

SC062013

Registered provider: After Care NW Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

A private company owns this home. It is registered to give care and accommodation for three young people who may have social or emotional difficulties.

The home does not have a registered manager. The manager has been in post seven weeks and is in the process of making an application to be registered.

Inspection dates: 10 to 11 March 2020

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	Requires improvement
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement
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Date of last inspection: 29 August 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
29/08/2018	Full	Good
27/06/2017	Full	Good
28/03/2017	Full	Requires improvement
06/09/2016	Interim	Not judged

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, 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 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 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. (Regulation 8 (1)(2)(viii))	10/05/2020
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)) In particular, ensure that risk assessments are evaluated to reflect the impact of action to reduce risk of harm and whether the action is effective.	10/05/2020
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enable, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare.	10/05/2020

In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experience of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home; and use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided. (Regulation 13 (1)(2)(f)(h)) This is in relation to ensuring that individual care plans reflect the correct information for each child.	
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 staff help each child to access and contribute to the records kept by the registered person in relation to the child. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(2)(f)) This is in relation to children contributing their wishes and views to their in-house placement plan.	10/05/2020
The independent person must produce a report about a visit ('the independent person's report') which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether— the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being. (Regulation 44 (4)(b)) This is specifically in relation to ensuring that the information provided is evaluated on a consistent basis and that young people, professionals and stakeholders are regularly consulted with.	10/05/2020

Recommendations

- The registered person should only accept placements for children where they are satisfied that the home can respond effectively to the child's assessed needs as recorded in the child's relevant plans and where they have fully considered the impact that the placement will have on the existing group of children. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 56, paragraph 11.4)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people:

The children living at the home have made mixed progress in their overall outcomes. One child has benefited from stability of placement. However, a change of placements for one child and the introduction of another child into the home has had some impact on the overall progress for children.

The staff request all relevant information from children's placing authorities to enable them to have a good understanding of the needs of the children. The manager undertakes pre-admission impact and matching assessments. However, where there is some concern whether the placement is appropriate, further clarification as to why the placement has been made is not clear and this could impact on the stability of placements for children. That said, children are supported to visit the home prior to placement.

In-house placement plans are developed and reviewed to make sure that the current individual care of each child is identified. However, some information on placement plans has been compromised by staff copying and pasting information. This could impact on care being provided.

Staff understand the importance of children attending education and encourage them to do so. While some children are making good educational progress, not all children attend consistently. One child has had a number of occasions of missing from home. This has contributed to the lack of education attendance and engagement. This means that their educational attainment and achievement is compromised.

Children benefit from good healthcare support to meet their physical, emotional and psychological health needs. Staff work closely with healthcare professionals to enable children to have access to the individual support they require. This includes therapeutic support, which helps children with overcoming past difficulties and enables staff to provide ongoing strategies to continue this support. Professionals spoken with at the time of the inspection say that this has had a positive impact for the children in placement.

Children have good relationships with the staff and feel comfortable with sharing and discussing things with them. Regular individual key-working sessions are held with the children and this helps to address any worries or concerns. The views of children are obtained by staff. However, this is not always reflected in records maintained. Specifically, placement plans do not demonstrate that children have been consulted with in order to record their views in relation to their plans.

Individual activities are encouraged based on children's interests. These include activities in the local community, for example going to the park, the cinema, play areas and the local town. Staff try to encourage children to continue to follow interests they may have previously had and source the resources locally. There are a

wide range of toys, books and games at the home to further provide children with things they like to play with. However, due to the current age difference between children, these activities are mainly undertaken separately rather than together.

Clear arrangements are in place and supported for young people to spend time with family and friends. Where there are restrictions on contact to safeguard children, these are known and adhered to by staff. This helps to keep children safe.

The home provides a warm, welcoming and comfortable environment for children. Health and safety checks are discreetly completed to further add to the safety of the home.

