

2677302

Registered provider: North West Youth Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is operated by a private provider. The home provides care for up to three children who may experience social and emotional difficulties and/or a learning disability.

There is currently one very young child living at the home. Another very young child has recently moved on from the home.

The home was registered in July 2022. There is currently no registered manager. The registered manager left in January 2023 and a new manager was appointed and started in post in February 2023.

The inspection was paused on 8 June 2023, due to the illness of the manager. The inspection resumed and it was completed on 15 June 2023.

Inspection dates: 7 and 8, and 15 June 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 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 are poor and they are not making progress.

Date of last inspection: 27 February 2023

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
27/02/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

Significant weaknesses in the quality of management oversight at the home have negatively affected the children's day-to-day care and experiences. Children have had poor experiences through difficult peer relationships which staff have been unable to manage appropriately. As a result, children have not always felt safe or been safeguarded effectively when incidents have occurred in the home.

Two children have lived at the home since the last inspection. One child's placement has since broken down. Managers failed to seek support soon enough when the placement was at risk of breakdown. As a result, the child has experienced another move that has not ended positively.

The relationship between the staff and the current child is positive. Staff are invested in the child's progress. They support the child to attend their alternative education provision until a suitable school is identified. The staff support the child to attend their health appointments. They also ensure that the child is kept active, which helps them to have a healthy lifestyle.

The child is involved in a range of activities, such as caring for the chickens, attending dance classes, going for walks and having trips away. These provide opportunities for the child to make lasting memories and have fun.

Family time is promoted to support the child's relationship with the most important people in their life. Friendships are encouraged, which enables the child to socialise with other children.

The home has been decorated. The child's bedroom is tailored to their preferences and they like it.

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

Serious and widespread failures mean that children have not been safeguarded effectively. One child was described as feeling 'petrified' during an incident involving another child who has since moved from the home.

Managers have failed to ensure that all incidents are recorded fully, including any follow-up discussions with children. Not all incidents that have resulted in children being harmed have been documented properly. Although staff have tried to intervene when children have physically clashed, they have not always been effective in diffusing situations resulting in children's behaviour escalating further. Accident forms have not been completed consistently and body maps are not recorded sufficiently following incidents. The poor management oversight of the

documents has limited the manager's ability to monitor staff practice and safeguard children.

Poor risk management has exposed children to harm. Written risk assessments do not always reflect the current risks or ensure that decisive action is taken to keep children safe. For example, one child has been exposed to inappropriate images when using an electronic device. While the manager was aware of this, they allowed the child to continue to use the device before ensuring that it was safe. The written risk assessments were not updated. No referral was made to the safeguarding lead, no incident forms were completed and no-one spoke to the children until the matter was raised by a child's social worker several months later. Although staff were aware of this concern, they failed to whistle-blow.

Managers have failed to implement a lone-worker risk assessment in relation to children's specific risky behaviours.

Staff have used physical intervention as a last resort. Although physical interventions have decreased significantly due to the changes in the group dynamic, not all physical interventions have been recorded sufficiently. This prevents leaders and managers from evaluating the incidents to ensure that the measures used are safe and proportionate. Similarly, not all recorded physical interventions include debriefs with children and staff, although the records indicate that such actions would take place. The records do not consistently indicate whether children require medical attention following a physical intervention.

When a child's behaviour escalated, staff were unable to manage the situation and called the police for assistance who physically handled the child. The impact of police intervention has had a significant impact on the child's emotional well-being.

Not all allegations against staff have been referred to the local authority designated officer. The failure of the provider to demonstrate the action taken does not provide sufficient assurance that they have protected children. No proactive steps have been taken to address the circumstances when children make allegations, to ensure that these continue to be monitored and handled appropriately.

Some direct work with children has helped them to learn how to keep themselves safe. However, this has not covered discussions about their identity to help inform their understanding of their identity.

No children have not gone missing from the home. Missing-from-home protocols are in place should this happen.

