

SC051947

Registered provider: After Care (NW) Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is privately owned. It provides care for up to 2 children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

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

The manager registered with Ofsted in October 2021.

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 June 2026

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	inadequate
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The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 10 February 2026

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
10/02/2026	Full	Requires improvement to be good
03/07/2024	Full	Good
08/08/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
14/06/2022	Full	Good

Summary of findings

There are significant shortfalls in the leadership and management of the home. This has affected safeguarding practice and the standard of care the staff provide for the child in the home.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Since the last inspection, there have been no moves into or out of the home.

The child is provided with a welcoming, clean and comfortable home environment. Their bedroom is personalised to reflect their individual preferences, including a light shade that the child has decorated themselves. However, there are some areas of the home that require improvement, including flooring in the dining room, the garden fences and the roof of the outdoor building.

The child is making progress in some areas of their life. They now attend a local youth club and have made some friends. The child is not currently attending an education placement but is engaging with a tutor and has achieved some education certificates.

Staff understand the child's individual needs. However, the manager has not obtained a local authority care plan for the child. Furthermore, the home's support plan is not regularly reviewed and does not include all the child's identified needs. This limits staff's ability to support the child's care, health and educational needs.

The child is registered with all relevant health services. However, staff did not follow up on a referral to a specific external agency to support the child with their identity. This has resulted in the child not receiving the necessary support as identified in their health assessment.

Staffing arrangements are not consistently aligned with the child's care plan. Staff who support the child are, at times, redeployed to provide support in other homes. This practice affects the consistency and continuity of care provided to the child.

The child feels listened to by staff. They participate in a range of enjoyable and age-appropriate activities, such as attending a comic book convention. Some of these memories are captured in photos in a memory book. Staff understand the importance of the child's relationships with people who are important to them. They support the child in spending time with their family when it is in their best interests.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

The child reports feeling safe in the home and can clearly identify trusted adults they can turn to for support. This has contributed to a reduction in incidents of the child going missing from the home.

Staff engage the child in some direct work. However, this does not always take place following incidents to support the child's understanding of risks and to develop strategies to keep themselves safe. Furthermore, the child would benefit from direct work relating to online safety.

Risk management plans do not provide clear guidance for staff on how to respond if the child were to go missing from the home or when the child's friends visit. Furthermore, there is no clear guidance for staff on carrying out welfare checks when the child is having unsupervised family time. These shortfalls expose the child to potential harm and leave staff without the direction they need to respond safely and effectively.

The quality of incident recording is poor. Not all incidents of self-harm are recorded. Records lack detail regarding staff responses and the decisions made. Such inconsistencies undermine the reliability of records and hinder effective oversight.

Staff do not always take appropriate action following safeguarding incidents. For example, they do not always carry out room searches following incidents of self-harm to ensure that the child does not have access to harmful items. This places the child at potential risk of harm.

Leaders and managers do not always staff the home in line with the child's risk management plan. The child should be supported by 2 staff members. However, on several occasions, staffing levels have reduced to one member of staff supporting the child. Furthermore, there is no risk assessment in place for lone working, and staff are not aware of a lone working policy.

Leaders and managers do not ensure that all recruitment checks are carried out before staff start working in the home. For example, gaps in employment histories have not been identified or explored, and proof of identification for staff has not always been checked and verified. This means that the child may be cared for by unsafe adults.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The home is led by an experienced registered manager who is child focused. Feedback from external agencies and family members is positive, particularly in respect of communication.

Management oversight of the care provided to children is poor. Systems are not in place to support leaders and managers in maintaining effective oversight of the care being provided in the home. This limits opportunities for the manager to identify shortfalls in

staff practice, including recording, and to identify any patterns or trends in relation to incidents.

Staff are moved to other homes within the organisation at short notice. This has affected staffing levels and has required the registered manager to work shifts. This creates a conflict between roles and responsibilities and reduces management capacity. As a result, the manager's oversight in the home is not consistently effective. For example, the statement of purpose has not always been reviewed and submitted to Ofsted within the required time frame.

