

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 with a learning disability and additional needs.

The registered manager left on 16 April 2021 to become the responsible individual. The appointed manager is in the process of applying to register with Ofsted.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection dates: 18 to 19 October 2021

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: 28 June 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection:

A compliance notice was issued following the full inspection on 28 and 29 June 2021, when the home was judged inadequate. The notice related to regulation 12, the protection of children standard.

On 3 August 2021, a monitoring visit took place and Ofsted assessed that the provider had taken sufficient action to meet the compliance notice.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/06/2021	Full	Inadequate
09/09/2019	Full	Good
06/11/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

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

Since the previous full inspection on 28 June 2021, the same children and young people have remained living at this home. Care planning has improved for one young person and there are now plans for him to move on to his own home with adult care provision. Escalation of disruptive behaviour from one child with complex needs led to leaders and managers giving notice to the local authority that an alternative home would be required for this child. This decision is now being reconsidered due to the child's more settled behaviour and progress.

Social workers report that they are satisfied with the care and support the children receive at this home. For example, one child's social worker confirmed the child's progress as reported by the manager. The child now mostly sleeps through the night, has reduced incidents of behaviour that causes harm to others, eats nutritious meals and has increased their communication and social interactions.

Children are generally settled and recognise this setting as their home. Positive relationships are evident between children and core team members. However, the continuity of care from consistent care givers is significantly hindered by the high turnover of staff and subsequent use of agency staff. Although the same agency staff are used where possible for familiarity, 23 agency workers have been employed at this home since the previous full inspection.

Some areas of the home environment are improved. Excessive signage for fire safety is no longer visible and photographs of the children decorate the walls. Consultation with children has led to their choice of paint colour to decorate the lounge and dining room. In addition, the children have chosen pictures to decorate the walls. The redecoration was occurring at the time of this inspection and was therefore incomplete. Without the use of warm colours and soft furnishings, the dining room remains stark in appearance. In contrast, children's bedrooms are personalised well, reflecting their choice of decoration, toys and belongings.

Children enjoy many outings and have access to a large garden with play equipment. Now that most COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted, children are enjoying a return to youth club. This provides an opportunity to meet new friends and join in games and activities.

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

Since the previous full inspection, senior leaders and the manager have taken action to review and amend all fire safety procedures. They have ensured that designated fire exits and garden gates can be opened without delay should there be an emergency.

Leaders and managers have reviewed and implemented revised safeguarding procedures. All team members have completed training in safeguarding and, more recently, the manager and deputy have undertaken advanced safeguarding training to improve their understanding around the protection of children.

In response to two incidents, safeguarding procedures were followed and the matters were reported to the relevant agencies without delay. Allegation management procedures were correctly followed, with appropriate consultation with the designated officer.

The use of physical intervention is rare as staff use distraction techniques to support children to calm when they are anxious and upset. Children's behaviour is recorded and reported to a behaviour support team. By reviewing incident reports and behaviours noted, the behaviour support team contributes to each child's support plan and provides a monthly analysis report. However, this team rarely observes the children directly and relies on records. The team's reports lack any clear analysis and, overall, simply list the behavioural incidents without summarising possible cause and effect. The additional resource of this specialist team is not being utilised effectively.

Improved systems are now in place for monitoring the actions of waking night staff, ensuring that they are completing tasks as required for the safety and welfare of children. Leaders and managers adhere to safer recruitment procedures. Such procedures have developed to ensure that thorough checks are completed on potential new staff and that regulatory requirements are met.

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

Leaders and managers have met all but one of the requirements made at the last inspection. The leadership and management standard remains unmet, and two additional requirements have been made as a result of this inspection.

The lack of effective monitoring hinders the development of this home. The manager has failed to review all the incident reports and relies on poor-quality reports from the behaviour support team regarding children's behaviour. Without a comprehensive overview, the manager is unable to identify patterns and trends that could inform children's care and support plans effectively.

Since 1 August 2021, eight staff have left. This high turnover impacts on the stability of staffing and the staff team's ability to provide continuity of care to children. Leaders and managers persist with the recruitment of more staff. However, two out of six new staff have left within a short period. At least two agency staff are present every day to ensure the sufficiency of staffing. Agency staff do not make up more than 50% of the staff team and regular agency staff are employed where possible.

The manager has failed to ensure that regular agency staff are provided with formal supervision. Given the number of days that core agency staff are working in the home, they need to be given the opportunity to reflect on their practice and to receive feedback from a supervisor.

Leaders and managers have improved the storage and access of records; however, the content of children's case records requires improvement. Outdated templates use language such as 'service users' and refer to 'Every child matters' agenda. One child's healthcare plan has not been updated since August 2021, despite a significant change to the child's health and well-being. Poor management oversight has not identified this outdated healthcare plan. Records are not being maintained so that they will be helpful to children now and in the future.

The staff are committed to providing the best they can for the children and are motivated to improve their practice. The team is keen that more staff are recruited. Despite the staff shortages, team members report that they receive regular supervision, training and management support. Although the manager has spoken to the team about using a therapeutic approach, no formal training around this has been provided. The statement of purpose and internal documents refer to this approach and these documents are therefore incorrect and need to be revised.

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 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>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>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;</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)(a)(h))</p>	30 November 2021
<p>The registered person must ensure that the employment of any person on a temporary basis at the children's home does not prevent children from receiving such continuity of care as is reasonable to meet their needs. (Regulation 31 (1))</p>	30 November 2021
<p>The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which—</p> <p>include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child;</p> <p>are kept up to date; and</p> <p>are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c))</p>	30 November 2021

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the dining room is decorated with colour and soft furnishings to create a warm, welcoming environment. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should have systems in place so that all staff, including the manager, receive supervision of their practice from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional, which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. Regular agency staff should be provided with such supervision. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2)
- The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understanding the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. 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)

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

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