

1263124

Registered provider: Autonomy Plus Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned by a private organisation. It is registered to provide care for up to 5 children with learning disabilities. At the time of the inspection, 5 children were living at the home.

The manager registered with Ofsted in December 2022 and is suitably qualified.

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 April 2026

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account

requires improvement to be good

How well children and young people are helped and protected

requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

requires improvement to be good

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: 20 May 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
20/05/2025	Full	Good
22/05/2024	Full	Good
22/08/2023	Full	Good
06/09/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Summary of findings

Children who can communicate verbally express positive views about living at the home. All children are making progress in education and in developing their independence skills. Staff ensure that children experience a range of enjoyable and meaningful activities. However, staff do not consistently use children's individual communication systems. As a result, children who are non-verbal have limited opportunities to fully express their views, wishes and feelings.

The manager's day-to-day oversight and monitoring of the home is not as effective as it could be. This has resulted in several areas of weakness. It is not consistently clear how staff support children's health and developmental needs. The physical environment is not always maintained to the expected standard. The manager has not made sure staff have all the skills and knowledge needed, reflective supervision sessions are not provided frequently, and safer recruitment practices are not consistently followed in the recruitment of agency staff.

Inspection judgements

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

At the time of this visit, 5 children were living in the home. Since the last visit, one child had left and another child had moved into the home. The inspector saw all the children during the visit.

Children have developed positive relationships with staff. Staff engage with children in a warm and caring manner and they are attentive to their individual needs. Children clearly enjoy spending time with staff. Those children who were able to express their views said that they like living at the home and described staff as 'kind' and said they like them because they 'play with them'.

Children make progress. Some children have lived at the home for several years. Staff support children well to develop confidence, independence and improve their overall health and wellbeing. For example, one child who had been significantly overweight has lost weight as a result of staff providing consistent support with healthy eating and physical exercise.

Staff use 'linkwork' sessions to talk to children about events and changes in their lives. However, these sessions are not undertaken consistently. For example, one child is finding changes linked to puberty difficult to understand. The limited use of supportive sessions means the child does not fully understand what is happening, which contributes to increased anxiety and unsettled behaviour.

Staff do not consistently support children to use and understand their alternative communication systems. As a result, some children are not fully supported to express their views, wishes or needs, or to make choices about their daily lives.

One child has a physiotherapy plan that requires staff to support them to complete specific exercises twice daily. It is not evident that these exercises are carried out consistently.

Children enjoy a wide range of activities both within the home and in the local community. Staff plan activities that reflect children's individual interests and preferences. Children also benefit from annual holidays and the celebration of birthdays and seasonal events. However, opportunities for some children to socialise with and develop friendships beyond those they live with are limited. Children are not consistently supported to build peer relationships outside the home, for example through joining local clubs or being encouraged to sustain friendships from school. As a result, children do not always have sufficient opportunities to develop the social skills necessary to form and maintain wider friendships.

Staff support children to engage in education. Children who attend school have good attendance, are making progress and enjoy going to school. One child who is not currently in school is supported to attend an alternative education provision and is helped to develop independence skills within the home.

The home is a large property set within extensive grounds, which provide opportunities for children to explore and spend time outdoors. However, the overall homeliness of the home needs improvement so that it feels less institutional. Repairs are not always completed in a timely way and areas awaiting refurbishment are not consistently maintained to an appropriate standard. In addition, the overall cleanliness of the home needs improvement. While this does not place children at risk, it detracts from the quality and comfort of their living environment.

Staff promote children's relationships with their families. Where appropriate, families are welcomed to visit the home and staff support children to spend time with family members in the community. One parent spoke positively about the support provided by staff, explaining that they now have a positive and enjoyable relationship with their child as a result.

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

The core staff team has worked at the home for several years and they know the children well. This continuity supports children's stability and care. However, this level of understanding is not consistent across the wider staff team. Some staff are unable to clearly articulate children's individual risks. For example, one staff member could not explain the risks that required increased staffing levels when children accessed the community. This limits staff's ability to respond appropriately and keep children safe.

At times, children become highly anxious and display behaviours that staff find difficult to manage. On at least 3 occasions, staff have used responses that are not approved. These include holding a door handle to prevent a child leaving a room and holding a child's wrists to prevent them from hitting staff. While staff have received some training, they have not been trained in restrictive physical intervention. This lack of training increases the risk to both children and staff and may have prolonged incidents unnecessarily. For example, when a child was damaging property, staff were unable to intervene and had to observe from a distance because they did not have the skills or confidence to support the child safely. Although no child has been harmed as a result of staff actions, the absence of appropriate training increases the likelihood of harm through the use of unapproved responses or through inaction.

Managers do not consistently respond effectively when staff use non-approved methods to keep themselves or children safe. Incidents are not always followed by reflective discussions exploring why staff acted as they did, whether the response was appropriate, or what alternative strategies could have been used. This limits opportunities for learning and improvement in practice.

Children are not consistently supported to understand why staff have responded to incidents in the way they have. They are not routinely given opportunities to express their views, worries or concerns about staff actions following incidents.

When concerns are raised about staff practice, leaders take appropriate action. Where necessary, staff are suspended, relevant individuals are informed, and investigations are completed. However, learning from investigations is not consistently shared with the wider staff group, including regular agency staff working in the home. As a result, staff do not always have a clear or shared understanding of professional boundaries or expected standards of practice.

