

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 provides care for up to three children who may have social and/or emotional difficulties.

The registered manager post has been vacant since January 2022.

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 August 2023

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

Date of last inspection: 24 May 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/05/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
08/02/2022	Full	Inadequate
29/01/2020	Full	Outstanding
15/11/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

One child was living in the home at the time of the inspection. A second child has very recently moved out of the home following a significant safeguarding incident. Although the two children have made progress in some aspects of their lives, the inadequate leadership of the home has compromised the safety of the children.

Children struggle to develop and maintain relationships with staff due to the high turnover of staff. This leaves children feeling worried and unsettled. One child said some staff have left suddenly without saying goodbye. Children have not been supported to understand why the staff have left or to manage any feelings they have about this.

Staff do not always treat children with dignity and respect. Children have previously made complaints about staff conduct, including derogatory comments made to them by staff. The responsible individual has responded appropriately to the complaints made.

Staff support children to attend school. Staff successfully advocated for one child to change schools. This was a positive move for the child and has helped them to engage with their education.

Staff collaborate with partner agencies to give children opportunities to attend a range of activities and clubs. This supports children to pursue personal interests and build their self-esteem.

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

One child has potentially suffered significant harm while living in the home. These concerns are currently subject to further investigation. Managers took immediate action in response to this incident, which reduced the risk of further harm. Despite this, managers did not ensure that required medical treatment was sought. Managers have not effectively challenged the delay from partner agencies in responding to this incident.

Some staff do not have the skills and knowledge to follow agreed risk management plans or to recognise that children are at risk of harm. One child said, 'The staff do not do enough to keep me safe.'

On one occasion, staff did not respond in a timely way to support a child who displayed self-injurious behaviour. Furthermore, poor communication between the manager and staff meant that there was a misunderstanding about the extent of the

child's injuries. As a result, there was a further delay in managers challenging the lack of action by staff and reviewing the safeguards in place for the child.

Managers do not have a full understanding of the extent of one child's self-injurious behaviours. As a result, they have not put in place effective monitoring or taken steps to ensure that existing strategies are keeping the child safe.

During the inspection, one child told the inspector that they had items in their bedroom which could present a risk of significant harm. Staff took immediate action in response to this, but the presenting risk's meant that the police were called to attend the home to assist.

Staff lack professional curiosity. For example, they do not know who children are in contact with online or what information they are accessing. This means that staff do not fully understand the potential risks for children. Staff carry out searches of children's bedrooms when there are concerns about children's safety. However, when staff remove items, they do not consider why the child had those items in their possession.

Since the last inspection, there have only been two incidents when staff have physically restrained children. However, one of the restraints was not necessary to keep the child or those around them safe. The staff member involved had not been trained to physical restrain children. This meant that the child could have been harmed. Before this inspection, the responsible individual had already acted appropriately in response to this concern. The second incident requiring physical restraint was proportionate. However, staff and managers failed to seek medical attention or to take appropriate action when the child complained they had sustained an injury during the restraint.

Staff do not support children to learn how to manage their emotions or to keep themselves safe. This includes carrying out direct work identified following reviews of safeguarding incidents. Although some work is done with children, this is of variable quality and is infrequent.

Children sometimes go missing from the home. Staff follow agreed plans to locate them quickly when they go missing. However, when children return home, they are not consistently given the opportunity to speak to an independent person. There has been a lack of challenge by managers to resolve this.

Quality assurance and review mechanisms are ineffective. As a result, managers have not identified shortfalls in practice or understood how these have impacted on children's experiences. For example, errors in the administration and recording of prescribed medication for one child had not been identified by managers.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The home does not currently have a registered manager. Since the last inspection, the home has had three different managers. The current manager has been in post

for two weeks. The repeated changes to the leadership of the home, which have included a change of responsible individual, have contributed to the inconsistent and at times poor oversight of the quality of care provided to children.

The current manager intends to apply to Ofsted to be registered. The new responsible individual is in the process of applying to Ofsted to be the named responsible individual.

The manager and responsible individual recognise that there have been significant shortfalls in the care provided to children. Some action had been taken before this inspection to address known concerns, but the scale and urgency of improvements needed had not been fully understood by leaders. An initial action plan, to cover the key concerns identified as part of the inspection, has been implemented. This includes a decision not to move any new children into the home.

Since the last inspection, seven staff have left the home. Agency staff have been used to cover for staff shortages. This means that children have sometimes been cared for by staff who they do not know, and who they have not formed a good relationship with. Recruitment of new staff is ongoing.

Staff attend monthly team meetings. However, the records of what was discussed are poor and it is unclear how these meetings assist staff in meeting the needs of children. Similarly, staff supervision sessions, which are not consistently held, do not provide staff with the direction and guidance needed. This leaves some staff feeling unsupported. One staff member said staff morale was low.

Staff have completed a wide range of training courses. However, the effectiveness of this training has been undermined by the turnover of staff, use of agency staff and change of managers. Staff have not demonstrated that they have the skills, knowledge or ability to consistently meet children's needs.

The language used by staff in records blames children for their behaviours. Managers have not yet taken steps to understand why this is or to support staff to better understand children's behaviours and needs.

A director who is not named as being involved in the day-to-day operation of the home is working in the home in some capacity. This includes communication with the children and their families, as well as staff. Their involvement in the home blurs the lines of accountability.

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 positive relationship standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— mutual respect and trust; an understanding of acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— meet each child's behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)) This specifically relates to ensuring that staff meet each child's individual emotional needs and support children to learn about acceptable behaviour.	30 September 2023
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular the registered person must 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; 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)(v))	30 September 2023

This specifically relates to staff understanding their responsibilities in keeping children safe.	
*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 homes 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. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(c)(f)) This specifically relates to having management arrangements in place which ensure that the staff are meeting the needs of each child and that the staff team provides consistency of care for each child.	30 September 2023
The registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medications received into the children's home. In particular the registered person must ensure that— medicine which is prescribed for a child is administered as prescribed to the child for whom it is prescribed and no other child; and a record is kept of the administration of medicine to each child. (Regulation 23 (1) (2)(b)(c)) This specifically relates to having arrangements in place to ensure medication is administered as prescribed and a record is kept of the administration of medication.	30 September 2023

*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that staff record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

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, Prescot Road, St Helens, Lancashire
WA10 3TP

Responsible individual: Patricia Neil

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Sally Griffiths, Social Care Inspector

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