

ENGLAND AND WALES / JUDGMENT

Helping Hands Housing Group v Ofsted

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First-tier Tribunal Care Standards The Tribunal Procedure (First-tier Tribunal) (Health, Education and Social Care) Rules 2008 2025-01620. EY Neutral Citation Number: [2026] UKFTT 00539 (HESC) Hearing held Royal Courts of Justice on 7th April 2026 Before Tribunal Judge Mr L Ford Specialist Member Ms S Billington Specialist Member Dr J Rutherford Helping Hands Housing Group Between: -v- Ofsted DECISION Appellant Respondent The Application

1. This is an appeal by Helping Hands Housing Group (“the Appellant”) against Ofsted’s decision dated 12 August 2025 refusing registration as a supported accommodation undertaking under section 13 of the Care Standards Act 2000. Attendance
2. Ms B Olagunju attended and was unrepresented but accompanied by her children and directors of her organisation - Ms D Olagunju and Mr M Olagunju.
3. The Respondent was represented by Mr T Leary of Counsel.
4. The Tribunal heard oral evidence from Ms Bolaji Olagunju (Nominated Individual), Mr A Hinson, Ms D Stannard and Ms E Bultitude, officers employed by Ofsted. There were regular breaks throughout the hearing. Late Evidence
6. By order dated 1 April 2026, the Tribunal admitted late evidence comprising a supplementary witness statement of Ashley Hinson dated 30 March 2026; interview notes from 24 April 2025 and 19 February 2026; and the original Statement of Purpose submitted by the Appellant. These has been included in a supplementary bundle which had been provided to the Appellant.
7. The only items of late evidence submitted during the hearing were a letter dated 15th April 2025 from the Respondent to the Appellant setting out the original documents required to be produced at the meeting on 24th April 2025, and a letter to the proposed Registered Service Manager (RSM) dated 25th July 2025 refusing her application.

Background

8. Ofsted accepted the Appellants for registration as a supported accommodation undertaking on 6 June 2024. Ofsted conducted registration interviews with the proposed Registered Service Manager (RSM) and Nominated Individual (NI) on 23 April 2025 and 19 February 2026. Ofsted issued a Notice of Proposal and subsequently a Notice of Decision dated 12 August 2025, refusing registration.

9. The proposed RSM did not appeal the refusal of her registration dated 25th July 2025 and is not a registrable individual.

Legal Framework

10. The legal framework for the registration of supported accommodation is found in Part 2 of the Act, which applies to supported accommodation by virtue of the Care Standards Act (Extension of the Application of Part 2 to Supported Accommodation) (England) Regulations 2022 (the “2022 Regulations”).
11. Regulations 2 of the 2022 Regulations defines “supported accommodation” to mean, with certain exceptions, “accommodation in England in which a child is accommodated pursuant to section 22C(6)(d) or 23B(8)(b) of the Children Act 1989” i.e. accommodation for looked after children being placed by a local authority to safeguard and support their welfare. Since children placed in supported accommodation will be vulnerable, those wishing to register such undertakings need to be registered with Ofsted and to comply with important minimum standards (set out in the 2023 Regulations).
12. The Act sets out the requirement to register at section 12, with section 13 providing that if Ofsted is not satisfied that the requirements of the 2023 Regulations are being and will continue to be complied with, it must refuse registration.
13. The provisions of the 2023 Regulations include the following:
 - By regulation 2, the “registered person” means “the registered provider or the registered service manager”, and the “registered service manager” is a registered individual acting as “the manager of the supported accommodation undertaking”.
 - By regulation 11, persons may only carry on a supported accommodation - undertaking if they meet the requirements of paragraph (5), which includes that “the individual or partner has the capacity, appropriate experience and skills to carry on a supported accommodation”. The same applies to the nominated individual pursuant to paragraph (7). By regulation 12, the RSM may only be registered if they have “the appropriate experience, which must include, within a period of five years before the day on which the application to register as a registered service manager is received, having worked for a period of at least two years in a position relevant to the residential support of children or adults”.
 - By regulations 13, a registered provider and RSM must “carry on or manage that undertaking with sufficient care, competence and skill”. Evidence
14. The Tribunal considered the evidence in the main bundle of 243 pages, and supplementary bundle of 46 pages. The tribunal heard oral evidence from Bolaji Olagunju (Nominated Individual) (NI), Mr A Hinson Ms D Stannard and Ms E Bultitude of Ofsted.

