



# ASPEN HOUSE

**STATEMENT OF PURPOSE  
JULY 2024**



**INVESTORS IN PEOPLE™**  
We invest in people Platinum

## **CONTENTS SUMMARY**

- Induction
- Values
- Aims and Objectives
- Aspen House Offer
- Status and Conditions
- Children's Rights
- Equality and Diversity
- Education
- Therapeutic Support
- Protection and Children
- Staff Team and Qualifications
- Learning and Development
- Admission Criteria
- Insurance
- Consultation
- Complaint

## **INTRODUCTION**

This document sets out the Statement of Purpose and function of the Aspen House as a residential children's home in line with regulation 16 of the Children's Home Regulations. The statement of purpose will provide information that is intended for a broad audience:

- Looked After Children (LAC)
- Parents of Children
- Aspen House Residential Care staff
- Local Authorities, health and social care trusts who place children or are considering placing them with the agency
- Ofsted
- General public

As Ascent Family Homes we aim to meet the following:

- The Care Standards Act 2000
- The Children's Act 1989
- The Children's Homes Regulations 2015
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Data Protection Act 1998
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010
- The Quality Care Standards 2015
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- The young person's guide to the Children and Families Act 2014
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Child Protection Procedures 5th Edition

Our statement of purpose will be reviewed and updated regularly by the Ascent Family Homes management team.

### OUR VALUES:

The Ascent Family Homes aims to set ourselves apart from many providers, as we promote a family and intentional parenting approach in all we deliver. We uphold therapeutic values that promote reparational development and a culture of excellence and child development for all the children in our care.

What makes us different:



- We will go above and beyond to ensure all children have a safe provision within our home and external engagements.
- Our team feel valued and is allowed to develop their skills, training, and career development.
- To ensure learning and development remain at the heart of what we do.
- To develop and implement a collective culture of excellence in all aspects of delivery and engagement with staff and young people.

As an organisation, we challenge ourselves to live its values through engagement with all children, employees, and external parties as appropriate. We affirm our position and commitment to supporting all children to recover from all trauma and child development experiences.

## **AIMS & OBJECTIVES.**

Ascent Family Homes has a therapeutic approach that supports children and young people within our residential care. We support children who display a wide range of complex and challenging care needs, by delivering individual and bespoke therapeutic interventions.

Our approach to residential care support is called 'Intentional Parenting.' This approach encapsulates all our interventions and strategies to support and engage with children with high care needs. Our approach ensures the whole professional team has a clear understanding of the therapeutic model via our team around the child approach.

In practical terms, this means we are not wedded to any fixed point of view about placement support and have explored a myriad of approaches that have the most impact on children. We remain committed to building positive relationships with young people aiming to meet them on their map of the world.

We aim to meet each child where they are at in life and learn to view life from their experience and perspective, this approach enables us to build positive relationships and engage them on their onward journey. The Ascent staff team intentionally parent children throughout their journey to recovery through intensive support and mentoring. We aim to build relationships with young people that are safe and supportive.

All children in our care are subject to individualised and diverse engagement strategies, these include mentoring, coaching, creative talent management and having access to external support cumulative activities.

## **Intentional Parenting Model**

Intentional Parenting is our model of how we support our children. We believe the onus is on adults to respond to the unmet needs of children. It is challenging to care for traumatised children, so the network needs to be

trained, and attuned to help them to develop the ability to understand the underlying issue of the child's presenting behaviours.

We believe that our staff team and the wider professional network have a duty of care to act intentionally in all interactions with vulnerable children by nurturing affirmation, love, safety, structure, and challenge. These interactions are attempts to meet the deficits of their previous parental experiences but most importantly to help them to learn some strategies on how to cope with their frustrations and to enable them to gain skills to move on positively with their lives.

We believe that no one theory meets the needs of human beings, so we have drawn upon and worked within existing theoretical approaches such as attachment, systemic theory, and psychodynamic approaches.

# Intentional Parenting Model

1

## Referral-information gathering

Referral from Local Authority  
Risk Assessment of presenting needs  
Placement plan

ascent  
children services



2

## Placement

placement with carer  
Settling period  
Safe care plan  
LAC review meeting

3

## Assesment Trauma and Response Assessment

support young person and foster family through therapeutic thought  
Trauma and response assessment  
Support plan agreed



4

## Support Plan

Support the young person through our intentional action and individualised support and or mentoring , key work and review



5

## Permanence and security

Support young people to return to family or remain in care  
support consistent parenting, coping strategies , increased understanding of circumstance.  
Help young person build networks.



# ASCENT TRAUMA AND RESPONSE ASSESSMENT

Is framework we have devised to understand a child's story and their experience of trauma and loss. By having this understanding, we can devise a therapeutic plan, appropriate intervention and importantly, support the residential team to best support the young person in a placement to move forward.

## THE YOUNG PERSON

We believe by exploring children's past, present and predicted their future outcomes give us the best indicators for understanding children's unmet needs.



## THE NETWORK

The network works with the same assumptions regarding the needs of the young person

## FAMILY

The team better understand the child's family history family norms , and interactions



## INFORMED STAFF AND CARERS

The team around the child is informed and curious about the young person history and trauma. The team can support the young person in an informed way

## A THERAPEUTIC SUPPORT PLAN

The therapeutic plan is appropriate and supports the residential team to intervene and engage with the young person to help them heal from past traumas.



**ascent**  
children services

Aspen House will work within a therapeutic approach which is based on our intentional parenting strategy. This approach has been devised by Ascent and is based on psychodynamic approaches to attachment problems and trauma-based behavioural alterations. The overall aim is to enhance the opportunities and key factors such as:

- Children's life expectancy and chances
- Improve placement suitability via effective risk-matching processes
- Identify talent and manage opportunity objectives for each child.
- Educational progression and career development
- Promotion of creative innovation and self-confidence
- The development of personal life skills and independence
- To remain safe, well and protected from harm or neglect.

### The Trauma and response assessment:

The TARA is a framework we have devised to understand a child's story and their experience of trauma and loss. We believe that exploring children's past, present and predicted future outcomes give us the best indicators for understanding children's unmet needs. By having this understanding, we can devise a therapeutic plan and appropriate intervention and, importantly, support for the staff: best to support our children at Aspen House progress. We must ensure the impact of a child's trauma is not lost or dismissed.

### What does this look like for children and young people?

In real terms, it means that I work alongside the wider therapeutic network to appropriately risk-match each child to Aspen House. We must have a robust and detailed understanding of each child's journey into care. I aim to ensure all my staff have a genuine understanding of the young person's experience, not just words in a referral and challenging behaviours. To understand the impact and hurt each child has experienced, we uphold a high standard of care from staff

such as warmth and safety. In turn, we prepare for the most common pushbacks such as testing of boundaries, relived trauma, challenges and in some cases intentional self-sabotage of placement.

