

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 home is owned and managed by a private company. It provides care for up to three children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

There is currently no registered manager in post.

At the time of inspection, there was one child living in the home.

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 October 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	inadequate
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	inadequate
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	inadequate
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There are serious and/or 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: 21 November 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/11/2023	Full	Good
22/08/2023	Full	Inadequate
24/05/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
08/02/2022	Full	Inadequate

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

There is currently one child living in the home. Since the last inspection, three children have moved into the home and three children have moved on from the home.

The quality of children's experiences on a day-to-day basis is varied. Children have not received continuity of care from a stable staff team and manager. This has impacted on their overall experiences and progress living in this home.

Managers do not ensure that they consider all the necessary information about children before they move into the home. Prior to one child moving into the home, leaders and managers became aware that they had connections to the child already living in the home. This information was not recorded or explored further. These shortfalls have led to children leaving the home in an unplanned way.

The child living in this home is currently unable to attend school due to a recent incident. During the inspection, leaders and managers were liaising with relevant professionals regarding a long-term plan for their education. However, staff were not supporting the child to engage with the short-term arrangements for learning that have been put in place.

Staff do not provide sufficient structure and routine for children. Staff said that they feel that the child would benefit from more structure; however, they have not put structured daily routines in place to support to child. This means that the children is often awake late at night and they struggle to get up in the morning.

The child is registered with local healthcare professionals and is supported to attend relevant appointments. Staff have challenged health professionals when it has been appropriate to do so.

Some parts of the home look tired and need repair and redecoration. Furthermore, some of the empty rooms had not been cleaned appropriately.

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

Safeguarding arrangements at this home do not effectively help children or protect them from harm.

Children's risk management plans do not provide staff with clear guidance to effectively manage and reduce children's risks. Some recorded strategies are not used in practice, and for some known risks there is no guidance for staff around the actions they are to take to manage these concerns.

Children's plans are not consistently followed by staff working in this home. For example, children's plans state that children living together should not be left unsupervised, however, on one occasion children were left unsupervised together, which led to a serious incident in the home.

Managers and staff do not understand their roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children. Allegations of harm to children are not always responded to appropriately. On one occasion, despite leaders and managers identifying concerns around the conduct of a member of agency staff, they failed to refer this to the local authority designated officer. This practice does not ensure that children's safety and welfare are promoted and potentially places children at risk of continued harm.

When children go missing from the home, staff search for them and share information with relevant professionals. Children have access to return home interviews, although the home's poor recording system makes it hard to ascertain if these have taken place after each incident or if any additional information was gained.

Staff are unable to manage children's behaviour effectively. This has resulted in the police being called to the home to manage children's behaviour. This places children at risk of being criminalised.

It is not clear how staff are to promote positive behaviour. The child has previously worked towards an agreed incentive plan. Despite this being a successful way to motivate the child, there are currently no clear targets in place for them to work towards. Furthermore, while consequences are used infrequently, the duration of the measures put in place is unclear and they are not always reviewed for effectiveness.

Room searches are not carried out consistently or in line with children's plans. Staff were unclear on the arrangements in place for the child currently living in the home. For another child, records referred to a search having taken place, with some items being removed. However, there was no record regarding the rationale for the search, if the child was aware of the search or what was done with items that were removed. This practice is inconsistent and does not ensure the welfare and safety of children.

Safer recruitment practices are not consistently followed. There are limited checks in place for agency staff. Leaders and managers have not ensured that relevant information is up to date and current, or that agency staff have the skills and training necessary to safely care for children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

There have been changes to the management arrangements since the last inspection. The previous registered manager left the home in April 2024. There has been an interim manager in post; however, they have not applied to register, and they are also leaving the organisation. Inconsistent management arrangements have had a negative impact on children's overall safety, progress and experiences and support for staff.

Since the last inspection, several staff have left the organisation. Due to staff shortages, agency staff have been used in this home. This means that children have been cared for by unfamiliar adults with whom they do not have an established relationship and who are unfamiliar with their needs and risks. This has resulted in incidents that have been poorly managed, leaving children at risk of harm.

Staff have completed mandatory training to support them in their role. However, not all agency staff have the required skills and knowledge to meet the child's needs. For example, leaders and managers have failed to ensure that agency staff have appropriate first-aid training or training in the safe administration of medication, despite lone working with one child.

There have been delays in leaders and managers notifying Ofsted of some significant incidents within the home. The shortfalls in management oversight have led to ineffective action to address unsafe practice and ensure children's safety.

The monitoring and oversight of the home are ineffective. Leaders and managers have failed to ensure that all risks have been suitably assessed and that staff are aware of the agreed strategies in place to support children.

Feedback from one social worker raised concerns regarding the communication between leaders and managers. Furthermore, information provided by leaders and managers during the inspection was inconsistent.

Leaders and managers have not ensured that there is an accurate roster in place that includes the actual hours worked by managers and staff. Records and duty rotas give conflicting information about which staff are on shift in the home. As a result, these documents cannot be relied on to identify when staff have been at work, should safeguarding concerns arise.

The review of the quality of care report does not evidence consultations with children or their families. The report is descriptive but there is little evaluation or learning from events within the period. The report does not identify specific actions to make improvements and drive forward the quality of care provided to children.

Due to the serious concerns identified at this inspection, a notice of restriction was issued to restrict the provider from accommodating more children at this home.

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; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies; 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. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(v)(vii)(b)) Leaders and managers must ensure that all risks are assessed with clear strategies in place for staff to use to manage and reduce risk. That staff understand and implement children's plans. That all staff working with children have the necessary skills and knowledge to care for them safely. That all staff working with children understand their roles and responsibilities in keeping children safe and that all allegations are reported to the designated officer.	28 November 2024

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. 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 work as a team where appropriate; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to 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)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(h)) Leaders and managers must ensure that the home is led and managed in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos outlined in the home's statement of purpose. Leaders and managers must ensure that the home's workforce provides consistency of care to children living in the home. Leaders and managers must ensure there are effective monitoring systems in place for all aspects of the day-to-day running of the home.	28 November 2024
The care planning standard is that children—	28 November 2024

receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that arrangements are in place to— manage and review the placement of each child in the home. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(ii)) Leaders and managers must ensure that all relevant information is considered when considering if the home can meet the needs of children.	
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. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b)) Leaders and managers should ensure that staff have a clear understanding of how their day-to-day practice supports the overall aims for children and that this is reflected in their plans.	28 November 2024
Schedule 4 sets out the other information that the registered person must keep in relation to a children's home. The registered person must— maintain in the home the records in Schedule 4. (Regulation 37 (1) (2)(a)) Leaders and managers must maintain an accurate record that includes the full names of all staff and the actual hours worked in the home, including the manager.	28 November 2024
The registered provider must appoint a person to manage the children's home if—	28 November 2024

there is no registered manager in respect of the home. (Regulation 27 (1)(a))	
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4) (e))	28 November 2024
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 quality of care provided for children; the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. 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)(a)(b)(c) (5)) Leaders and managers must use feedback from children, families and professionals and improve the evaluative content of the review of the quality of care report in order to drive forward improvement within the home.	28 November 2024

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure the home is maintained to a high standard, and that all empty rooms are suitably cleaned. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure the procedure for searching children's bedrooms is clear, and that records are in place to evidence when this has taken place and any

action taken. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 16, paragraph 3.20)

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: Suite 4 Ena Works, Volunteer Street, St. Helens, Merseyside WA10 2AY

Responsible individual: Catherine Chandler

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Genevieve O'Reilly, Social Care Inspector

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