The home relies on agency staff on a regular basis to ensure there are sufficient number of staff to safely care for children. However, the manager has not assured themselves that the agency follows safer recruitment procedures. Shortfalls were identified, including missing overseas police checks and incomplete employment histories.

The manager ensures that permanent staff are recruited using safer recruitment practices. However, when staff disclose health conditions or disabilities, assessments are not consistently completed before staff commence employment to confirm that they are medically and physically fit to undertake their role. This oversight may affect staff safety, children's care, and the effectiveness of support provided.

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

The registered manager is supported by a deputy manager in managing the home. Due to competing demands on the registered manager's time, the deputy manager undertakes some of the day-to-day operational oversight. Both leaders are committed to the home and demonstrate a clear desire to achieve positive outcomes for children.

However, systems for monitoring and oversight are not consistently effective. This has resulted in several shortfalls being identified at this visit.

Staff spoken to during this visit were positive about the leadership team and reported that they feel supported in their roles. Staff spoke warmly about the children and demonstrated a strong commitment to meeting their needs.

Managers undertake regular supervision sessions with permanent staff. However, supervision does not consistently provide opportunities for staff to reflect on incidents. In addition, managers have not ensured that agency staff receive regular supervision sessions. This limits opportunities to review practice, support learning and drive sustained improvements in the quality of care.

Staff training includes a combination of online and face-to-face learning. However, staff have not received specific training to support their understanding of cerebral palsy, despite this being relevant to the needs of one child living at the home. Training provided to agency staff is generic and does not cover key areas, for example, professional boundaries, the home's behaviour management strategies, and children's individual needs, such as specific medical or physical conditions. These gaps reduce staff's ability to provide consistent and informed care.

The manager has developed an improvement plan for the home, which includes actions to address maintenance and refurbishment. The manager also uses Regulation 45 reports to reflect on the strengths of the home and identify areas for development. However, these reports do not sufficiently evidence how actions taken have led to measurable improvements in the quality of care or outcomes for children. This limits leaders' ability to demonstrate the impact of the changes they have made.

Feedback from professionals and families is positive. They spoke favourably about the care provided and the progress children are making. No concerns were raised about children's safety or welfare.

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, The 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 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— assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; help each child to understand how to keep safe; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; and understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii) (v)) This is in regard to staff having the skills to manage children's behaviours appropriately and in line with agreed plans. That children are helped by staff to understand their emotions and feelings and develop appropriate strategies to manage their own emotions and feelings that keeps them safe. That the manager ensures all staff understand risks children may present and the action they need to take to keep children safe.	29 May 2026
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children's home; or	29 May 2026

if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that— the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform; the individual is mentally and physically fit for the purposes of the work that the individual is to perform; and full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3)(b)(c)(d)) This is with regards to ensuring that the registered person checks that the agency who is providing staff to work at the home has undertaken all the necessary safer recruitments checks. In addition, staff declaring health conditions are assessed prior to starting work at the home to ensure they are medically and physically fit to undertake the role.	
The health and well-being standard is that— the health and well-being needs of children are met; In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff help each child to— achieve the health and well-being outcomes that are recorded in the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 10 (1) (2)(a)(i)) This specifically relates to ensuring that staff are completing exercises with the child as directed by the Physiotherapist.	29 May 2026
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare.	29 May 2026

In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— 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; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; 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; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(c)(f)(h)) This relates to the registered person ensuring all staff, including agency staff, have the skills and knowledge they need to care for the children. For example, professional boundaries, training to manage children's behaviours which keep children and staff safe, and child specific training such as cerebral palsy. That monitoring of the home and its impact on the children is improved with greater consistency of the day-to-day oversight of the home by the registered person.	
The children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who— develop positive relationships with them; engage with them; and take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff— help each child to express views, wishes and feelings. (Regulation 7 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(ii))	29 May 2026

This specifically relates to staff supporting children to use their communication systems consistently.	
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— 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; help each child to develop resilience and skills that prepare the child to return home, to live in a new placement or to live independently as an adult; ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(iv)(vi)(c)(i)) This is with regards to the home's cleanliness, homeliness and that repairs are completed timely. In addition, that staff help children to explore and understand changes that happen to them as they grow into adults.	29 May 2026
The registered person must ensure that all employees— undertake appropriate continuing professional development; receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(a)(b)) This is in regard to all staff having frequent supervision sessions so that they can discuss and reflect on incidents and practice.	29 May 2026

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children are offered a wide range of activities both inside and outside of the home (where appropriate) and are encouraged to participate in those activities. Staff should support children to take part in school trips, out of school and other clubs, volunteering and leisure activities. Specifically, that children have opportunities to spend time with those they do not live with and helped to make friends. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 31, paragraph 6.5)
- The registered person should undertake a review that focuses on the quality of the care provided by the home, the experiences of children living there and the impact the care is having on outcomes and improvements for the children. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.2)

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: 1263124

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Autonomy Plus Limited

Registered provider address: 67 Roundpond, Melksham, Wiltshire SN12 8EB

Responsible individual: Nicholas Faulkner-Elliott

Registered manager: Michael Evans

Inspector

Debbie Bond, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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