

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.

There were two children living in the home at the time of the inspection.

The registered manager left in September 2024, and an acting manager is in post who has applied to register with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 October 2024

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	requires improvement to be good
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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: 12 April 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/04/2023	Full	Good
26/04/2022	Full	Good
30/03/2022	Interim	Improved effectiveness
11/08/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

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

The home environment has been decorated to a good standard and is warm and welcoming. The home meets the needs of the children and feels and looks like a family home. The children's individual tastes and interests are reflected in their bedrooms, which they have helped to design. This gives the children a sense of belonging and acceptance.

Culture and diversity are celebrated in the home, and the children are comfortable and feel safe in exploring their identities. The children are offered a range of experiences and activities in line with their individual interests and hobbies.

A high turnover of staff has affected the children's sense of stability. As a result, this has had an impact on a child and their behaviours. This hinders the children's ability to build solid, supportive and trusting relationships.

The children are at a stage where it is critical that their preparations for semi-independence are embedded. For one child, who has a high level of vulnerability, it is imperative that they have the support to navigate day-to-day situations. Staff need to enable them to develop a degree of independence in preparation for adulthood.

Behaviour support plans are in alignment with the children's individual needs, and staff ensure that they have access to the right support services. For one child, this has promoted their emotional well-being and safety.

Staff have regular discussions with the children. This helps the children to address what is important to them and, equally, any worries or concerns. However, staff do not always evidence what follow-on work is completed, such as when a child made a disclosure. This impacts on children's ability to feel valued and build trust with adults.

Staff understand the importance of children attending education and encourage them to attend. Children's attainment is varied. One child is making good educational progress, having secured a college place after gaining their GCSEs. However, another child has experienced delays with their transition into post-16 education because of poor communication. This compromises their educational attainment and achievement.

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

Children say that they like their home and that they feel safe. They can identify who they can talk to if they have worries. Staff care about the children and spend time with them. Staff and children interact positively.

Staff understand children's risks and vulnerabilities. Plans are detailed and specific to the individual children. These are reviewed regularly to ensure that they are up to date. Staff work collaboratively to manage risks.

Leaders and managers respond to allegations or incidents of concern and notify relevant parties. However, records are not comprehensive, and children are not consistently spoken to or kept informed throughout the process. This prevents children from being listened to, feeling valued and building trusting relationships with staff caring for them.

Although physical intervention has only been used on one occasion and was proportionate, the child was not spoken to following this incident, and the language used in records places blame on the child. The records do not show that the child's needs and presentation were taken into account.

Not all staff have received physical intervention training. When staff have not had relevant training, they work alongside trained staff.

Staff know what to do when children go missing from home. Staff follow children's missing-from-home plans and make sure professionals and family members are updated. The response when children have returned home varies, and not all children have had the opportunity to speak to an independent person. This is a missed opportunity to gain a clear understanding of why the child goes missing and the associated risks.

Staff recognise when they are unable to keep children safe. For one child, this has meant they have had to move from the home. Staff have worked with professionals to ensure this was done sensitively to reduce the potential risks for the child. This kept the child safe.

Safer recruitment ensures that potential staff are vetted for suitability to work with children. When concerns arise about staff conduct or suitability, these have been addressed swiftly, which allows children to be cared for by suitable adults.

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

There has been a significant turnover of staff since the last inspection. The registered manager has left and a new manager is in post. The majority of staff members, including the manager, are in their probationary period. The turnover of staff has left the children feeling sad and confused.

The new manager is ambitious and has aspirations for the children in his care. He has begun to develop his priorities in the service development. Children's experiences and outcomes are central to the planning. However, these plans are at the very early stages and have not had the opportunity to be embedded across the staff team.

The quality-of-care report lacks feedback from children, families and professionals. The report does not include an action plan to develop the operation of the home. Reports of independent monitoring of the home have not been submitted to the regulator within expected timescales. The last one received does not contain a statement as to whether the children are safeguarded. This fails to show if managers understand the impact of the quality of care provided to the children.

Staff benefit from structured and regular supervision. This enables staff to have opportunities for reflection on their practice. However, annual appraisals have not taken place for all staff. This fails to ensure that managers understand staff development needs, which impacts on motivation, performance and morale.

Team meetings take place regularly. However, staff members would benefit from greater communication, guidance and direction from management and leaders to strengthen team morale.

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— demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(g)(ii)) In particular, ensure that the outcomes of safeguarding incidents, allegations and complaints are recorded and that children can contribute their views to these records, to enable the provider to learn from the child's experience.	4 December 2024
The registered person must ensure that— within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (b)(i)(ii)(c))	4 December 2024

In particular, the registered person must ensure that when behaviour management measures are imposed, they are evaluated to review their effectiveness. The registered person must also ensure that children are spoken to about the measure and that their views are included.	
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality of care review") at least once every six months. In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating— the quality of care provided for children; the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. After completing a quality-of-care review, the registered person must produce a written report about the quality of care review and the actions which the registered person intends to take as a result of the quality of care review ("the quality of care review report"). The system referred to in paragraph (2) must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff. (Regulation 45 (1) (2)(a)(b)(c) (3) (5))	4 December 2024
The registered person must ensure that all employees— have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (4)(c))	4 December 2024

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Staff should record information on individual children in a non-

stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

- The registered provider should ensure that when new staff are recruited, they complete specialist training as part of their induction. This is specifically in relation to having enough suitably trained staff to undertake restraint to keep a child safe or others safe if needed. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11)

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

Angeline Clarke, Social Care Inspector

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