

SC062013

Registered provider: After Care NW Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home provides care for up to three children between the ages of seven and 17 years with Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) needs. The manager has been employed with the provider since January 2020.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, Ofsted suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

We last visited this setting on 28 October 2020 to carry out an assurance visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 August 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **requires improvement to be good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **requires improvement to be good**

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 March 2020

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
10/03/2020	Full	Requires improvement to be good
29/08/2018	Full	Good
27/06/2017	Full	Good
28/03/2017	Full	Requires improvement

Inspection judgements

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

Children's plans do not contain important goals that are relevant to the children's needs, including life skills that they need to achieve and specific health outcomes. As a result, staff and children do not have a shared understanding of the outcomes that they are working towards and why.

Children with additional needs, such as special educational needs, emotional health needs and physical health needs, are not receiving external input and advice to help them achieve their full potential. The manager has access to a unique therapeutic service. However, the therapeutic reflections and direction from a clinical psychological team are not developing staff's practice. This subsequently results in a lack of impact on children's day-to-day care.

Children are receiving full-time education and they are enjoying school. One child has started a new school and has settled in well. However, the staff and the manager do not know the children's current academic attainment and their educational targets. One child said that she is very behind her peers in school because she has missed a lot of education. Without this knowledge, staff and the manager are unable to support the children to fulfil their academic potential and close any attainment gaps.

Children are supported to have fun with their families and friends. Distance is not a factor in children being able to spend time with people who matter to them the most. Children are also given the opportunity to enjoy activities, new hobbies and holidays. This enables children to make positive and long-lasting memories.

One child said, 'I am happy here and there is nothing I would change.' Staff have recently bought another child a pet to support his needs. Observations and conversations show that children are happy and have good relationships with the adults who care for them.

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

The staff have developed some good relationships with the children's families and the police to find children when they go missing from the home. However, staff do not always follow plans to find children when they are missing overnight. Children are not always given the opportunity to speak to an independent person when they have returned home after being missing. Staff are not curious about children's whereabouts and their experiences when they have been missing. The above shortfalls result in children not having robust and informed risk management plans to safeguard them when they go missing from the home.

The manager has a good understanding of the children's emotional triggers. This knowledge has been shared with other professionals, such as school staff, to support the children's emotional regulation and this has reduced the number of incidents within school and at home.

The managers have requested multi-agency input when they are worried about children's safety. However, this input has not always happened. The manager has failed to escalate these concerns. This results in children's safety plans not being informed by partner agencies.

The home environment requires further attention to ensure that children live comfortably and in a hygienic home. The use of locks on internal doors not only unnecessarily restricts the children's access to all areas of the home but also detracts from a homely environment. Furthermore, the cleanliness of one child's bedroom is undermining the ethos of a welcoming and well-cared-for home.

Staff have not received training in specific safeguarding issues such as exploitation and self-harm. This may result in staff not having the knowledge to identify when children are at risk and put effective safety plans in place to keep children safe.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The manager does not consistently provide direction to lead the staff on how to meet the children's needs. The manager also does not reflect with staff on their practice relating to specific events that happen in children's lives. This results in the manager being unable to identify poor practice and address it to ensure that children are receiving the best possible care.

The manager provides a nurturing approach to the staff team and children. Staff feel supported and children's views about their care are embedded within practice. However, formal support processes, such as supervision, are not always taking place in line with the provider's policy. They also do not include actions for staff to develop. Consequently, the manager is not developing a learning culture to ensure that practice is continually improving for children.

The manager and staff have not received training to develop their knowledge of children's individual needs, including neurological conditions, emotional health needs and physical health needs. This lack of knowledge has an impact on the manager's ability to lead a staff team that is skilled in meeting the individual needs of children.

The manager has not demonstrated good practice for safer recruitment. The manager has failed to provide strong oversight of a staff member's employment gaps and a reference has not been verified. The manager has not followed probation procedures with a new member of staff. This practice could lead to children receiving care from unsuitable adults who have not received sufficient support to meet children's needs.

The independent person who visits the home has not consistently requested feedback from children, families, professionals and the staff team. The lack of feedback from these important people reduces the opportunity to improve the care provided. A further lack of feedback in the review of the quality of care means that the manager is unable to identify areas for development and growth for the team.

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; 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 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; that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health; that the effectiveness of the home's child protection policies is monitored regularly. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(v)(vii)(b)(d)(e)) This relates specifically to staff following plans in place to reduce risk to children when they are missing from the home.	24 Sept 2021

Children consistently receiving independent return home interviews when they have been missing from the home. Children receiving support to reduce specific risks such as exploitation. Staff to be trained in how to recognise exploitation and self-harm to enable them to identify risks and keep children safe. Children's living environments to be hygienic and free from hazards. Multi-agency meetings to take place within timescales when children are deemed to be at risk of significant harm.	
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; demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— research and developments in relation to the ways in which the needs of children are best met; and feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received; and	24 Sept 2021

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)(g)(i)(ii)(h)) This relates specifically to the manager having good-quality oversight of safeguarding incidents to ensure that practice is good and safeguarding processes have been followed. The manager challenging other agencies to ensure that multi-agency safeguarding responses are provided and plans are put in place. The manager ensuring that supervision takes place in line with the provider's policy and identifies development areas for staff. Training to take place that will upskill the staff in line with the children's specific needs.	
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 arrangements are in place to— manage and review the placement of each child in the home; and plan for, and help, each child to prepare to leave the home or to move into adult care in a way that is consistent with arrangements agreed with the child's placing authority. (Regulation 14 (1)(a) (2)(b)(ii)(iii)) This relates specifically to children having plans that contain current information about their needs; external expertise being used to support children's progress; and children being supported to develop life skills.	24 Sept 2021

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff have the knowledge and skills to understand each child's education and training targets and their next steps for learning. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 27, paragraph 5.11)
- The registered person should actively seek independent scrutiny of the home and make best use of information from independent and internal monitoring (including under regulations 44 and 45) to ensure continuous improvement. They should be skilled in anticipating difficulties and reviewing incidents. They are responsible for proactively implementing lessons learned and sustaining good practice. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)
- The registered person should maintain good employment practice. They should ensure that recruitment, supervision and performance management of staff safeguards children and minimises potential risks to them. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)

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

Inspectors

Carly Quinn, Social Care Inspector
Marie Cordingley, Social Care Inspector

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