Records demonstrate that the manager reviews some safeguarding incidents. However, shortfalls in staff practice are not always identified, and when they are, this information is not always shared with staff to improve practice. Furthermore, staff debriefs are not always carried out following safeguarding incidents. This limits opportunities for staff to learn and reflect on how they support children.

Staff have access to a range of training opportunities, both online and face to face. However, not all staff have received mandatory or needs-led training on topics including autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

Staff spoken to are positive about the support they receive from the manager. Staff benefit from regular supervision and team meetings, although these are not sufficiently reflective or evaluative of children's needs, risks and progress, or of staff members' own practice.

Leaders and managers do not escalate concerns with local authorities when essential care plans and strategy meeting minutes are not shared, or when the child does not receive an independent return home interview within the required time frame following a missing-from-home incident, in line with statutory guidance.

Leaders and managers have not adhered to a staff member's pregnancy risk assessment plan in relation to staffing ratios. The plan does not include the risks associated with physical intervention and is not regularly reviewed. This potentially places the staff member at risk.

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 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; demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— 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)(g)(h))	20 July 2026

Specifically, staff must have the skills, knowledge and understanding required to meet children's needs and manage risks effectively. The registered manager and staff must undertake all mandatory training, as well as training tailored to children's individual needs, including areas such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, autism, attachment, and sexuality identity.

Leaders and the registered person must ensure that appropriate staffing levels are maintained, enabling the registered manager to have sufficient capacity to lead and manage the home effectively. Staff practice must be consistent to meet children's needs.

Leaders and managers must ensure that debriefs are carried out with staff and children following incidents.

Leaders and managers must ensure that actions identified in children's assessments are addressed, specifically referrals to external agencies.

Leaders and managers must ensure that pregnancy risk assessments are adhered to and regularly reviewed, and that staff supervision provides opportunities to reflect on practice, safeguarding incidents, and the needs of the children.

Leaders and managers must ensure that the registered person has consistent oversight of incidents, records and documents. Where shortfalls in staff practice are identified, action must be taken to address them.

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;

20 July 2026

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 effectiveness of the home's child protection policies is monitored regularly. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(v)(vii)(e)) Specifically, leaders and managers must ensure that: children's individual risk management plans are regularly reviewed and provide staff with clear, accessible guidance to support risk reduction, particularly in relation to missing-from-home incidents, family time, and when children are visiting friends or their friends visit the home; children receive an independent return home interview within 72 hours of going missing from the home; room searches are carried out following incidents of self-harm; staffing levels are in line with children's risk management plans; direct work is carried out with children following incidents.	
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 the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that— the individual is of integrity and good character; full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a) (3)(a)(d))	20 July 2026

Specifically, leaders and managers must ensure that gaps in employment are scrutinised, that evidence of this scrutiny is recorded, and that they hold copies of all required identification documentation.	
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)) Specifically, the registered person must ensure that concerns are escalated when local authority documents are not received and when there are delays in independent return home interviews being carried out within the specified time frame, in line with statutory guidance.	20 July 2026
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children’s home; and 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) (2)(b)(ii)) Specifically, leaders and managers must ensure that children’s plans include all their support needs, including education, and are regularly reviewed and updated.	20 July 2026
The registered person must maintain records (“case records”) for each child which—	20 July 2026

include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child; are kept up to date; and are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c)) Specifically, the registered person must ensure that all safeguarding incidents are recorded, including incidents of self-harm.	
The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ("the statement of purpose") which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1. The registered person must provide a copy of the statement of purpose to HMCI and make a copy of it available upon request to— keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16 (1) (2)(a)(b)) Specifically, leaders and managers must ensure that the statement of purpose is updated to reflect any changes to staffing.	20 July 2026

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that the home environment meets the needs of the children, is homely, and is maintained to a good standard. Specifically, action should be taken to remedy the loose roof tiles on the outdoor building in the garden, paint the garden fences, and replace the flooring in the dining room. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', pages 14 and 15, paragraphs 3.3 and 3.9)

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: SC051947

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: After Care (NW) Limited

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

Responsible individual: Timothy Blundell

Registered manager: Natalie Hamilton-Ryszka

Inspector

Michelle McGrath, Social Care Inspector

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