

1278022

Registered provider: Independent Living Services (North West) Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately run children's home is registered to provide care for up to three children. The provider states in its statement of purpose that it provides care for children who may have social and/or emotional difficulties.

The registered manager post has been vacant since January 2022.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 February 2022

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected **inadequate**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **inadequate**

There are serious and widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded and the care and experiences of children and young people are poor and they are not making progress.

Date of last inspection: 29 January 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
29/01/2020	Full	Outstanding
15/11/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

There is currently one child living in the home. The child has lived at the home for a number of years and told the inspector that they had previously been happy there. However, there are risks to the child that have not been managed well and the child expressed frustration about the substantial changes to the staff team.

Arrangements for supporting the child with their education are not robust. The child is currently receiving tuition at home, but this is for a minimal amount of time, with their engagement varied. The child's education plan states that this is a short-term measure with a view to supporting them to return to their college placement. However, it is not clear how staff are supporting the child to return to college or that this arrangement has been reviewed since it was put in place as a temporary measure.

Routines in the home do not support children to be ready for education. For example, it was identified during the inspection that the home's internet remains on all day and during the night, which contributes to the child being up through the night on the internet. This does not promote healthy routines for the child.

The child is registered with relevant health professionals and staff supported them to attend a medical appointment during the inspection. However, not all of the child's specific health needs have been fully addressed. Health plans show that the child has been referred for an assessment. Internal records fail to demonstrate the outcome of the referral, or any work completed with the child to encourage their engagement in the assessment. Additionally, there is no evidence of any discussion with professionals regarding this matter. This does not ensure that children's health needs are met and understood.

The child is supported to spend time with their family, and the quality of this time has improved. The child's parent spoke positively about the progress they have made since living at the home and told the inspector: 'The only changes [name] has made have been positive ones.'

The home environment is bright and welcoming. Refurbishments to the property have been completed to a high standard. However, the internal doors have locks on them. Although the child told the inspector that these are no longer used, they detract from the otherwise domestic feel of the home.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: inadequate

Leaders and managers have failed to manage or minimise identified risks to children living in the home. On occasions, children have left the house during the night with staff being unaware. The provider failed to take any action to prevent further

occurrences of children leaving without staff's knowledge, resulting in children being at risk of harm in the community. Leaders and managers did address this with staff during the inspection and arranged for door alarms to be installed.

Risk management plans have not been updated with recent relevant information. This means that staff do not have the written guidance or agreed strategies that they are to use to minimise risks and keep children safe. Risk management plans identified that a child required a referral to a specialist service for support around child sexual exploitation. However, records fail to confirm whether this referral was made and what additional support or action was taken to safeguard the child.

Missing-from-home records evidence significant concerns in relation to staff's management of one child's risk of child sexual exploitation. Despite known risks, staff transported a child to a known area of concern. On another occasion, staff transported a child to a train station to meet an unknown male. Records do not demonstrate the action taken by staff or show that information has been shared with other professionals.

Records do not show the actions taken by the manager to support children to engage in independent return home interviews after episodes of being missing from home. This is a missed opportunity to gain information in relation to the reasons why children go missing from the home.

The approach to searching children's bedrooms is inconsistent and lacks transparency. Some room searches have been routinely undertaken by staff without children's knowledge. On other occasions, when staff are aware of information that may require a room search, they have failed to undertake room searches in line with the organisation's policy and procedure. When staff have searched a child's bedroom, records show that they have taken photos to send to the child's social worker. Records do not show that any other action has been taken, despite the recording indicating that the bedroom is not fit for children. This does not demonstrate that staff have a clear understanding of children's needs and vulnerabilities or that they have taken adequate action to safeguard the child.

When deemed relevant, consequences are not used effectively in this home. When they are imposed, records do not show what action staff have taken to avoid using these measures, or how long a measure has been implemented for. Additionally, consequence records do not show whether children have had the opportunity to talk about the consequence or reflect on their own behaviour.

Recruitment of staff is not robust. Managers have failed to explore the reasons why staff's previous employment ended. Records do not demonstrate how leaders and managers verify the qualifications of staff.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The previous registered manager left the organisation in January 2022 and there is currently no interim manager in post. The responsible individual, who was employed

in December 2021, is currently in charge of the day-to-day management of the home.

The home has experienced a period of significant instability due to several staff changes, resulting in a whole new staff team being formed. The current team lacks qualified and experienced staff. Staff changes have not always been handled sensitively. Children have not been given the opportunity to say goodbye to the staff members they have developed warm and trusting relationships with. This has an impact on the experience and progress children make while living in the home and their confidence to form trusting relationships.

Staff spoken to said that they feel supported by the responsible individual. They receive regular supervision, including single-subject supervisions to improve their knowledge and understanding of key areas, such as safeguarding processes. The responsible individual has organised a number of workshops to supplement the existing training offer for the staff team.