### Aspen House Team around the child:

At Aspen House, we work within a (TAC) model approach which effectively provides all children with an internal team of support. All children are aware of the dedicated team of staff within their TAC and are aware that despite the staffing ROTA, a member of their TAC will always be present within the home. To develop the TAC model all staff attended regular TAC meetings chaired by a manager and external therapeutic lead. These TAC meetings provide a collective case review of each child and allow all TAC members to:

- To meet each child at their map of the world- Identify triggers and review a child's background story into care.
- Review the current and historic risk factors, for each child.
- Plan and update risk management plans for each child.
- Review and update support plans for each child.
- Monitor and measure outcome progression for each child.
- Agree on a responsible approach to identify talent, risk and planned key work sessions.
- Explore the thoughts, views, and feedback from each child.
- Staff to seek constructive feedback and support from management.
- Identify staff training and ongoing development objectives for the service.
- Plan and discussion the best way to advocate on the behalf of each child within LAC reviews or professional meetings
- Explore planned activities for the home and all children.

The TAC case review meeting provides all staff with an opportunity to address issues that are impacting each child at Aspen House. We explore how we can offer therapeutic lead sessions, which are often targeted around specific areas, i.e., problem-solving, keeping I safe, managing anger, and getting involved in groups or clubs. The young person can also access more structured therapeutic intervention to help them process trauma.

### Aspen House Positive Relationships:

We conducted regular staff and young people evaluations of service and practice which highlighted that staff felt extremely proud of our commitment to creating positive relationships. Staff shared that they felt his approach has been positive for them as employees and peer-by-peer relationships within the home. We have also acknowledged the importance to include external service providers, local authorities, suitable birth parents and the wider professional network.

We will remain committed to demonstrating positive and empowering relationships that embed firm-measured outcomes.

In terms of children in our home, we uphold diversity in their independence, talent and confidence is extremely rewarding. In all aspects of our home, we believe positive outcomes implement effective safeguarding provisions of care, our formed relationships have created us to risk assess potential harm, especially based on our discussions regarding safety in the community. An example of this is our children will often communicate with staff who overheard a discussion in the community or school, which in turn provides us with insight into their areas of development and educational need.

### Reparational Interventions and outcomes for children:

As a therapeutic family home, we value and promote positive and responsive accountability, which in turn forms productive and trusting bonds/relationships within our home. We all collectively acknowledge the importance to create a culture that creates open forums to repair and forgive current and past experiences.



Our approach is inclusive to all within the home, which in turn includes employees, social workers, and family.

Aspen House is an extension of Aspen House which is an Outstanding Ofsted-rated service. As an organisation we have maintained a well-developed home that lives examples of positive engagement, development, and reparational success for all children.

Many of our children have experienced lives that did not educate or teach them how to manage their emotions and feelings of anger towards others. At Aspen House we believe that “All things broken can be repaired”, this well-known statement within our home encourages open communication and a willingness to discuss and address concerning factors.

We have collectively noticed remarkable achievements with all children in our home, who have developed an understanding of empathy and reflective approaches.

The Aspen House staff team have also had to, unfortunately, had to manage challenges such as physical and verbal assault from some children. In some cases, we could have pursued legal or criminal action, however, as a staff team, we uphold that our internal reparational cause and consequence approach is more impactful to the development of children. Aspen House has a firm and fair response to such incidents, which includes the following:

#### Reparational Examples:

- A child to acknowledge what they have done wrong and accept full accountability for their actions.
- A child to reflect on the event/incident and openly communicate their thoughts and feelings, alongside the impact this has on others in the home.
- Cross-reference the incident/event in line with our home rules and expectations.
- Staff to have a creative approach to delivering informal education to a child, to learn from this. An example will be for property damage, to assist staff in repairing an item.
- Actively attend and engage in shared time with a staff member or attend therapy sessions.
- To offer a reduction sanction that gives the child the opportunity to understand our examples of empathy and forgiveness.

Aspen House staff have created a joint ownership culture within our home which allows staff the opportunity to also display the reflection of practice with our children. We aim to continuously aim to create an active voice for all within the home, which is well-balanced.

#### Consultation, feedback, and the voices of Eden Young People:

Aspen House continues to promote and values the views, thoughts, and feelings of all children within the home. A monthly community meeting is in place and attended by all, to explore this in detail. We are fortunate to have 4 young boys who openly communicate their views and feel comfortable expressing themselves with staff.

All children in our home are aware of their options to report or make a complaint, this includes internal and external pathways. We also display visual posters throughout the home that support this process, alongside our complaints and compliments box. To encourage our young people to actively engage in the service evaluation process, we have created quizzes and offered incentives that are tailored to their interests. Our feedback forms are kept on file and are also shared with our “Thoughts and Feelings” champion lead who is responsible for leading these discussions and providing detailed feedback to and for all highlighted requests.

Aspen House is a 5-bedroom semi-detached townhouse, in the residential area of Coulsdon in Southeast London. The home operates as a residential step-up/down service for boys and between at the point of placement aged between 11-16 years. The house will offer placements for 5 young people. The house has two wings that are fully contained which will accommodate boys and separately at night, but they will interact across the whole house like any family during the day. The wings will be separated by a central ground floor corridor that is fob-controlled.

The home will support young people over 18-24 months to reintegrate into a foster family or return home and move on to supported living age appropriate. For some young people we will provide a transition service for independence, which will be a referral opportunity to another Ascent children's home location.

Ascent family homes are committed to providing high-quality accommodation and access to therapeutic support. There are five good-sized bedrooms available to the young people, a therapy/sensory room, creative space. Also, the house has two spacious living rooms with comfy chairs, a sofa, and large TV to add to the homely atmosphere, allowing an environment for social interaction and connection plus seating for games, reading, art, music, drama, and other activities There is a well-equipped furnished kitchen with a dining area. The back garden has space for outdoor recreation and plans for a fruit and vegetable cultivation.

The house is comfortable and spacious, which reflects a homely and non-institutional environment. young people their personal space that they can personalise.

The home is in a safe community in a residential part of southeast London close to all local amenities including public transport, parks, and recreational facilities. We understand that many young people placed in a residential environment have already suffered significant trauma in their life and are often emotionally and behaviourally dysregulated. Ascent provide a stable, safe, and nurturing home environments for children to live in.

Aspen House intends to receive young people following the appropriate matching, and assessment process. We aim to provide a period of stability and intensive support for the young person by using a key working system. We will match children according to the other residents of the home to ensure we maintain safety and security for all the young people. Each young person will have the opportunity to be an active member of the local community and engage in positive activities.