How well children and young people are helped and protected:

Staff have a good understanding of maintaining the safety and well-being of the children living at the home. They implement a range of strategies and undertake specific individualised work with the children to help them understand risks and how to keep safe. Risk management strategies are in place and reviewed on a regular basis. However, the reviewing of these does not reflect when risks have increased or decreased, or whether strategies implemented have been changed to reflect the changes identified. As a result, it is unclear whether these strategies are effective. This has been identified by the organisation, and a new risk format is due to be implemented.

Since the last inspection in August 2018, one child has been discharged and another admitted. Effective measures were implemented, which enabled the child moving on to another placement to do so in a positive way.

At the last inspection, it was identified that there had been no incidence of children missing from home or safeguarding concerns. However, there have been a number of incidents of missing from home in the past six months, some of which have been for significant periods of time. Staff follow individual missing from home risk assessments and work in partnership with other professionals tasked with safeguarding children. Strategy meetings have been held, with plans implemented to help children return to the home to help to keep them safe. This has resulted in some reduction of incidents of missing over the past two months. However, these episodes of missing have impacted on the overall progress some children are making.

Children have behaviour management plans in place. These plans focus on encouraging behaviour through positive role-modelling, de-escalating negative behaviours and praising positive behaviours. Children have only been restrained for their own safety. Detailed records are maintained to reflect measures used. Records also reflect that children and staff have been spoken with following the incident to enable them to reflect on the incident and look at strategies that might be used in future situations.

Safer recruitment guidelines are followed by the organisation when recruiting staff. Visitors to the home are verified to ensure the safety of the children.

Regular health and safety checks are undertaken to ensure that the home is safe and comfortable for the children and staff. Fire checks are undertaken and all staff and children have taken part in regular practice fire evacuations. This means that they know what to do in the event of a fire within the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers:

Since the last inspection, the previous registered manager has moved to another home run by the organisation. The deputy manager has also moved on to other employment. A new manager has been appointed. At the time of the inspection he had been in post six weeks and is in the process of submitting an application to be registered. He has experience of working with children and young people and holds a relevant qualification. The deputy manager's post has not been filled. The impact of the change of management has been minimised by the previous manager being available to help support the new manager within his role.

The remaining members of the staff team have provided continuity to the children. Staff spoken to demonstrate a good understanding of the children and their individual needs. They feel that the change in management, although a bit unsettling, has been managed well.

The staff receive regular supervision, which enables them to reflect on their practice. The previous manager developed a personal development plan for each member of staff. This plan gives an account of their history and practice to date and their short-term and long-term goals. This is a live document that staff can add any interests to, such as further training and career opportunities. All staff undertake mandatory training, ensuring that their skills and knowledge remain current. For example, updated training has been provided on child sexual exploitation and management of the Covid-19 virus. Team meetings are used as a further way of discussing practice and keeping updated with current issues. These measures help promote the welfare of young people.

Children's records are maintained on electronic systems and also on some paperwork. However, the electronic system is not easy to navigate for staff and, as a result, information is not always readily available in the correct place. This impacts on the continuity of recording. Care plans are, in general, individualised working documents. However, some of the format has been copied and pasted and this means that there is confusion about which child this relates to. The senior managers of the organisation are aware of the issues with the electronic recording system and are in the process of addressing this to ensure continuity of recording throughout the organisation. This will also improve the management monitoring and oversight of the home.

The independent monitoring of the home has improved since the last inspection. However, further evaluation within these reports would enable the regulator to have

greater oversight of the home and outcomes for the children. For example, the independent visitor reports on what the staff have recorded but does not consistently evaluate this for the impact this has for the children at the home.

Action has been taken to address the requirement made at the last inspection in relation to the safer area report. The requirement in relation to risk assessments has been partially met with, reflecting only known and emerging risks. However, as previously mentioned, monitoring of strategies used to minimise risks are not clear. Although the independent visitor reports have improved, evaluation and evidence of speaking with other professionals, parents and children is not consistently recorded.

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 NW Limited

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

Responsible individual: Timothy Blundell

Registered manager: post vacant

Inspector

Claire Deary, Social Care Inspector

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