Record-keeping within the home is inadequate. It is not always clear who has completed records as they are not consistently signed by the author. The inspector found blank daily records. Leaders and managers have failed to ensure that a record of the child's life in the home is maintained. Furthermore, the child's plans contain historical information that is no longer relevant to them. Leaders' and managers' monitoring of daily records is poor and fails to address the clear shortfalls in recording in the home.

Leaders and managers have not ensured that all serious incidents in relation to children are notified to Ofsted. This affects the regulator's ability to maintain effective oversight of practice in the home.

The independent visitor has failed to identify a number of shortfalls that were identified during the inspection. The responsible individual had recognised the need for monitoring of the home to be more effective and a new independent person was appointed prior to this inspection taking place. They have yet to visit the home.

The review of the quality of care report does not include consultation with children, their families or external agencies. This does not support leaders to drive forward improvements in the home and improve the quality of care provided to children.

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 education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— maintain regular contact with each child's education and training provider, including engaging with the provider and the placing authority to support the child's education and training and to maximise the child's achievement; help each child who is above compulsory school age to participate in further education, training or employment and to prepare for future care, education or employment; help each child to attend education or training in accordance with the expectations in the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 8 (1) (2)(a)(vi)(ix)(x)) The registered person must ensure that the arrangements in place to support children's educational attainment, and how this is to be promoted by staff, are clear.	6 April 2022
The health and well-being standard is that— the health and well-being needs of children are met; children receive advice, services and support in relation to their health and well-being; and children are helped to lead healthy lifestyles. (Regulation 10 (1)(a)(b)(c)) The registered person must ensure that any outstanding concerns in relation to children's health needs are escalated	6 April 2022

to the relevant professionals and that the routines in the home support children to lead a healthy lifestyle.	
The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— mutual respect and trust. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— strive to gain each child’s respect and trust; understand how children’s previous experiences and present emotions can be communicated through behaviour and have the competence and skills to interpret these and develop positive relationships with children; are provided with supervision and support to enable them to understand and manage their own feelings and responses to the behaviour and emotions of children, and to help children to do the same; that each child is encouraged to build and maintain positive relationships with others. (Regulation 11 (1)(a) (2)(a)(viii)(ix)(x)(b)) The registered person must ensure that positive relationships and conflict resolution between children and staff are promoted.	6 April 2022
*The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— 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;	27 March 2022

understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm; that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(v)(vi)(b)(d)) The registered person must ensure that: ■ the risk of children leaving the building without the knowledge of staff is assessed ■ children's risk management plans are kept up to date and include clear strategies for staff to follow to minimise risks to children ■ staff understand children's risk management plans and take effective action when there are concerns for children's welfare.	
*The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— promotes their welfare. 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.	27 March 2022

(Regulation 13 (1)(b) (2)(a)(c)(f)) The registered person must ensure that staff have the skills and experience to respond to children's individual needs and that oversight of the day-to-day running of the home is improved in order to improve the quality of care that children receive.	
The registered person must ensure that— children can access all appropriate areas of the children's home's premises; and any limitation placed on a child's privacy or access to any area of the home's premises— is necessary and proportionate; allows children as much freedom as is possible when balanced against the need to protect them and keep them safe. (Regulation 21 (b)(c)(ii)(iv)) The registered person must ensure that children have access to all areas of their home.	6 April 2022
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The requirements are that— full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1) (3)(d)) The registered person must ensure that full information is available in relation to each of the matters listed, specifically that previous employment history is explored and qualifications are verified and certificates seen by managers.	6 April 2022
The registered person must ensure that— within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes— details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure; a description of the measure and its duration;	6 April 2022

details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure; the name of the person who used the measure ("the user"), and of any other person present when the measure was used; the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(ii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(b)(i)(ii)(c)) The registered person must ensure that records demonstrate what action staff have taken to avoid using the measure and evidence consultation with children.	
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which— include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child; are kept up to date; and are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c)) The registered person must ensure that children's case records are kept up to date and signed by the author of the record.	6 April 2022
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to sexual exploitation;	6 April 2022

there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(a)(e)) The registered person must notify HMI of any relevant incidents.	
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality of care review") at least once every 6 months. In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating— the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and The system referred to in paragraph (2) must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff. (Regulation 45 (1) (2)(b)(5)) The registered person must ensure that reports include the feedback of stakeholders, in order to drive forward improvements in the home.	6 April 2022

* These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

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: 1278022

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Independent Living Services (North West) Limited

Registered provider address: Lakeside, Prescott Road, St Helens, Merseyside
WA10 3TP

Responsible individual: William Mulvaney

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Genevieve O'Reilly, Social Care Inspector

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