

SC062013

Registered provider: After Care NW Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a privately operated children's home. The home is registered to provide care for up to three children who may have complex needs, including social and emotional difficulties.

The registered manager has been in post since April 2022.

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 April 2023

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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Date of last inspection: 26 April 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
26/04/2022	Full	Good
30/03/2022	Interim	Improved effectiveness
11/08/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good
10/03/2020	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children are provided with a homely and inviting environment. They are supported to personalise their bedrooms, and there are photos and mementos displayed throughout the house. This environment helps children to feel calm and relaxed. One child said, 'There's nothing I would change about living here. It's good, I like it here.'

Staff prioritise children's physical and emotional health. When children move in, staff quickly register them with relevant healthcare services and support them to attend all appointments. Staff share vital information with specialist healthcare providers to make sure that children are receiving the right diagnoses and treatment. Children's health needs are always met.

Staff work in partnership with specialist therapeutic services. Staff's practice is informed by an understanding of trauma and the psychological impact this will have on the children they are caring for. This allows staff to work with children in an empathetic way.

Staff build positive relationships with children. Staff get to know children and understand their point of view. When children don't agree with the opinions of professionals, staff approach this sensitively and help children to understand their own care plans. Children feel listened to and safe.

Children are not consistently encouraged to develop safe hobbies and interests. Staff have not identified activities related to one child's existing interests. In addition, staff have not adapted the child's plans to meet their needs more. In contrast, another child is being supported to engage in extracurricular activities and learn more about their areas of interest.

Staff ensure that children's files contain all the important documents. When children move in, staff gather relevant paperwork quickly. This helps staff to have all the information they need to care for children. However, staff do not encourage children to regularly access their files or make any meaningful contribution to them. Therefore, children's files do not represent their voices or views. This was a requirement of the last inspection that has not been met.

Staff do not always successfully promote children's education. One child is thriving in school. They have excellent attendance and are making good progress, and their education is supported at home. By contrast, the other child is out of education, and staff are not engaging them in any form of alternative learning.

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

There is a strong culture of safeguarding and risk management in this home. Staff know their role in a range of safeguarding scenarios, even in relation to risks that children are not currently facing. Staff can identify and respond quickly to a range of risks.

Staff know how to respond effectively when children go missing from home. The manager has developed a robust missing-from-care policy that staff consistently follow. As a result, when children go missing, there is a quick and coordinated response. When children come home, they do not always get the opportunity to speak to an independent person about what has happened. This could limit professionals' understanding of children's experiences.

Staff use a consistent approach to managing children's behaviour. Staff understand what works well to de-escalate the behaviour of each child that they are caring for. This means that crises are avoided, and physical interventions have not been needed. This helps children to sustain positive relationships with the adults caring for them.

Robust checks are completed in relation to any potential new employees. This approach to recruitment ensures that children are only cared for by safe adults.

The manager completes a regular review of the risks and benefits related to the location of the home. The location risk assessment considers all local risks and includes intelligence from other professionals. This ensures the continued suitability of the location of this home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

There is a suitably experienced and qualified manager leading this home. She gets to know the children well and understands their individual needs and potential. Her leadership is developing a motivated staff team, who are striving to provide good-quality care for the children they are looking after.

Leaders and managers promote effective multi-agency working. Good-quality relationships and information sharing with other professionals help to provide consistency in children's care.

Staff attend a wide range of training to develop their skills and knowledge. This helps them to understand children's needs and provide better care.

The manager uses a comprehensive assessment to gather information about children before they move into the home. Although a lot of useful information is gathered, this is not always critically evaluated. In one instance, a child's placement has broken down.

Staff receive good-quality, reflective supervision. Staff performance is also reviewed annually via a robust system of appraisal. However, supervision is not taking place at

regular intervals, in accordance with the home's workforce development plan. This limits the effectiveness of supervision for formal oversight of staff practice.

Staff say they feel supported and enjoy working at this home. Although there have been some recent changes in the staff team, the manager has offered helpful support to ensure morale has not been affected. Children have not been impacted by staff changes and are receiving care from a motivated 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 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— 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; that each child's relevant plans are followed; 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)(b)(iii)(c)(f)) This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	30 June 2023
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,	30 June 2023

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. (Regulation 8 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)) In particular, when children are out of education, the registered person must ensure that useful strategies are used to find ways to engage children in learning.	
The enjoyment and achievement standard is that children take part in and benefit from a variety of activities that meet their needs and develop and reflect their creative, cultural, intellectual, physical and social interests and skills. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff help each child to— develop the child’s interests and hobbies; participate in activities that the child enjoys and which meet and expand the child’s interests and preferences; and make a positive contribution to the home and the wider community; and that each child has access to a range of activities that enable the child to pursue the child’s interests and hobbies. (Regulation 9 (1)(2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(b)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that children are offered and engage in a range of positive activities. When children have specific interests, the registered person must ensure that they are given opportunities to explore and develop these interests.	30 June 2023

Recommendations

- The registered person should have systems in place so that all staff, including leaders and managers, receive supervision of their practice regularly, as per the intervals detailed in the home's workforce development plan. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards' page 61, paragraph 13.2)
- 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. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards' page 56, paragraph 11.4)
- The registered person should ensure that when a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, they have an opportunity to have an independent return home interview. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards' page 45, paragraph 9.30)

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: Rosie Binfield

Inspector

Nicola Shaw, Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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