The Ascent staff team will be positive role models for children and promote values of inclusion for all people. We will use our networks to provide opportunities for young people to actively engage outside the home with other organisations and signpost them appropriately to promote their interests and learning.

Aspen House will offer:

Intensive therapeutic support and care to help young people transition into families.

- High-quality care for young people who are looked after in our residential care.
- 5 comfortable bedrooms personalised to the young persons need.
- A commitment to supporting each child/young person as an individual with unique needs.
- 24-hour support for children/young people.
- A community-based service.
- A commitment to the recruitment of residential care staff from diverse backgrounds/experiences.
- A consideration of ethnicity, gender, sexuality and disability of the children and young people when making placement and matching decisions.
- The Aspen House team will be committed to affirming the identity of children and young people to ensure they have a balanced sense of self and support the issues and challenges facing young males who are in the care system.
- A commitment to the ongoing learning and development of residential care staff, to support them in achieving the highest standards of care.
- A commitment to developing staff skills to meet the most complex needs of children and young people.
- Placements that are safe, nurturing, and protective, where children and young people are treated with respect and dignity.
- Children and young people will be encouraged, nurtured, and supported in a family setting where shared values are upheld, and their individual needs and differences are respected.
- A commitment to managing risk proactively with young people and helping them to find safer alternatives to their challenging behaviours.
- An ongoing dialogue with the children and young people we care for, along with carers and the local authority about how we can improve our services.
- All young people will have access to the complaint procedure via the Clear-care software, and each young person receives a children's guide which contains a complaint telephone number and email.
- The home's policies are available upon request and are downloadable on the service's website.

## Outcomes for children and young people

Ascent is committed to improving the life chances of the children we work with and supporting them to achieve the best of their abilities regarding their: health, personal and social life. We hope this will support them to re-engage with living in a family environment with the right support.

We aim to help young people to:

- Recognise their uniqueness, worth and sense of self.
- Enhance their life and social skills.
- Build trust.
- Understand and show awareness of personal, social and health needs.
- Learn skills to cope with their needs, emotionally and psychologically.
- Learn how to advocate for themselves.
- Respect the dignity of those around them.
- Live in a family
- Embrace a new experience as a positive opportunity.

At Aspen House there will be a joint ownership culture within our home, which allows young people to express their voice and space to reflect on their lived experience. Our culture promotes a positive environment that cultivates laughter, fun and creativity whilst allowing young people to enjoy being their age and learn and developing the necessary resilience they need to thrive. This includes learning from mistakes, repairing relationships, being challenged to achieve and accepting life's challenges. We impose reasonable boundaries on young people and will hold them to account.

We aim to continuously promote the voice of the young person and actively listen to their feedback through, keywork and consultation sessions and house meetings

Ascent believes that all things broken can be fixed and we promote this within our staff team and child peer-by-peer relationships.

Reparational planned outcomes:

- A child to acknowledge what they have done wrong and accept full accountability for their actions.
- A child to reflect on the event/incident and openly communicate their thoughts and feelings, alongside the impact this has on others in the home.
- Cross-reference the incident/event in line with our home rules and expectations.
- Staff to have a creative approach to delivering informal education to a child, to learn from this. An example will be for property damage, to assist staff to repair an item.
- Actively attend and engage in shared time with a staff member or attend therapy sessions.
- To offer a reduction sanction which gives the child the opportunity to understand our examples of empathy and forgiveness.

## STATUS & CONDITIONS

Ascent Fostering Agency is an independent fostering Provider (IFP), a private limited company registered under the Companies Act 1985 (Company Number 08252409). In January 2023 Ascent fostering expanded its business development to operate the Aspen House children's home. Aspen and Aspen House will be trading entities of Ascent Fostering Agency Ltd; its residential provision operates as Ascent family homes.

In March 2022 Ascent Fostering Agency successfully obtained an Outstanding from Ofsted. Aspen House, our 1st children's home was rated Outstanding in July 2023.

### Young People's wishes and feelings

We continue to adopt a young person-centered approach and believe the more we consult/empower the young people and get them involved in the decisions that affect their lives, the more they can contribute to the life in the home, and thus the more likely they are to have a successful and positive experience of the placement. All children are consulted and play an active role in their care; therefore, we will routinely seek the views of the young people. We ensure that as much as possible, their views are taken into consideration when making decisions that affect their personal lives.

The young people are encouraged to contribute to all recording processes particularly their risk assessment, support plan and incident reports. Young people can read through recordings made about them by staff. This includes their review reports, mentoring reports, incident reports, sanctions, rewards, and restraint recording. Young people can write about any concerns they have about what has been written about them. The clear care database can allow access for young people.

- House meetings are regular and are opportunities for the household to discuss any issues brought up by either the young people or the staff. Any issues that cannot be resolved will be taken to the staff (team) meeting, and feedback given to young people about any decisions made.
- Young people are welcome to challenge any working practice and are encouraged to make any suggestions for change. We aim to consult in ways that are sensitive and respectful to all religious, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic needs. The use of an interpreter and/or advocate whenever necessary in consultation with young people.
- We empower and support young people in moving forward with their lives and developing healthy attachments and independent living skills by “doing with not doing for”.
- Ascent has a zero-tolerance concerning racism, bullying and any form of discrimination and violence against a person.

## Children's Rights

Ascent is committed to promoting the rights of young people, as stipulated under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child regarding Articles 2, 3, 6 and 12. The young people are consulted about their care and the plans that are made for them. They are informed that this does not mean that they will always get what they want but that their views must be taken seriously.

Sometimes the wishes and views of the young person are not always in their best interests, and it is important that we record these differences and why decisions have been made. We will always include where a young person has expressed that they do not agree and allow young people to add their views.

Young people have the right to access the information that has been written about them, and depending on their age and understanding, for that information to be explained to them. We will offer support to young people who request to view their written files.

We believe that all children and young people who live in the home have the right to have their say and to make a difference in the services they receive. The home encourages young people to access independent advocacy through our independent visitor if they are unhappy about the care that they receive or their overall care plan. Aspen House will signpost children towards the national youth advisory service which advocates for looking after young people.

- We give young people the opportunities to participate in surveys or consultations to give their views on the care system and being a looked after child.
- All young people get a copy of the Ascent complaints procedure and children's guide.
- We will instigate a service interview each month with the service manager as a good practice.
- We also appoint an independent auditor who carries out our regulation 44 on monthly basis, part of the duty of his duties involves interviewing young people to find out how they are doing in the home and advising the home's manager on areas that need improvement.
- Young people will be informed at their earliest admission to the home that we are regulated by Ofsted which operates to ensure their rights are protected and promoted, and it can be contacted should they wish to.

