However, staff records of restraint and debriefs for staff, managers and

children are not always completed in the relevant timescales. Consequently, this impacts on the support staff and children may receive.

When appointing new staff, managers and senior managers do not follow safe recruitment practices. As a result, the manager and senior managers are unable to demonstrate that they know that all those who work in the home are safe to do so. This has been a breach at previous inspections and resulted in compliance notices in 2021. As a result of this further breach, a requirement has been raised at this inspection.

The manager has failed to ensure Ofsted has received reports from the independent visitor from November 2021 to April 2022. These have now been shared with Ofsted.

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 quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— understand and apply the home's statement of purpose; ensure that staff— provide personalised care that meets each child's needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking account of the child's background. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(iv)) This specifically relates to staff ensuring that children's religious dietary requirements are met at all times.	11 July 2022
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— understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person;	31 July 2022

that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(iv)(v)) This specifically relates to the registered person ensuring that they follow children's care plans and provide children with sufficient staff to meet their needs and protect them from harm. Also, to guidance being available for staff in the event an identified risk arises.	
If the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005(a) applies to the home— the registered person must ensure that the requirements of that Order and any regulations made under it, except for article 23 (duties of employees), are complied with in respect of the home. (Regulation 25 (2)(b)) This specifically refers to ensuring fire doors are fitted properly and meet fire regulations.	06 June 2022
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 employment dates and the reasons why a person left their previous employment are verified.	11 July 2022
The registered person must ensure that all employees— have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (4) (b)(c)) This specifically refers to ensuring that all staff, including bank staff, have an annual appraisal.	31 July 2022
The registered person must ensure that—	11 July 2022

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 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; and within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(b)(i)(ii)(c))	
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; the registered provider and, if applicable, the registered manager; and the responsible individual. (Regulation 44 (1) (7)(a)(d)) This specifically relates to the provider receiving a monthly report and this being shared with HMCI.	11 July 2022

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 Limited

Registered provider address: Aston Children's Care Ltd, 181 Penn Road,
Wolverhampton WV3 0EQ

Responsible individual: Mahesh Mehan

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Jodie Lewis, Social Care Inspector

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