

2801032

Registered provider: Polar Childcare Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home was registered with Ofsted in August 2024. It is operated by a private organisation.

The registered manager post has been vacant since September 2025.

The home provides care for up to three children who experience social and emotional difficulties, mental disorders, or who are drug and alcohol dependent.

At the time of this inspection, two children were living at the home. The inspectors spoke with both children.

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 October 2025

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: 25 February 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none



Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25/02/2025	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

Children's experiences, progress and safety are adversely affected by ineffective care planning and serious shortfalls in staff safeguarding practices. The leadership and management of the home are poor.

Staff do not understand all the children's individual needs. They do not have access to some of the children's relevant plans. This includes relevant local authority documents, care plans and personal education plans (PEPs).

One child was previously engaging in one-to-one tutoring. However, they have now disengaged from this and they do not participate in any formal education, employment or training. The other child does not attend education and refuses to return. Staff do not have effective strategies in place to ensure that the children regularly participate in educational activities or are supported to develop their independence skills in line with their age. This does not support the children to reach their full educational potential.

One professional spoken to said: 'The home tutor has informed me they were receiving negativity and hostility when they were coming to the home. It is the local authority view that things have taken a dramatic downward turn since the new interim manager came in.'

Children are registered with local healthcare providers and are encouraged to attend routine appointments. The impact of children's earlier life experiences and ongoing emotional well-being support is assessed by the in-house clinical team, who help the staff to work therapeutically with the children on an individual basis.

One child told inspectors that they want to move out of the home as they were no longer happy. However, the following day, they changed their mind and said they were OK living in the home but still wished to move. The child told the inspector that they did not like the interim manager and felt at times that staff were too strict and patronising. The child said that they do not like living with the other child in the home.

Leaders, managers and staff do not ensure that the home environment is a nice place for children to live. Some parts of the home are in poor condition. For example, one child's bathroom is dirty. Children do not have all items that they need. For example, the child's wardrobe is broken. This does not ensure that the home and garden are safe or that the environment is a homely place for children to live.

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

At this inspection, staff did not know that the inspectors were able to gain entry to the home. The door was open and there was no doorbell in use. On another occasion, staff

did not know that a child who does not live in the home spent the night in a child's bedroom. This potentially puts children, staff and visitors at risk of harm.

Leaders and managers do not consider all children's needs and vulnerabilities before they move into the home. The previous manager did not robustly assess the risk posed by an older child to a younger child. Leaders and managers did not consider how the staff team could meet one child's needs alongside a child who was living in the home. Staff do not have the knowledge and skills to manage these risks, and this led to children suffering significant harm.

Children's risk management plans are not robust or up to date. They do not consider adequate strategies for staff to follow to reduce and minimise the risk posed to the children. This means staff do not have accurate information to manage safeguarding incidents. Staff spoken to during the inspection did not know what action they would take to safeguard children from suicidal ideation, substance misuse and sexual assault. The children continue to be at risk of ongoing harm due to staff not having the required skills or knowledge to respond effectively to safeguarding incidents to keep them safe.

The children frequently go missing from home, both together and alone. This has led to serious incidents occurring. This includes community damage, antisocial behaviour, underage sexual activity, possession of inappropriate materials, arson, tattoos, and substance misuse. Despite staff efforts to follow procedures, such as reporting to the police, searching for children, and on occasions discussing risks with the children, these interventions do not reduce the risks effectively.

When children go missing from home, they are not provided with the opportunity to speak to somebody independent of staff working at the home. This does not provide the children and staff with opportunities to identify triggers and review strategies to mitigate this risk. As a result, children remain at significant risk of harm.

A child made allegations in respect of some staff members' relationships with each other. Leaders and managers did not recognise the seriousness of this and did not report the allegations in line with safeguarding and organisational procedures. This means potential safeguarding issues are not addressed.

There are significant shortfalls in safer recruitment practices. Suitability checks are not robust. The interim manager and responsible individual are working in the home without relevant police checks. References are not always obtained from previous employers or sufficient consideration given when staff have been dismissed in previous roles or if they have criminal convictions. Gaps in employment history are not explored and overseas checks are not always obtained. This means children are cared for by staff who may not be suitable and safe to do so.

Serious incidents are not consistently notified to Ofsted and the placing authority in a timely manner, or notified at all. This means that the regulator and placing authority do not have sufficient oversight and scrutiny of the management of safeguarding incidents.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Since the last inspection, the registered manager has left the home. An interim manager is in post and has applied to register with Ofsted. A new responsible individual is in post.

The leadership and management arrangements are poor. Management oversight of the care provided for children is ineffective. Leaders and managers do not have oversight of all incidents that have occurred. Therefore, leaders and managers cannot address any shortfalls in staff practice to improve the quality of care staff provide for children.

Leaders and managers do not maintain the home in accordance with the aims outlined in the home's statement of purpose, policies and procedures.

Records to show leaders and managers review processes, monitoring and auditing information were not available for the inspectors to review. This does not demonstrate that leaders and managers have identified shortfalls in practice. As a result, poor and inconsistent staff practice continues to go unaddressed.

The review report on the quality of care over the past six months has not been submitted to Ofsted and is considerably late. The previous review does not include clear, measurable targets and does not incorporate feedback from the child, professionals, family members or staff. This impacts on the leadership of the home as it does not support leaders and managers in their efforts to strengthen and develop the care that staff provide for children.

The external monitoring of the home is conducted by an independent person contracted through a consultancy agency. The responsible individual also works for the same consultancy agency as an independent person herself. This means there is no impartial or external scrutiny of the care and safety provided to the children.