The contact details for Ofsted National Business Unit [NBU] are:

Telephone 0300 123 1231 (and then select option 1)

Email: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

Web: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

Children's Commissioner for England

Sanctuary Buildings

20 Great Smith Street

London

SW1P 3BT

020 7783 8330.

Email [events.occ@childrenscommissioner.gov.uk](mailto:events.occ@childrenscommissioner.gov.uk) Web:

[www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk](http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)

Equality & Diversity

Aspen House is committed to promoting equality of opportunities in all our working practices and operating principles. Within Aspen House, we will employ staff from a range of backgrounds to reflect the diversity of those whom we support. The support planning process will consider the cultural, linguistic, and religious needs of the young people in the service.

Young people will be supported in attending appropriate services and celebrating any festivals which relate to their individual religious/or cultural beliefs. At Aspen House, we aim to ensure that positive arrangements are made to help young people observe their religious, racial, cultural, as well as their linguistic identity and heritage, whilst supporting the young people to develop their own identities.

We also believe in widening the cultural knowledge base of our young people and encouraging them to embrace the community's, wider society's, diversity. This also means engaging young people in conversations about differences and providing the means to explore issues.

Education

Ascent emphasizes the value of education as a means of enhancing life opportunities and personal satisfaction. We seek to support young people in formal education and to build strong learning plans if the child is not in school or college. The management team regularly track and monitor educational outcomes for all children and have a dedicated educational lead champion, to enhance talent and development.

We are committed to children achieving the best outcomes holistically. We work closely with Virtual School leads and the child's social worker to assist young people in getting into the right educational provision for them and succeeding in school.

All young people are expected to be in full-time education and engage in work or training opportunities. We have the same expectations and responsibility as staff to ensure that young people attend school. All young people will have Personal Education Plans (PEP) and or EHCP which we will actively support and monitor.

Each child has a timetable which promotes educational progression and attendance, we aim for this approach to be the norm within our home.

- We take an active interest in our young people's education. We assist them with homework and incorporate attendance into our reward system, especially when a young person is struggling to attend education.
- We promptly work with their education provision to address any issues that the young people face, at their earliest convenience.
- All children have access to computers where they can access training, resource, and homework to facilitate their studies.
- Young people who have difficulty in school/college will be supported as we address underperformance.
- If a young person is excluded will be supported to continue studying at home or in the community. Through the assistance of the Virtual School, we will access extra tuition for young people who need extra support with their studies.
- We have an excellent track record of getting school refusers , and young people who struggle with education back in to specialised or main stream provisions.

#### Monitoring Educational Attainment

We are committed to monitoring and recording our young people's education progression and attainment and supporting any concern that we observe or that is raised with us to ensure that young people are achieving consistently their planned targets.

We work with education provisions to ensure that young people's work is focused and sufficiently challenging.

We review their needs for additional support and specific resources regularly.

To demonstrate progress against targets, an attainment which improves behavioural self-management is important so needs to be recorded. Over time, significant improvement is celebrated and areas for further development are targeted. Behaviour easily influences learning and seriously affects outcomes.

The purpose of the Personal Education Plan (PEP) is to review young people's needs and future targets to ensure it is still relevant. All PEPs are reviewed termly with support from the Virtual School and Designated Teachers.



We are also committed to supporting our young people to be assessed when they have unidentified struggles that hinder their education attainment such as supporting them to have an Education and Health Plan assessment to know if they will benefit from having ECH Plan.

We will encourage our young people to engage in the opportunity of learning personal, social, health education and vital life skills. There will be various psycho-educational groups that will cover these subject areas, to encourage a real understanding of how these areas can promote healthy psychological well-being in everyday life.

### Health and Wellbeing

Ascent will continue to support young people to manage their health: e.g., to register with GPs, Dentists, opticians, sexual health clinics, CAMHS/Drug and Alcohol Services as appropriate, and will be supported in attending appointments. The staff team support children to maintain healthy meal and dietary choices through planning with them. Communal meals are part of the therapeutic process and provide an opportunity for education about healthy lifestyles, as well as group interaction and bonding.

### Therapeutic support for Aspen House:

Our therapeutic support is devised by the Organisational Psychotherapist and Registered Manager and is tailored to the identified history and background history experiences of each child.

### Therapeutic Practice and Values:

- To remain committed to our intentional parenting strategies for children and their families.
- To review and improve our therapeutic model and opportunities for all children in our care.

# Therapeutic support in Ascent

## Referral

- Case discussion LA / Ascent
- Fostering Director/Manager and Therapeutic consultants.
- Referral and Ascent Assessment
- Agree fee with LA if appropriate and agree intervention with SW.



## Intervention

- Agree approach and matching the relevant intervention-Duration.
- Life story work
- Mentoring
- 1:1 intervention
- Sensory attachment work
- Attachment based play therapy or creative therapies



## Review

- Review and report to stake holders
- what has worked and what hasn't worked
- evaluation



## Next Steps

- Is further sign posting for additional services required?
- Do they need a check in?
- Extensions



ascent  
children services

ascent  
fostering  
agency

ascent  
family  
homes

- To implement tailored therapeutic interventions for each child based on identified need, to recover from the trauma and consequently enjoy their childhood.
- To support all children to feel loved and supported by Aspen House staff, feeling accepted and understood via inclusive practice.

Aspen House supports young people who have experienced significant trauma, separation, and loss. We recognise that these young people present with a high level of emotional need. As an organisation, we support staff to gain knowledge via a wide breadth of training, which supports all staff to understand children's attachment style and the 'inner working model'.

We will use the PACE (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy) approach to support our parenting of young people.

When we use the term therapeutic: it is a way of caring for children that supports them heal, and the residential staff go alongside with them on their journey. We achieve this by offering planned therapeutic help and support over time.

The focus of the work is to recognise and acknowledge the unmet needs of the young person and to understand and address the impact of early traumatic experiences on the children (for example, serious loss, neglect, abuse, or extreme attachment difficulties). Such experiences are likely to have had severe consequences on the child's capacity to be parented or cared for, to make friends, trust, or be part of the group, to learn and be taught and just respond to everyday life experiences. These difficulties are unlikely to improve without intensive and skilled therapeutic support on a 24-hour-a-day basis.

To develop the staff team, we provide a holistic menu of training that helps them to understand the complexities and equip them with skills and techniques for working with children and young people who have experienced trauma. We also provide an extensive training programme which includes a four-day training course in Therapeutic Child Care and communication for children.

We have devised an internal therapeutic course that is devised by our therapeutic consultants, the course gives grounding to all staff on the model of therapeutic children care we use. But it prepares them to work in a way that is not behavioural but supports young people by helping us understand what a young person's behaviour is communicating.

While some young people may have access to CAMHS, we find that many are often reluctant to engage, for fear of being labelled or misunderstood. Our Organisational Psychotherapist will meet young people at their 'map of the world.' By this, we mean that young people will decide how and where they would like to engage in the process.

