

2547837

Registered provider: After Care NW Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately owned home provides care for up to three children with social, emotional and mental health needs.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since July 2020.

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.

We last visited this setting on 6 October 2020 to carry out an assurance visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 December 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: not applicable

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
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Not previously inspected		
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Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children benefit from a multi-agency plan to meet their emotional health needs. This includes support from external and internal therapeutic services which respond to the changing needs of children. This helps children to develop resilience and overcome any hurdles in their lives. One child said: 'They read my mind and help me through everything.' Another child said: 'They tell me everything is going to be OK, and it always is. I have never had this before.'

Children have two care plans that highlight most of their needs and arrangements that are in place to meet their needs. These documents have lost focus and it has resulted in children not having common, specific and measurable goals that they are aiming to achieve. This is a complicated system and creates an opportunity for drift relating to children's progress.

Children are supported by staff to develop life skills that will help them manage adult life. Individualised plans are developed to help children gain specific skills in preparation for them to live more independently. The plans are evaluated by the manager and staff to ensure that children are making progress. If they are struggling with specific skills, their plans are adapted to meet their needs and help them achieve.

Staff support children to spend meaningful time with their families. Children are supported in creative ways to manage any difficulties they may have with their family relationships. This enables children to feel empowered through managing complex family dynamics and ensures that they maintain good-quality relationships with their loved ones.

Children are supported to overcome hurdles relating to their education. The staff team reflects with children about education plans that will support them to achieve their full potential. Staff persistently encourage children when they face a challenge with their education. This practice has enabled children to believe in themselves and be aspirational about their future.

Children are supported to create memories with their team. Staff help children capture their experiences in a memory book. This enables children to have a record of their life story and assists them when they are older with remembering significant times in their lives that brought them joy and happiness.

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

The staff team has a comprehensive understanding of the risks in the children's lives and how to keep them safe. Staff work with the children to help them develop good self-awareness and put in place strategies to manage risky situations. When the children are struggling with their emotions, staff complete some outstanding work to

emotionally support children. Staff and the manager seek external support from other agencies if it is required to keep children safe and they follow safeguarding procedures. This helps children through the difficult period that they are going through and risks in their lives are reduced.

When children go missing from home, staff follow their safety plans to try and get them home safely. However, when children go out in the community, staff do not consistently maintain contact with them to ensure that they are safe. This has stemmed from an assumption about children's vulnerabilities linked to their past experiences and a view that some children are safer than others. The team has completed a significant amount of reflection about this, and learning has been taken on board. There is further reflection to be completed with the team about gender stereotypes linked to risk and the team will need to embed this learning.

There is a detailed assessment in place about the risks that are in the local area and there is a plan in place to ensure that these external risks are managed. Staff have good links with local agencies that safeguard children, and their support is used to keep children safe.

Children are educated by their staff team about current safeguarding issues in society that could affect their lives. Children have engaged well with this work; however, there are still some gaps in their understanding. Staff have failed to put in place a consistent plan relating to children's mobile phones to ensure that any potential safeguarding issues are identified and managed. This has not had an impact on children's safety. However, if this remains unaddressed, it could create a safeguarding issue.

The managers ensure that they can meet the children's needs before they move into the home. The dynamics between children in the home are continuously assessed and safety plans are put in place to ensure that all children are safe in their own home. This enables children to feel stable and secure and minimises the risk of them experiencing further trauma through disruption in their lives.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The staff team feels well supported. One team member described the manager's guidance, support and encouragement as 'immeasurable'. Staff receive good informal development opportunities. The manager also uses formal arenas, such as team meetings and supervision, to ensure that team members reflect on their practice to continuously improve outcomes for their children. There are some members of staff who have not received supervision in line with the organisation's policy and procedure, which could result in drift with the manager's future vision.

The manager has a good oversight of significant events that take place in the children's lives. The manager evaluates the staff's practice to ensure that plans have been followed and reflects on anything that could have been improved to support the children. The manager coaches newer team members to develop their practice

and highlights areas of development to ensure that standards remain high for the children.

For one child, the multi-agency response to manage and reduce risk was not good enough. The manager has offered some challenge with regard to the child's overall plan. However, she has not challenged the lack of timely multi-agency reviews to keep the child safe and ensure that he received a positive outcome. It is vital that when services are not good enough for children that managers challenge external professionals.

Children's records are not always written from a child-focused perspective. Children's records belong to them and should therefore be written in a language that is accessible to them. However, current practice creates a culture in which children are not the driving force behind their care and plans.

Staff have completed training. However, not all the training meets the children's identity needs. The training that has been completed informs good care for the children. The training that is required will enhance the team's ability to support children to understand their own identity and develop a good sense of self.

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 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)(b)) This relates specifically to managing risks with regard to children's use of mobile phones It also relates to ensuring that the team stays in regular communication with children if they go out in the community to ensure that they are safe.	31 January 2022
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)) This specifically relates to the children having a plan that clearly focuses on their progress and future. The plan should include specific and measurable goals that everyone is working towards to support the children to reach their potential. It also relates to the children's educational needs being analysed to inform their plans.	31 January 2022
The registered person must ensure that all employees—	31 January 2022

receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(b))

This specifically relates to team members receiving supervision in line with the provider's policy.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that where the placing authority or another relevant person does not provide the input and services needed to meet a child's needs during their time in the home or in preparation for leaving the home, the home must challenge them to meet the child's needs (see regulations 5(c)). Staff should act as champions for their children, expecting nothing less than a good parent would. The registered person should consider the use of an independent advocate (see paragraph 4.16) if the child's needs are not being met. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards' page 12, paragraph 2.8)
- The registered person should ensure that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs, and that the training available meets the needs of the children in their care. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards' page 53, paragraph 10.11)
- The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.5)

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: 2547837

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: After Care NW Limited

Registered provider address: 45 Kensington Road, Southport, Merseyside PR9 0RT

Responsible individual: Timothy Blundell

Registered manager: Rosie Binfield

Inspector

Carly Quinn, Social Care Inspector

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