

1183621

# Assurance visit

## Information about this children's home

This home is run by a private organisation. The home provides care for up to four children. The provider's overall aim is to support children and their families to reunite.

The home has been without a registered manager since November 2019.

**Visit dates:** 16 to 17 September 2020

**Previous inspection date:** 5 March 2020

**Previous inspection judgement:** Declined in effectiveness

## 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 identified the following widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit:

- Concerns about the health and safety of the building.
- The quality of accommodation is substandard.
- The home has been without a suitable registered manager for over 42 weeks.
- There is a lack of consistent and effective leadership and oversight of the home.
- There is a lack of staff continuity and suitable staff training and experience.
- A number of important requirements set at the last inspection have not been met.

### **The care of children**

The children do not receive positive messages about how they are valued. The quality of accommodation is substandard. There are paint-stained carpets and floors, stained and damaged walls and ceilings, a broken lounge window, poor paintwork, graffiti on doors, broken furniture and recessed bedroom lights hanging from the ceiling. Some damage is relatively recent and has not been speedily repaired. Other damage and poor-quality accommodation were identified at the last inspection and were evident at this visit.

The interim acting manager and core staff are individually caring towards the children. However, the children experience a lack of continuity of staff. For example, 17 different staff have worked at this home since 1 April 2020. Only three substantive staff, including the interim acting manager, have worked at the home for more than two months. This is not related to COVID-19. None of the newly recruited staff have previous experience of working at a children's home. As a result, this is a new and inexperienced staff team. The children's previous experiences mean that continuity of relationships and a suitably experienced staff team are even crucial to their long-term ability to thrive.

The staff have continued to support the children through COVID-19 and there has not been any demonstrable negative effect on the children's emotional or physical health. One child has enjoyed not having to go to school. Although this child refused to engage in work issued by the school, the staff have successfully engaged them in some education-related activities.

The children have been supported to maintain virtual, and later, appropriately socially distanced, contact with their families.

The children's experiences vary. The child who has recently moved in was supported effectively during the admission process and has begun to make positive relationships with some staff. Both children are making some positive progress and appear relatively settled and happy in their home. However, another child's placement ended abruptly as the home was not able to meet their needs.

## **The safety of children**

There are some serious concerns about the management and oversight of this home which have the potential to negatively affect children's safety and well-being. In some areas of the home, the poor-quality accommodation presents hazards to the children and the staff. The rear patio has a drop at the edge that is potentially dangerous. The staff described one of the children doing backflips off this area and jumping with their scooter off this area. There is no risk assessment to demonstrate that the provider has considered the risk or how to reduce it.

The garden gate has been removed. This means that members of the public may now enter the home's garden unchallenged. This does not promote children's privacy or ensure suitable security of the home's grounds.

Fire prevention arrangements are not consistently effective. One fire door has small holes in it and is missing intumescent strips, one door has a broken closure and another does not close. This failure places the children and staff at risk. One child likes to have their bedroom door propped open at night. However, there is no evidence of any discussions with the child to help an informed choice to be made. There is no risk assessment to demonstrate that the provider has considered the risk or how to reduce it.

Restraint records do not consistently include all of the required information. On one occasion, an agency member of staff, who has not undertaken suitable training, restrained a child. There is no information to suggest that the agency staff member did so without appropriate reason. However, the lack of suitable training means that the risk of harm to them or the child was not minimised effectively. On another occasion, the acting interim manager was involved in a restraint, yet the record of this has not been reviewed by a person independent of the event to provide a suitably critical eye.

The children's individual risk assessments and risk management plans are not effective. On occasion, they have been cut and pasted from other parts of the document and are confusing. This means that there is a lack of consistently clear and effective guidance for the staff on keeping the children safe.

## **Leaders and managers**

There is a lack of consistent and effective leadership and oversight of the home. There have been four responsible individuals in the past two years. The current responsible individual has brought some stability to the home, but has recently resigned. The previous registered manager left in November 2019 and the home has been without a suitable registered manager for over 42 weeks.

The provider is not monitoring the service effectively. The monthly independent visitor's reports detail the improvements that the visitor considers are required. Their reports detail ongoing concerns about the quality of accommodation and safety, yet

these have not been addressed. Requirements set at the last inspection in relation to the quality of accommodation and safety of the building remain outstanding or have been reset at this visit for different reasons. The concerns about inconsistent and ineffective management have therefore continued to increase since the last inspection.

Records are not consistently clearly and appropriately maintained. For example, complaints records do not evidence that children have received feedback on the outcome of their complaint.

The staff duty rosters do not clearly record who was on site at any given time. This is particularly important due to the high number of staff who have worked at the home since April 2020.

## 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
<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>use this understanding to deliver care that meets children’s needs and supports them to fulfil their potential.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to—</p> <p>meet the needs of each child; and</p> <p>enable each child to participate in the daily life of the home.</p> <p>(Regulation 6(1)(a)(b)(2)(c)(i)(ii))*</p>	<p>23/10/2020</p>

<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 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;</p> <p>that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child’s health.</p> <p>(Regulation 12(1)(2)(b)(d))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that there are clear and suitably detailed risk assessments in place for each child, that are consistently followed by staff. Furthermore, ensure that specific aspects of risk, such as the lack of security of the grounds and the drop from the patio, are risk assessed and suitable measures put in place to reduce risk.</p>	<p>30/10/2020</p>
<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> <p>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.</p> <p>(Regulation 13(1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(f)(h))*</p>	<p>23/10/2020</p>
<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>10/11/2020</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>ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child;</p> <p>ensure that the home’s workforce provides continuity of care to each child.</p> <p>(Regulation 13(1)(a)(b)(2)(c)(e))</p>	
<p>If the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005(a) applies to the home—</p> <p>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.</p> <p>(Regulation 25(2)(b))</p>	23/10/2020
<p>The registered provider must appoint a person to manage the children’s home if—</p> <p>there is no registered manager in respect of the home; and</p> <p>the registered provider—</p> <p>is an organisation or a partnership;</p> <p>does not satisfy regulation 28; or</p> <p>is not, or does not intend to be, in day-to-day charge of the home.</p> <p>(Regulation 27(1)(a)(b)(i)(ii)(iii))</p>	23/11/2020

\*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

## Recommendations

- Ensure that all incidents of control, discipline and restraint are subject to systems of regular scrutiny to ensure that their use is fair. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 46, paragraph 9.36)
- In particular, ensure a suitable independent review of each record of restraint by someone who is senior to any staff involved in, or witness to, the incident.

- Ensure that staff understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Record information on individual children 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)

## Children's home details

**Unique reference number:** 1183621

**Registered provider:** A & T Home Limited

**Registered provider address:** Plot 8, Maitland Road, Lion Barn Estate, Needham Market, Ipswich, Suffolk IP6 8NZ

**Responsible individual:** Joy Bradley

**Registered manager:** Post vacant

## Inspector

Joanna Heller, Social Care Inspector

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