Support services available to children and young people:

- In association with Reaching Higher, a children's charity, children and young people within the Aspen House network can access a range of supports, clubs, and residential camps.
- Personal mentoring
- Weekly Clubs include a football academy, creative arts – dance, drama, mixed martial arts, music, and filmmaking.

- Physical, Social, Health & Education (PSHE) workshops on bullying, managing conflict, budgeting, and leadership skills.
- Support with regards to CSE
- Therapy & Counselling
- Annual leisure activities, including outings and trips
- To attend Eden's weekly therapeutic programme.

Aspen House reviews outcomes for children alongside the statutory review process and would agree with young people's measurable outcomes to support their development. We remain committed to ensuring young people maintain appropriate contact with family and friends and the service has a family facility room which can be used for contacts. Aspen House will work under the children's care plans to ensure they can meet with their network safely.

Friends are welcome to visit at reasonable times, as set out in the house rules. Staff will monitor friends' visit, their behaviours, the length of visits and the number of friends visiting at a time, which would be at the staff's discretion.

Any visitor that is felt to be jeopardising the welfare of the young person, another resident, or staff, will be asked to leave the premises. If the visitor is a significant person in the young person's life, the social worker will be informed and depending on the level of concern, contact arrangements could be reviewed.

### Protection of Children

Ensuring the safety and security of young people is paramount at Aspen House.

Young people have their own bedroom each with a lockable cabinet to keep their most personal belongings. The home has a security system, that ensures doors and windows are appropriately secured. We have a 24-hour CCTV recording system that monitors the front and hallways internally and the drives side, and rear of the premises externally.

Recordings are backed up to the cloud and staff can view this data, but images are only assessable for downloading by the Registered Manager and Deputy Manager. The Ascent behavioural management policy outlines and guides to and for staff who work directly with young people on positive strategies for managing young people's behaviours.

Ascent has an open and transparent approach with all children to ensure they are clear on what are acceptable and unacceptable behaviours. As a group, we believe in openness of communication and that young people also take responsibility for creating the sanctions to self-manage behaviour.

At Aspen House, we believe in helping young learn how to self-regulate their emotional states and behaviours with the use of sensory activities, and foods, and providing them with an enriching environment. This ensures that the environment is calm, and peaceful throughout the journey and household rituals that create certainty, safety, and security.

It is the responsibility of staff to maintain safe and appropriate boundaries with and between residential care staff and young people. Consistency and fairness are key ingredients to developing a safe and positive home environment. We endeavour to promote a culture where control is maintained through positive relationships based on respect and understanding between young people and staff.

We ensure the well-being of our young people by establishing consistent boundaries and structures in the home. Through positive reinforcement, respect, and negotiation, young people can contribute to setting many of these boundaries. Natural and logical consequences are encouraged to help children and young people learn to develop cause-and-effect thinking.

Aspen House is a mixed-gender home with two separate living environments. We will encourage healthy and positive joint engagement between all young people, as appropriate. However, have created separate living environments for our male and female young people. Ascent understands and recognises the importance of effective safety management, which will be implemented and overseen by our dedicated staff for both sides of our home.

In line with our current Ascent Family Home expectations, our rules will demonstrate the importance of appropriate dress, touching, and the general boundaries in the home.

The rules and expectations will be made clear, as boys and will not have access to each other's bedrooms or living environments. We will introduce and operate a waking night staffing system, alongside our daily staffing profile for the daytime. A total of two wake in night staff will be appropriately monitored at Aspen House during the night.

The home will emphasize respect and help young people manage appropriate relationships as adolescents. We know that mixed home has their benefits and challenges, but we believe this environment will be the best to normalise our young people. Ascent will continue to effectively manage our internal suitability assessment of needs for each young person, which requires matching the young people in placement.

The team also believe that methods of control and restraint can only have the desired impact within the context of positive relationships existing between staff and young people. Communication, negotiation, and mediation are important skills that the team use to help young people to address unacceptable behaviour. Within this overall context, the emphasis and aim of the team are to promote, acknowledge and reward positive behaviour whilst supporting young people to unlearn inappropriate behaviours.

All staff are trained in PRICE restraint, we will only impose the use of restraint as an absolute last resort. As an organisation, we believe that our day-to-day de-escalation and positive relationships, assist us to reduce potential incidents or challenging near-miss incidents. PRICE training is a therapeutic lead service that understands our values and aims to safeguard and prevent restraint or the use of physical touch

Under The Children's Home Regulations 2015 and Aspen House's policies and procedures, we have approved and prohibited sanctions. Although the emphasis at Aspen House is on safe and consistent approaches within the context of positive relationships and rewarding positive behaviour, there are times when sanctions and reparations are deemed necessary. At Aspen House, the following sanctions/reparations are used:

**Restorative Approach:** When a young person's behaviour is causing another young person(s), residential care staff or member of public distress, we use mediation to support the relationship and the young person may be supported to restore relationships via a three-way meeting with support.

**Reparation/Restitution:** Logical consequences may be used, for example, if a young person has caused criminal damage, they may help by re-painting walls or removing graffiti. Wherever possible the police will not involve in issues of criminal damage except in extreme circumstances.

**Repayment:** A natural consequence may be used if a young person misuses money that has been agreed for something (a haircut, bus fare/train fare/taxi fare, clothes), and an agreed amount is paid back each week. This will never be more than two-thirds of the total pocket money.

**Pocket money:** Pocket money can be spent under supervision as part of a harm reduction programme if this has been identified by Risk Assessment. All young people will be encouraged to use a Go Henry parent bank card and pocket money/spending will be processed via this method.

**Withhold of privileges:** Access to privileges could be withheld such as access to the internet and music studio/games time, however, this must be managed in the understanding that the withheld privilege does not impend on a young person's education nor used in a punitive way.

When we use any of the above, young people should always know why there are boundaries, and expectations and certain behaviour are not unacceptable. Young people are supported to understand and relate to why a consequence or sanction has been used. In this way, young people are more likely to want to address the issue. Any of the sanctions that are used above are recorded and the manager checks and monitors their use and impact on the behaviour of the young people.

Aspen House uses PRICE as its de-escalation and restraint approach; positive handling (restraint) is only used in certain situations.

A member of the residential team is the designated PRICE trainer; all staff will be trained with annual refresher. This is to enable all staff to develop skills in de-escalation, have an awareness of permissible forms of holding, and be informed witnesses to any holding or restraint.

We expect that all trained staff have a full understanding of all personal-centred non-restrictive measures, before enforcing any form of restrictive measures or holds. Any restraint will be recorded and reviewed to ensure that it was the most appropriate action and in line with our policies.

