

1263124

Registered provider: Autonomy Plus Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned by a private organisation. It provides care for up to five children who have a learning disability and additional needs.

The registered manager left on 16 April 2021 to become the responsible individual. The appointed manager has yet to register with Ofsted.

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

Inspection dates: 28 to 29 June 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **inadequate**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **inadequate**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **inadequate**

There are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded.

Date of last inspection: 9 September 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
09/09/2019	Full	Good
06/11/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

The progress and experiences of children are inadequate because safeguarding arrangements are weak, management oversight is poor and therefore children are not always fully protected.

Children are able to live at this home beyond their 18th birthday in order to support a move to adult care. However, there has been a delay with arranging planned moves resulting in two young adults living at the home at the time of this inspection.

Care plans, as arranged through the child's placing authority, are not always followed. Leaders and managers failed to ensure that an application for housing was completed correctly. This has resulted in a six-month delay and, consequently, the young adult remains living at the home. In addition, a social worker reported that an application for a court order regarding the deprivation of liberty for a child was not completed and submitted as agreed.

The routine locking of some doors restricts children moving around in their home. The supervision of children entering the kitchen has been replaced by fitting a bolt to the door. Such restrictive practices deny all the children from entering the kitchen. The manager has a list of matters in the home that require repair or maintenance. However, there has been some delay in attending to the list of jobs identified. For example, holes in the bannister on the staircase have been there for over four weeks, and two repaired areas have yet to be painted to be complete. Some areas of the home have excessive signs for fire safety that detract from creating a family-style appearance. In addition, weeds at the entrance of the drive have been overlooked to grow tall and unsightly. Children's bedrooms are personalised well, reflecting their choice of decoration, toys and belongings.

Children are supported well to attend school and college full time. Staff members collaborate with education staff to ensure that there is consistent support with communication, personal care and behaviour. When not in education, children go on outings, play in the large garden and have toys and activities in the home. Effective use of voice-activated technology enables children to have independence in selecting the music and television that they like.

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

The arrangements to safeguard children are inadequate. An allegation of abuse against a staff member was not recognised as such, and consequently leaders and managers failed to act to investigate whether children were being harmed. One incident that led to a member of staff being suspended in February 2021 was not managed within safeguarding procedures. Leaders and managers failed to ensure

that consultation occurred with the designated officer. In addition, Ofsted was not notified of this event. A more recent safeguarding incident was reported to Ofsted promptly. However, the referral to the designated officer was delayed.

Children are not always effectively monitored through the night, as detailed in their care plans. Staff are employed to be awake in order to be available to children with complex health needs. Night staff are required to undertake routine checks on the health and welfare of children. A recent serious incident occurred during the night; the staff member was unaware as they had failed to check on the child. The potential for the child to be harmed was further exasperated by the electronic monitor not being connected, as required because of epilepsy. This safeguarding investigation has included a review of the use of the monitor, given that this has not been considered in the two years it has been in use.

Fire safety arrangements are inadequate. The front and rear exits from the home are locked, requiring a key to open them. Staff have all been issued with a key; however, this arrangement is not satisfactory. Emergency evacuation plans for children state that if staff do not have a key there are keys available behind a break-glass system fitted on the wall near the exit doors. This is incorrect; there are no keys located by the doors. This seriously compromises the safety to exit the building in the event of a fire or emergency. Furthermore, the gates from the garden to access the meeting point are secured by padlocks. The manager was unable to unlock these gates, as one padlock had rusted to the extent that the number combination could not be moved. Three different fire risk assessments were presented to the inspector, none of which are suitable.

Safer recruitment procedures are not always adhered to. Applicants are required to complete an application form providing a full employment history and explanation of any gaps. Records confirm that this does not always happen. Leaders and managers have accepted applications that are incomplete, and gaps have not been fully explored. This practice fails to ensure that staff employed are suitably checked to work with children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The leadership and management of this home are inadequate. Oversight by leaders and managers is poor, and therefore children are not always fully protected.

Leaders and managers fail to apply effective scrutiny and challenge to records and care practices. The many different recording systems in use restrict the ability of leaders and managers to gather a clear understanding of the quality of care for each child. The two requirements made from the monitoring visit on 28 January 2021 are not met. Monitoring systems and poor-quality reports by an independent visitor remain as shortfalls.

The absence of comprehensive and effective monitoring results in leaders and managers not being fully aware of the strengths and areas for development of this

home. Leaders and managers reported that they do not have a development plan for the home. Additional monitoring through monthly visits by an independent visitor fails to explore safeguarding matters in depth. The suspension of a member of staff was included in the monthly report of February 2021. The independent visitor failed to recognise that this incident required a referral to the designated officer and Ofsted. In addition, the independent visitor fails to regularly seek feedback from parents, relatives and people working at the home.

Staff members are enthusiastic about their role in supporting and caring for children with learning, and additional, disabilities. Staff training has been limited due to the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions. However, a team day provided opportunities to discuss physical intervention and how to record this appropriately. Some senior staff are providing formal supervision to team members without having any training in supervisory skills. The absence of this specific training has the potential to hinder the professional development of the senior staff and their supervisees.