15. The Respondents witnesses gave a clear and consistent account of the visits and interviews that they had conducted with the NI. Most of their evidence was unchallenged. The main element of the NI's cross-examination centred upon the suggestion that they have not provided sufficient notice of the documentation that would be required at the second compliance interview and a general suggestion that there was a lack of support and advice from Ofsted. It was apparent from the evidence of Ms Bultitude that very specific written notice have been given as to the documentation that would be required at the second interview, which was confirmed in writing before the interview. It was clear from the Appellants questions that she accepted little responsibility for non-compliance and it was also clear that Ofsted had set out what was required of the Appellant, specifically before the second compliance interview. This was confirmed in a letter dated the 24th of April 2025 to the Appellant.
16. Ms Olagunju gave oral evidence and referred to her statements in the bundle. She appeared to criticise Ofsted for not giving her sufficient guidance during the registration process and giving her further opportunities to provide information. She fully accepted at the time of the second interview she had still not provided sufficient answers in relation to safeguarding issues, but argued this was an area that she would improve on. During her evidence she did not demonstrate any greater degree of knowledge or insight than at the second compliance interview and, notably, did not refer to the regulatory framework throughout her evidence which suggested she still lacked a basic acknowledge of what was required. Although the impossibility of her appeal succeeding without a RSM was repeatedly put to her, she displayed no insight as to how that affected her application. Her evidence and submissions were effectively a plea to the tribunal to give her a chance to demonstrate that she could perform in the future, which again suggested a lack of insight into the need to demonstrate compliance before registration.
17. In relation to checks on the proposed RSM's right to work it was clear from her evidence that she had relied on another employers checks as to the right to work and had only carried out her own checks after her second interview in February 2026. The Tribunal's conclusions with reasons
18. The Tribunal were not concerned with the merits of the proposed RSM The proposed RSM did not appeal the refusal of her registration and is not a registrable individual. Regulation 12 requires a suitable RSM and this requirement is not met. For that reason alone the appeal cannot succeed.
19. It was of concern that Ms Olagunju, throughout the course of the hearing, and in her oral evidence, did not understand the basic requirement for a RSM to be approved and this reflected a lack of knowledge and insight into the requirements of the regulatory framework, even though this was repeatedly explained to her by the Tribunal and the Respondents Counsel.

20. We find that the proposed Nominated Individual, Bolaji Olagunju, does not have direct experience of supported accommodation and demonstrated limited knowledge of the regulatory framework, safeguarding strategies, and operational delivery. Although there were improvements in the policies and other required documentation during the course of registration there were still substantial inadequacies. She accepted in her evidence, both written and oral, that she had insufficient safeguarding knowledge at her second interview and failed to demonstrate she now had such knowledge. She appeared to take the view that Ofsted should advise and support her throughout the process and showed no insight into the need for her to be able to demonstrate her abilities and that the responsibility is on her to be able to satisfy the basic requirements of registration.
21. The Statement of Purpose and associated policies provided by the appellant were initially non-compliant, with references to inappropriate regulatory regimes and confusion as to the applicable framework. Although revised, deficiencies remained, including a lack of clarity as to issues of operational delivery, safeguarding practice, recruitment and quality assurance. In addition, required documentation, including health and safety material, was not fully available at the time of the registration visits. It was apparent that even during Ms Olagunju's oral evidence she made no reference to the relevant regulations and provided general statements as to what service she would provide.
22. There is no approved RSM. The Tribunal is not satisfied that the Appellant would carry on the supported accommodation undertaking with sufficient care, competence and skill, as required by regulation 13.
23. Registration is not a right; the statutory scheme places the burden firmly on the Appellant. The Tribunal concludes as at the date of the hearing that the Appellant has not discharged that burden. Decision
24. The appeal is dismissed. The Respondents decision dated 12th August 2025 is confirmed District Judge L Ford First-tier Tribunal (Health, Education and Social Care) Date Issued: 09 April 2026 5

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