For example, where there is concern about the safety of the young people, residential care staff/other people or where serious damage to the person/property is likely to occur. Restraint is the last approach and other measures should always be prioritised.

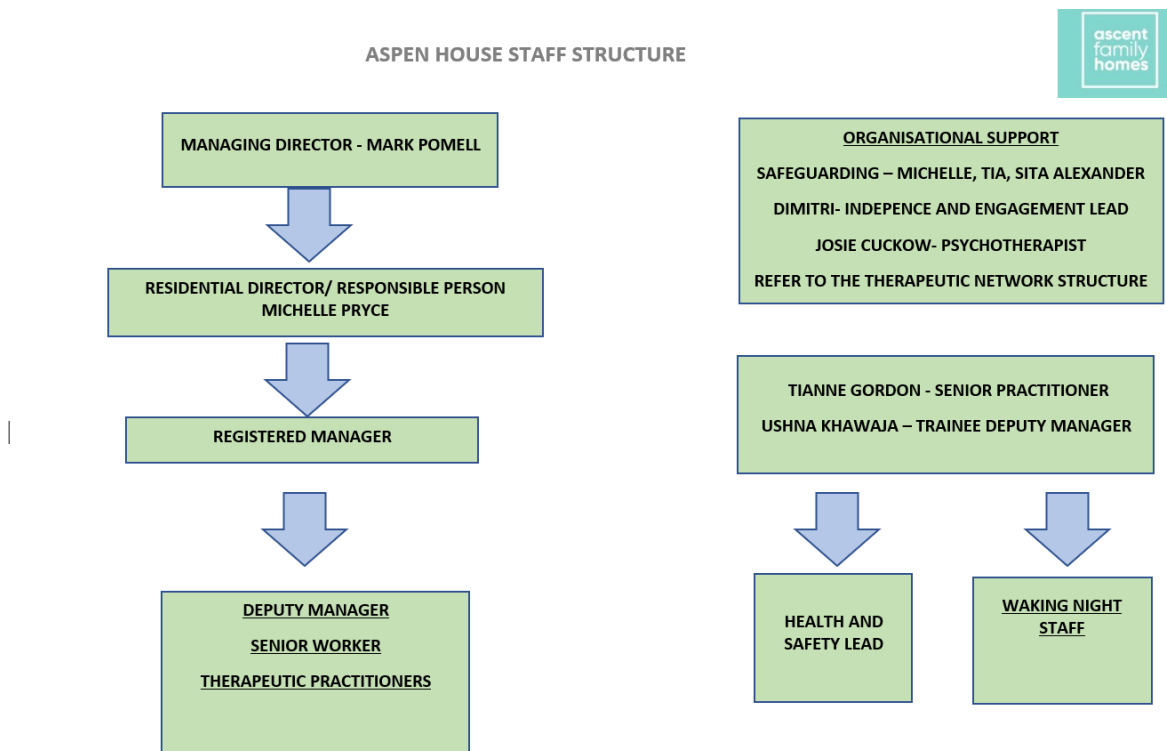
As we work with young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties who express their struggles through challenging behaviours and may be involved in incidents, we will ensure that we consistently review the incidents and ensure that young people and staff are part of debriefs following an incident. This gears towards repairing relationships between staff and young people.

All residential care staff will have their practice reviewed as appropriate to ensure the safety of all.

### The Management Team

Aspen House is part of Aspen House Fostering Agency Ltd which is the Registered Providers.

The staffing structure operates with a complement of a Registered Manager, Deputy Managers, Senior Practitioners and 10 Therapeutic /Waking Night Practitioners who work within a structured staffing profile rota. The use of agency staff will be provided in extreme or emergencies, however, we have a consistent cohort of agency staff to ensure we maintain consistency and trusting relationships.



### Katie Wilson-Downie- Registered Manager for Aspen House

I am Katie Wilson-Downie, I am the Registered Manager for Aspen House. My background is in management for children’s residential and semi-independence. I have also been a supervising social worker in fostering for around 4 years also.

My academic qualifications are a Behavioural Science undergraduate degree and a postgraduate degree in Social Work. I have been a kinship foster carer for a teen in my family, and she successfully moved into her independent flat at 19.

I became interested in this field because I have care experience myself. I am very passionate about supporting young people who face challenges, and my expertise is supporting adolescents who have experienced trauma. I am excited to join the Ascent Family team and will remain committed to supporting my service, young people, and staff team.

### Michelle Pryce-Morally (Residential Director/Responsible Individual)

Michelle joined Ascent in 2021 and implemented Aspen House, leading the service to obtain Outstanding in 2023 and 2024. She continues to be a part of the Ascent Children Services team and focuses on developing Deputy Managers into the roles of Registered Managers.

Michelle has held various job role functions within children's services with close to 14 years in leadership management. Michelle is passionate about child development and has continuously remained committed to delivering effective, life-changing positive outcomes for the children within our care. A key and crucial aspect of Michelle's day-to-day management is the review of safeguarding and reflective practice.

Michelle holds a Leadership and Management qualification and has further committed to children's social care training and development

Michelle is also the safeguarding lead for residential.

### Mark Pomell, Dip S.W.; M.A. Management Studies, Managing Director (Registered individual)

Mark is a qualified social work manager. He has over 35 years of experience in social care. Mark has worked at a senior management level in both the statutory and private sectors. He has been responsible for the delivery services for children spanning, LAC, Adoption, family placements, and Children with disabilities. Mark has led teams to deliver high-quality services consistently and is committed to ensuring the best outcomes for young people.

### Mark Hobbs, Commercial Director

Qualifying as a Chartered Accountant with Ernst & Young in 2002, Mark has over a decade of experience in senior financial management, including senior roles at FTSE 100 companies. Mark has also spent over 17 years developing and leading youth work with young people. In 2010, Mark founded a youth charity called Reaching Higher, which has quickly grown into a thriving organisation delivering outstanding results in the community. Mark combines his passion for seeing young people thrive with his management experience at Aspen House Residential House.

### Deputy Management Team

In line with the Leadership and Management Standards, Ascent has worked hard to explore a Trainee Deputy Management Team pathway. We believe in people management and personal career development for our staff team, which we have found successful to date. We aim to build a Deputy Management structure that develops our staff team and enhances our therapeutic values and culture.

Throughout the year 2023, we trained deputy managers within the business in readiness for the opening of this service. This process begins 4 months before the service opening and the candidates have a comprehensive learning and development programme. Our Deputy Managers report to the Registered Manager and provide line management to the frontline practitioner staff team.