Family members and social workers are generally satisfied with the level of communication they receive about their children. In particular, family members reported positively on the manager of the home and his support provided to them and their children.

Leaders and managers are committed to addressing the failings identified from this inspection to improve the safety and care experiences for children.

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
<p>The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who—</p> <p>understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children;</p> <p>use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to—</p> <p>meet the needs of each child; and</p> <p>enable each child to participate in the daily life of the home. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(i)(ii))</p> <p>This refers to ensuring that there are prompt repairs to the home and removal of excessive fire notices to create a homely environment.</p>	28 July 2021
<p>* The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if</p>	28 July 2021

<p>necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child;</p> <p>help each child to understand how to keep safe;</p> <p>have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm;</p> <p>understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person;</p> <p>take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and</p> <p>are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>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;</p> <p>that the effectiveness of the home's child protection policies is monitored regularly. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(v) (vi)(vii)(b)(e))</p> <p>In particular, take urgent action to review all safeguarding procedures and ensure that all staff are aware of these procedures and comply with them.</p> <p>In addition, take urgent action to review night-time supervision of children and ensure that staff understand the expectations of them so that children and young people are always appropriately supported and supervised.</p>	
<p>The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that—</p> <p>helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and</p> <p>promotes their welfare.</p>	<p>28 July 2021</p>

<p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(h))</p>	
<p>The care planning standard is that children—</p> <p>receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and</p> <p>have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that each child's relevant plans are followed. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c))</p> <p>This refers to the prompt completion of applications as agreed in care plans, for example, for housing and deprivation of liberty safeguards.</p>	<p>28 July 2021</p>
<p>The registered person may only use devices for the monitoring or surveillance of children if—</p> <p>the monitoring or surveillance is for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child concerned, or other children;</p> <p>the child's placing authority consents in writing to the monitoring or surveillance;</p> <p>so far as reasonably practicable in the light of the child's age and understanding, the child is informed in advance of the intention to do the monitoring or surveillance; and</p> <p>the monitoring or surveillance is no more intrusive than necessary, having regard to the child's need for privacy. (Regulation 24 (1)(a)(b)(c)(d))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that there is regular review of any monitoring devices used.</p>	<p>28 July 2021</p>

<p>If the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005(a) applies to the home—</p> <p>the registered person must ensure that the requirements of that Order and any regulations made under it, except for article 23 (duties of employees), are complied with in respect of the home. (Regulation 25 (2)(b))</p> <p>In particular, take urgent action to review and amend all fire safety procedures in the home to ensure that designated fire exits and gates away from the premises can be opened without delay should there be an emergency.</p>	<p>28 July 2021</p>
<p>The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only—</p> <p>employ an individual to work at the children's home; or</p> <p>if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3).</p> <p>The requirements are that—</p> <p>the individual is of integrity and good character;</p> <p>the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform;</p> <p>the individual is mentally and physically fit for the purposes of the work that the individual is to perform; and</p> <p>full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3)(a)(b)(c)(d))</p>	<p>28 July 2021</p>
<p>The registered person must ensure that all employees—</p> <p>undertake appropriate continuing professional development;</p> <p>receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience; and</p>	<p>28 July 2021</p>

<p>have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (4)(a)(b))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that senior staff who provide supervision receive appropriate training to do so effectively.</p>	
<p>The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if—</p> <p>a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation;</p> <p>an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious;</p> <p>there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there;</p> <p>a child protection enquiry involving a child—</p> <p>is instigated; or</p> <p>concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry); or</p> <p>there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(a)(b)(c)(d)(i)(ii)(e))</p>	<p>30 June 2021</p>
<p>The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month.</p> <p>When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the independent person—</p> <p>if they consent, to interview in private such of the children, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as the independent person requires; and</p> <p>to inspect the premises of the home and such of the home's records (except for a child's case records, unless the child and the child's placing authority consent) as the independent person requires.</p>	<p>28 July 2021</p>

<p>A visit by the independent person to the home may be unannounced.</p> <p>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—</p> <p>children are effectively safeguarded; and</p> <p>the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being.</p> <p>The independent person's report may recommend actions that the registered person may take in relation to the home and timescales within which the registered person must consider whether or not to take those actions. (Regulation 44 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3) (4)(a)(b) (5))</p>	
--	--

* These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendations

- The registered person is responsible for reviewing the quality of care. The review should enable the registered person to identify areas of strength and possible weakness in the home's care, which will be captured in a written report. The report should clearly identify any actions required for the next six months of delivery within the home and how those actions will be addressed. The whole review process and the resulting report should be used as a tool for continuous improvement in the home. In particular, there should be a development plan for the home, informed by a review of the quality of care. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.4)

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: 1263124

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Autonomy Plus Limited

Registered provider address: 67 Roundpond, Melksham, Wiltshire SN12 8EB

Responsible individual: Michael Evans

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Clare Davies, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2021