Due to the safeguarding concerns identified, Ofsted has issued a compliance notice under regulation 12.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Leadership and management oversight of the home is poor. There is no registered manager at the home. Since the last inspection, the former responsible individual has left the organisation. A responsible individual was appointed in June 2023. They left with immediate effect before the inspection was resumed due to concerns about the management of the home.

The newly appointed manager is currently absent. A senior manager currently has full oversight of the home while the management arrangements are being resolved. Prior to the inspection and the responsible individual leaving, the senior managers along with the independent person identified a significant number of shortfalls. These relate to the management oversight of the home. A detailed action plan has been formulated to address the serious and widespread concerns.

There are significant gaps in the management oversight of incidents and safeguarding concerns that have exposed children to the risk of harm. The manager has confirmed to senior managers that they have completed tasks when they had not been done, calling their integrity into question. The review of the quality-of-care report does not include the views of children's parents or carers and staff.

Some of the children's paperwork is out of date. Managers do not have a mechanism for measuring the progress of children. The minutes of meetings about the children have not been recorded consistently to inform the children's continued care. There is no system for recording complaints, which provides limited opportunities for the manager to focus on any improvements.

There is no evidence of new staff completing an induction or progressing with their probation. Not all new staff have received a first supervision session. This does not provide sufficient assurance that practice issues are addressed and children are cared for in accordance with the statement of purpose. Staff supervision records are of poor quality and lack reflection. These include the records for the manager, who up until recently had only received one formal supervision session with the former responsible individual since they started managing the home.

Staff recruitment processes lack rigour. Where there are applicants with specific health conditions, these conditions have not been explored fully and evaluated to inform the suitability decisions. There are concerns about unconscious bias within the staff team that the provider is looking into.

The regulator has not been notified about all significant incidents. This prevents the regulator from monitoring the home's safeguarding practice. The outcome of the safeguarding investigation that was identified at the time of the last inspection has not been shared with the regulator. This does not provide sufficient assurance that the appropriate action has been taken and that any lessons have been learned to inform and improve practice.

Not all of the previous requirements have been met. Due to the leadership and management concerns identified, Ofsted has issued a compliance notice under regulation 13.

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; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; 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; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and 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)(v)(vi)(vii)(b)) In particular, the registered provider must ensure that appropriate safeguards are implemented to keep children safe online; that children's plans and risk assessments are reviewed and kept up to date; that lone-working risk assessments are implemented for children who are known to make allegations; that allegations against staff are clearly recorded and concerns are shared with the relevant agencies and professionals to ensure that appropriate action is taken;	30 July 2023

that any physical interventions are identified and recorded in compliance with the regulations and there is management oversight of them; that accident forms and body maps are recorded appropriately; that work is completed with children to help them to manage their behaviour and learn from incidents; that staff understand how to whistle-blow.	
*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 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)) In particular, the registered provider must ensure that effective monitoring systems are in place to ensure that the home is suitably managed in a way that is consistent with the aims and objectives of the statement of purpose and promotes children’s safety and welfare; that an effective monitoring system is in place to review the quality of care of children and the quality of records; that recruitment processes are safe and robust; that significant incidents are notified to Ofsted, including any updates; that staff receive an effective induction and probationary support; that supervision sessions for new and existing staff take place regularly and that supervision records are reflective and of good quality.	30 July 2023

In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— seek to involve each child’s placing authority effectively in the child’s care, in accordance with the child’s relevant plans; seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child’s needs; if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority’s or a relevant person’s performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child’s needs are met in accordance with the child’s relevant plans. (Regulation 5 (a)(b)(c))	30 July 2023
The care planning standard is that children— have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. (Regulation 14 (1)(b))	30 July 2023
The registered person must ensure that a record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of any investigation. (Regulation 39 (3))	30 July 2023

* These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that they have a system in place that allows them to monitor the matters set out in regulation 45 and complete a review of the quality of care at least once every 6 months. In particular, the registered person should ensure that the quality of care review report includes feedback from staff and parents/carers.’ (‘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: 2677302

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: North West Youth Services Limited

Registered provider address: Peine House, Hind Hill Street, Heywood OL10 1JZ

Responsible individual: Karen Buckley

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Jacqueline Malcolm, Social Care Inspector

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