

SC062013

Registered provider: After Care (North West) Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and operated by a private provider. It offers care for up to three children who experience social and emotional difficulties.

At the time of this inspection, two children were living at the home.

There has been no registered manager since 28 August 2024.

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 April 2025

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: 29 October 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection:

On 18 February 2025, we carried out an assurance inspection. Following the inspection, two compliance notices were issued under Regulations 12 and 13 of The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015.

The compliance notices were reviewed as part of this inspection.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
29/10/2024	Full	Requires improvement to be good
12/04/2023	Full	Good
26/04/2022	Full	Good
30/03/2022	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Both children living at the home spoke to the inspector as part of this inspection.

Children live at the home for a long time. The provider is dedicated to offering stability for the children who live at the home. Children are settled and have positive relationships with staff.

The lower floor of the home has been refurbished since the last inspection. The home is well decorated and maintained inside and out. Children's bedrooms are decorated based on their preferences and personality. Staff support children in having and caring for pets, such as a bearded dragon.

Staff know and encourage children's interests and hobbies. They help children research their interests and engage in activities in relation to them, such as buying vintage clothing and joining online experiences of specific historic periods.

Staff promote children's identities, cultures and religions. Staff explore culture and identity with children to ensure that they are meeting their needs. Staff assist one child in attending a local church. They support another child in spending regular time with people who speak their first language.

Plans for children to develop skills for adulthood are in place. The plans are tailored to their individual needs and abilities. However, the implementation of one child's plan has been delayed, and there has been limited progress on the plan for another child. Children have not received timely support to develop the necessary skills for adult life.

The managers and staff strive to ensure that children experience positive moves out of the home. Staff ensure that children understand the reasons for their transitions and work collaboratively with placing authorities to deliver consistent messages. Staff welcome staff from new homes into the setting to ensure that children can meet them before they move.

Staff take photos of children's time at the home and collect mementos from their trips, activities and experiences. When collating this information, staff consider children's needs and preferences, such as making photos available in digital format. This ensures that children have a wealth of material that documents their life story and journey in the home.

Children receive a suitable education. Staff are proactive in identifying alternative opportunities when children are struggling with their chosen college courses, such as finding and facilitating an apprenticeship. However, one child does not have a current personal education plan, and this has been unchallenged by managers and staff. Other key documents for children are also missing, such as a current care plan and health

assessment. Therefore, it is unclear whether the internal plans for children are comprehensive and align with their wider plans.

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

Staff understand the risks to children and how to manage them. Risk assessments are clear and regularly updated. They contain detailed strategies for the staff to follow. Staff make referrals to specialist agencies when children would benefit from their support, such as drug and alcohol services.

Staff know the children well and understand how to manage any concerns. Staff have received training in how to de-escalate heightened emotions, and they use their skills to keep children calm and avoid situations where they may need to be held.

Children are rarely held by staff. Staff are trained to hold children safely. When holds are used, they are proportionate to the risk faced by children and staff. Physical intervention used is the least restrictive to the child and for the minimum length of time required to keep the child safe. The manager promptly reviews incidents involving the use of restraint and clearly records the expectations of the staff. Following restraint incidents, the manager promptly speaks to the children and staff to reflect and gather their views.

Children do not go missing from the home. Children have detailed and current individual missing-from-home plans. Staff know what to do if children go missing.

Children know how to make complaints about the home. Managers and leaders respond promptly to children's complaints and explain what actions they take in response. Staff ensure that children have several opportunities to raise formal complaints when they say they wish to, even if they change their mind. Staff ensure that children have access to advocacy services when they wish to challenge other agencies. Managers and staff demonstrate to children that their opinions are valid and valued.

Consequences for children are proportionate. The manager recognises when the natural consequences of behaviour are sufficient and does not impose further repercussions. However, consequences are not always linked to the children's behaviour, and they are not always restorative. Therefore, the child misses an opportunity to learn how their behaviour affects them and others. A recommendation has been made in relation to this.

Room searches are infrequent. Staff have carried them out only when there is a clear safeguarding reason to do so. Usually, staff inform children about the search at the earliest opportunity.

The managers and leaders inform Ofsted swiftly when there has been a serious incident. This allows for the regulator to have prompt and appropriate oversight of any concerns.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home has had several changes in management over the last year. The last registered manager left the home on 28 August 2024. There were two interim managers following this. The senior leaders have recognised the instability in management arrangements and how this has affected the children and the home. An experienced manager, who is registered at another home in the organisation, has been appointed. The manager knows the home, the children and the staff well.

The manager is supported by a committed deputy manager, who also knows the home well. The managers have carried out a thorough audit of the home and identified the areas they feel require development and support. The managers have begun to implement their plans. Children and staff report positive progress in the home under the most recent management arrangements.

Managers are present in the home. The manager and deputy manager organise their time based on the needs of the two homes they oversee and ensure daily management presence in each. The oversight of managers has improved since the last inspection. Managers promptly review key documentation and identify strengths and shortfalls in staff practice and recording. They take effective action to address any shortfalls.

There are no staff vacancies in the home. Some new staff have joined the home since the last inspection; however, these are mostly experienced staff from the organisation who already know the children. The home does not use agency staff. New staff are safely recruited.

Staff feel supported by the managers in the home. Managers have an open-door policy, and staff say that the managers are always available to speak to about any worries or issues. Managers supervise staff regularly. They provide additional supervision to address the specific learning needs of staff. Staff understand their role and the expectations the managers have of them.

The offer for staff training is comprehensive and includes training to meet the specific needs of the children they care for, such as training on attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and foetal alcohol spectrum disorder. Staff undertake the training provided to them. The manager and deputy manager undertake additional training in line with their positions of leadership, such as managing allegations and supervision training. The managers and staff are well prepared for their role.

The managers have the required qualifications for managing a children's home. The staff members have either finished their diploma or are currently pursuing it. There is no one working at the home who has not obtained their qualification within the required time frame.

The compliance notices and statutory requirements issued by Ofsted following the last inspection have been met.

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 quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff— help each child to develop resilience and skills that prepare the child to return home, to live in a new placement or to live independently as an adult. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(vi)) Specifically, ensure that plans are made and implemented in a timely manner so that children have the necessary skills when they move out of the home. The plans should align with the child's needs and abilities, and children should be encouraged to consistently build on their skills.	30 June 2025
In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— 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 (b)(c))	2 June 2025

Specifically, the manager and staff should challenge the placing authority when statutory meetings are not held on time and raise concerns when they do not receive copies of the child's documentation.	
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Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that any consequences used to address poor behaviour are restorative in nature and help children recognise the impact of their behaviour on themselves, other children, the staff caring for them, and the wider community. In some cases, it will be necessary for children to offer reparation in some form to anyone who has been harmed by their behaviour, and the staff in the home should be trained to help the child understand and carry out this responsibility. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', pages 46 and 47, paragraph 9.38)

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: SC062013

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: After Care (North West) Limited

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

Responsible individual: Timothy Blundell

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Sarah Huntbatch, Social Care Inspector

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