### Management Expectations:

The Registered Manager continues to report to the Responsible Individual and both alongside the wider senior team oversees the following:

- The organisation's vision and mission
- Quality Standards & Management Systems
- Safeguarding
- Fulfilling statutory duties and responsibilities
- The values to be promoted throughout Ascent family homes Residential.
- The strategic direction and goals of the organisation
- The organisation's policies
- The annual business & development plan
- Major financial expenditure decisions

### The Ascent Staff Team and Qualifications:

We have recruited a diverse selection of staff who hold various qualifications and experience within childcare settings. Ascent funded NVQ qualifications for staff who require additional training and development objectives, we also support staff to work towards their development objectives. Our staff are qualified or are working towards suitable and enhanced qualifications, as we are committed to becoming a forever learning organisation.

All staff will receive a structured induction and 6-month probationary assessment. We will ensure our staff have adequate skills, qualifications and experience required to safeguard and support our young people.

To track and monitor staff training and development I have created a training matrix template, which tracks attendance and refresher training due. All staff have attended annual first aid and completed level 1 and 2 safeguarding refresher training. Aspen House remains a multi-skilled team who delivers workshops to the team based on experience and personal expertise.

As an organisation we will commission external providers to deliver first aid, safeguarding, Lado and contextual safeguarding.

#### Staff Expectations:

- All staff to have or work towards suitable qualifications, training, and support.
- Ascent Family homes (Aspen House) have all required insurances, job descriptions, employment contracts, annual personal development plans, and probation reviews and are appropriately DBS checked.
- All staff including managers receive supervision and personal development appraisals following their roles and responsibilities.

We intend to recruit a balanced team of male and female residential care staff to support young people appropriately and to promote diversity in the group, these values will extend to our equal opportunities' recruitment.

### Staff Supervision:

All employees will be expected to attend monthly supervision with their line manager.



The purpose of each supervision session is to explore staff case management, quality assurance measures, improvement and service development, review of workload, setting the expected standards, monitoring, and reviewing performance, identifying learning and development opportunities, and keeping them informed with wider organisational updates. Staff will also have access to clinical therapy support to provide debriefing and support intervention services.

We recognise that residential care has become increasingly more complex. Aspen House is committed to providing high-quality training and coaching for staff. The delivery of and attendance at training is inherent to good quality childcare and is an essential element of supporting our residential care staff. It assists in the organisation's ability to support good outcomes for children.

Learning & Development Strategy:

Attendance at training encourages residential care staff to take responsibility for their professional development and learning. Eden Residential House is committed to supporting residential care staff to receive formal qualifications and will help them to achieve them when possible.

The overriding objective of our training programme is to support all residential care staff to develop specialist and therapeutic knowledge and skills that cater for the needs of the most vulnerable children and young people with high-end complex needs and challenging behaviours. By having skilled workers lessens the risk to children and themselves caused by low competence and a lack of empathy.

All staff are trained in PRICE restraint, we will only impose the use of restraint as an absolute last resort. As an organisation, we believe that our day-to-day de-escalation and positive relationships, assist us to reduce potential incidents or challenging near-miss incidents. PRICE training is a therapeutic lead service that understands our values and aims to safeguard and prevent restraint or the use of physical touch.

Eden's staff can:

- Complete accredited therapeutic training
- Develop their understanding of their role and responsibilities, improve their knowledge, and develop and refine their skills as substitute parents.
- Raise their awareness of the psycho-social backgrounds, resulting in vulnerabilities, and therapeutic needs of looked-after children/ young people.
- Encourage residential care staff to reflect and understand the effects of discrimination in all forms and parts of the community.
- Ensure that all residential workers are competent and confident in safe caring and safeguarding children in their care.

The Training Programme addresses the learning needs of staff at every stage of their development.

The core training programme for all staff will consist of:

- Therapeutic Child Care level 1 (4-day course)
- First Aid
- Promoting Diversity
- Working Together to Safeguard Children

- Safer Caring
- Serious Concerns & Allegations
- Managing Challenging Behaviour
- Anti-discriminatory practice
- Promoting good outcomes
- Record Keeping
- PRICE Training Restraint

Specialist Training:

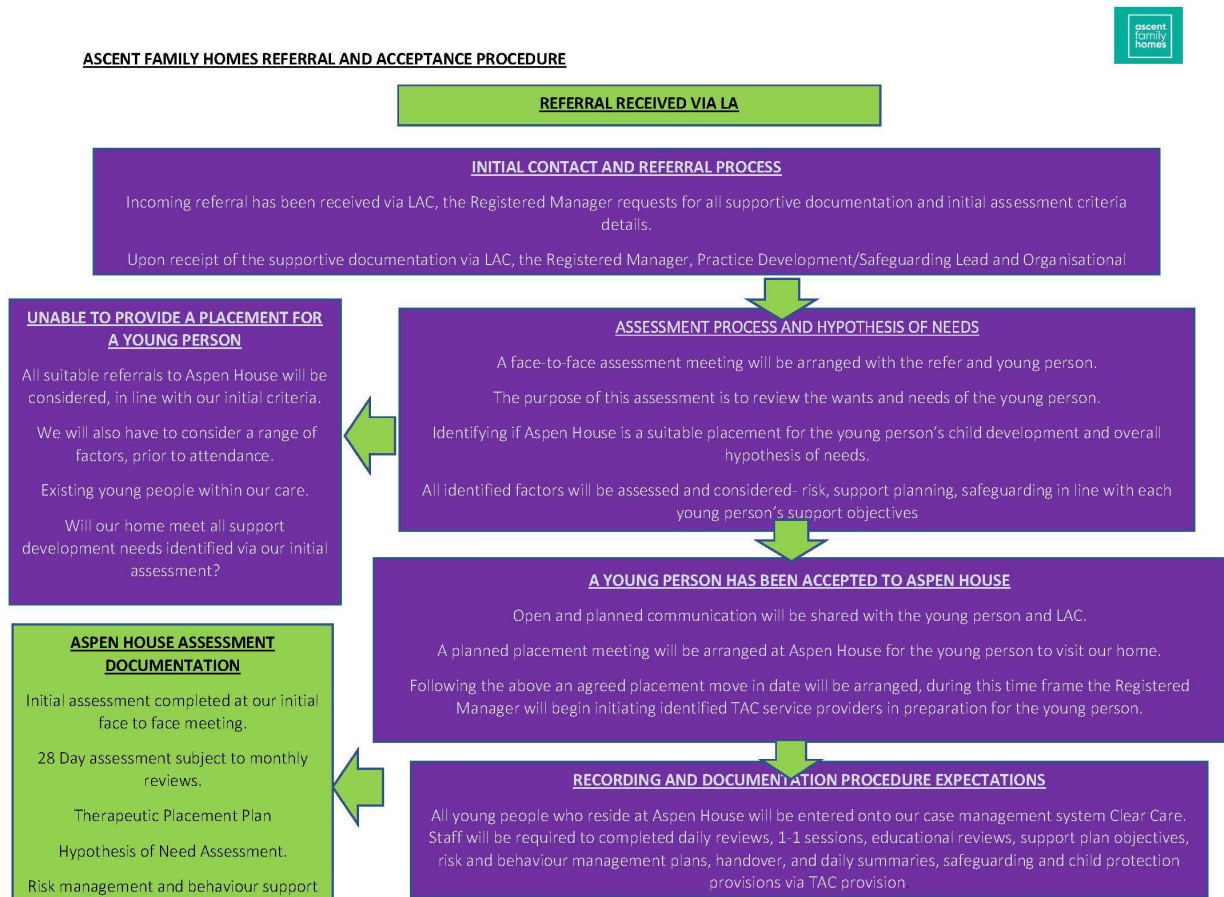
- Therapeutic Child Care Levels 1 & 2
- Nurturing Attachments training (12 weeks course)
- Sensory Attachment Intervention training