One requirement raised at the last inspection has not been met and has been restated. One recommendation raised at the last inspection has not been met and has been raised as a requirement.

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; help each child to understand how to keep safe; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other; 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 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)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(b))	14 December 2025

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; 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)(f)(h))	14 December 2025
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children's home; or if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3).	14 December 2025

The requirements are that—

the individual is of integrity and good character;

the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform;

full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2.

The registered person may permit an individual to start work at the home despite the fact that the requirement in paragraph (3)(d) has not been met if—

the registered person has taken all reasonable steps to obtain full information about each of the matters in Schedule 2 in respect of the individual, but the enquiries in relation to any of the matters in paragraphs 3 to 6 of Schedule 2 are incomplete;

full and satisfactory information in respect of the individual has been obtained in relation to the matters in paragraphs 1 and 2 of Schedule 2;

the registered person considers that the circumstances are exceptional; and

the registered person ensures that the individual is appropriately supervised while carrying out the individual's duties, pending receipt of any outstanding information on the matters in paragraphs 3 to 6 of Schedule 2, which is then considered satisfactory by the registered person.

The registered person must take reasonable steps to ensure that any individual who is working at the home and who does not fall within paragraph (2)(a) and (b) is appropriately supervised while carrying out the individual's duties.

(Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3)(a)(b)(d) (7)(a)(b)(c)(d) (8))

Specifically, the registered person must ensure that satisfactory Disclosure and Barring Service checks and overseas employment checks are conducted and remain current prior to employment. Satisfactory references must be obtained and gaps in employment history must be explained and explored. If a person has previously worked in a position involving work with children or vulnerable adults, verification and assessment of the

reason the employment or position ended must take place, supported by a clear rationale about the person's suitability for the role.	
The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— mutual respect and trust; an understanding about 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; help each child to develop socially aware behaviour; encourage each child to take responsibility for the child's behaviour, in accordance with the child's age and understanding; help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone; communicate to each child expectations about the child's behaviour and ensure that the child understands those expectations in accordance with the child's age and understanding; help each child to understand, in a way that is appropriate according to the child's age and understanding, personal, sexual and social relationships, and how those relationships can be supportive or harmful; help each child to develop the understanding and skills to recognise or withdraw from a damaging, exploitative or harmful relationship; strive to gain each child's respect and trust;	14 December 2025

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; understand and communicate to children that bullying is unacceptable; and have the skills to recognise incidents or indications of bullying and how to deal with them; and that each child is encouraged to build and maintain positive relationships with others. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(viii)(ix)(xii)(xiii)(b))	
The registered person must prepare and implement a policy which— is intended to safeguard children accommodated in the children's home from abuse or neglect; and sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect. (Regulation 34 (1)(a)(b)) Specifically, the registered person must ensure that all managers and staff understand and follow safeguarding and allegation management policies.	14 December 2025
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home's statement of purpose; that arrangements are in place to—	14 December 2025

manage and review the placement of each child in the home; and that each child's relevant plans are followed; that the child's placing authority is contacted, and a review of that child's relevant plans is requested, if— the registered person considers that the child is at risk of harm or has concerns that the care provided for the child is inadequate to meet the child's needs; the child is, or has been, persistently absent from the home without permission. (Regulation 14 (1)(a) (2)(a)(b)(ii)(c)(e)(i)(ii))	
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; an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious; there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(a)(b)(c)(e))	14 December 2025
The registered provider must appoint, at the registered provider's expense, a person ("the independent person") to visit and report on the children's home carried on by the registered provider. Subject to paragraphs (4) and (5), the registered provider may not appoint the following as an independent person— a person who has, or has had, a connection with— the registered person;	14 December 2025

which the registered provider considers to give rise to doubts about that person's impartiality (for the purposes of producing the independent person's report – see regulation 44). The independent person must declare any actual or potential conflict of interest (whether of the type mentioned in paragraph (3) or otherwise) to the registered provider without delay and, if reasonably practicable, before conducting a visit to the home. If the registered provider becomes aware of a potential conflict of interest in relation to the independent person before or during the independent person visiting the home (see regulation 44), the registered provider must— make arrangements to cancel the visit without delay; and appoint a different independent person to visit the home. (Regulation 43 (1) (3)(g)(i) (6) (7)(a)(b))	
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— help each child to achieve the child's education and training targets, as recorded in the child's relevant plans; support each child's learning and development, including helping the child to develop independent study skills and, where appropriate, helping the child to complete independent study; understand the barriers to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child to overcome any such barriers; help each child to understand the importance and value of education, learning, training and employment; promote opportunities for each child to learn informally;	14 December 2025

help a child who is excluded from school, or who is of compulsory school age but not attending school, to access educational and training support throughout the period of exclusion or non-attendance and to return to school as soon as possible; help each child to attend education or training in accordance with the expectations in the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 8 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(viii)(x)) Specifically, the registered person must ensure that children's PEPs are accessible to the staff to support children with their targets and provide opportunities for informal learning and the development of independence skills when the child is out of education.	
The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 6 (1) (2)(c)(i)) Specifically, the registered person must ensure that the home is decorated and maintained to a good standard and that any broken items in the bathroom and children's bedrooms are repaired or replaced, the backyard is clean and tidy and the walls in the utility room are decorated.	14 December 2025
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	14 December 2025

any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children.	
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(Regulation 45 (1) (2)(a)(b)(c))	
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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: 2801032

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Polar Childcare Limited

Registered provider address: Halls House Farm, Chain Lane, Staining, Blackpool FY3 0DP

Responsible individual: Clare O'Connor

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Julie Elder, Social Care Inspector

Karen Andrews, Social Care Inspector

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