We are committed to working in partnership with their families/significant persons and other agencies, to ensure that young people access the best care that they can get at this stage of their lives.

Each young person's needs are assessed on an individual basis; however, the home would be unable to accommodate a child with limited mobility (using a wheelchair) due to the layout of the home. It is our long-term view that the long-term goals will be to transition the young person into foster care or family:

- Young people who require a child-centred residential alternative to a family placement or foster placement
- Young people who have suffered multiple placement breakdowns.
- Young people who have emotional, behavioural, and social difficulties and complex needs
- Young people with attachment difficulties
- Young people who present challenging behaviour
- Young people who have been neglected or abused (CSE)
- Young people who have suffered trauma and loss.
- Young people need to develop identity and self-esteem.
- Young people need to learn social and interpersonal skills.

## The admission - Criteria and Process



At Ascent will ensure we risk-match young people in a planned way in line with our admission policy.

Our step-down service works best with knowledge and insight into the children's and young people's stories and history. Referrals should be sent to Aspen House via our placement service.

All incoming referrals will be processed via the Registered Manager who will share our initial assessment criteria form for completion. The initial assessment form captures the key information we would need to consider and assess a placement at Aspen House, such as risk assessment, history, support planning, legal status, an overview of complexity, support needs, previous placements etc.

All incoming referrals will also be screened by our Organisational Psychotherapist. We will then initiate contact with the referrer for a face-to-face assessment.

A face-face assessment will be arranged aimed to identify if Aspen House is suitable for the support needs of the young person's needs and progression. During the face-to-face assessment, we will aim to form positive relationships, that capture the wants and needs of the young person as they will be key to all future planned moves. Following the assessment, we will conduct a case review considering all identified areas, support needs, achievable objectives, and current home placements.

Upon our review of a positive acceptance to Aspen House, we will contact the referrer within 5 days of assessment. A placement transitional meeting will be arranged to agree on suitable move dates and transitional period reviews in line with the support needs of the young person

#### Transitional Support Plans:

We acknowledge that moving into a new home for a young person can be a challenge, especially if it's a new location which will require the forming of new relationships. All new placements will be allocated to a key staff member who will provide support and daily 1-1 check-ins in preparation for our new home.

In most cases, all accepted referrals are planned and confirmed via the Registered Manager and Therapeutic network. We do not rush this process and will always have at minimum a 2-week transitional period and timeframe between placements.

Care and attention will be paid to the dynamics of the current group, how well the last young person has settled and the impact another person being accommodated will have on the group, especially if the group is newly formed.

The group will be informed of the proposed young person and where possible be involved in supporting the new young person to settle in by showing them around the home and facilities. Ideally, a new young person should have the opportunity to come and visit the home and meet with other residents before the placement is agreed upon and they are accommodated.

Where this is not possible, we will endeavour to support the young person in other ways to reduce any anxieties about coming. For example, we will speak to the young person and visit the young person with their social worker or current caregiver. We welcome young people and parents to ask questions and challenge anything we say that they are unclear or unhappy about.

Following this visit, and if everyone agrees to the placement, a placement meeting will take place and a moving-in date will be set.

For any placement to be legal the necessary paperwork needs to be completed and signed by all relevant parties (young person, social worker, the person with parental responsibility) before admission.

Incoming Referral documentation required:

- Placement Information Record
- Chronology
- Risk Assessment
- Current Care Plan Part 1 and 2
- Other relevant documentation including PEP, EHCP, and court report

Emergency Placements

As a therapeutic home we ideally prefer planned and throughout placements to our home. However, we may consider an emergency placement in extreme circumstances, which will be assessed by the Registered Manager, Organisational Psychotherapist and Deputy Management team. As a management team we will collectively assess the overall appropriateness of the placement, suitability and impact the placement could have on our existing young people, support plan history and pathway meetings.

Insurance:

Aspen House the appropriate insurance, which includes:

- Employer's liability up to £10,000,000
- Public liability up to £10,000,000
- Business content / interruption

Consultation:

Aspen House will consult with young people quarterly on their experience of the service and the support there are receiving. The management team will ensure the young people's feedback is actioned as appropriate and they will get feedback back once our response is enacted.

Complaint Procedure:

Ascent has a comprehensive complaints policy and procedures. In the first instance, all complaints should be addressed to the Registered Manager or Deputy Manager unless they are about the management. In such cases, these will be escalated through the managing director. The complaints procedure will be explained to all young people on induction included in their handbook.

Aspen House has visual posters throughout the home that outlines our complaints procedure for all children.

The Aspen House complaints procedure emphasizes resolving complaints at a local level:

Stage 1

- Informal problem-solving by the residential care staff and line manager.
- Records of investigations and outcomes of complaints resolved informally are held on file for inspection by Ofsted and/or other regulatory bodies.

- All children/young people placed in Aspen House are informed of the organisation's complaints procedure via a Children's/Young Person's Guide.' Children receive complaint cards with the contact details of the registered Individual and Manager to report if they have any concerns.
- All residential care staff and children's/young people's placing authorities are given information about Aspen House's complaints procedures.

## Stage 2

- Complaints are those where resolution at Stage 1 has not been possible or where a complainant has elected to invoke Stage 2 of the procedure direct. Complaints of this nature are dealt with by Aspen House's Manager; and if appropriate independent consultants are appointed to carry out formal investigations.
- Stage 3
- The Aspen House Representations and Complaints procedure has scope for a complainant if dissatisfied with the response in Stage 2, to request that the matter be referred to the Services Provider

## Outcomes:

Details of any future complaints and their outcomes will be filed confidentially and be made available for Ofsted. We will remain to provide excellent care of children.

If you have any questions about Aspen House or would like to know more, please contact us via email at [referrals@ascentfamilyhomes.co.uk](mailto:referrals@ascentfamilyhomes.co.uk)

