

No Limits Caithness Day Care of Children

Wick Family Centre Bank Row Wick KW1 5EY

Telephone: 01955 605 790

Type of inspection:

Unannounced

Completed on:

15 April 2024

Service provided by:

No Limits Caithness

Service no:

CS2012308049

Service provider number:

SP2012011880



About the service

No Limits Caithness is registered to provide a care service for children and young people with additional support needs, to a maximum of 16 children, aged from 4 years up to the age of 16 years. A maximum of four of these places may be used for children and young people aged 16 to 18 years.

The service is operated by the charitable organisation 'No Limits Caithness', which is run by a board of directors. The care service is located in Wick, Caithness and operates during school holidays and on Saturdays during the school term.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 9 and 11 April 2024. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included, previous inspection findings, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- reviewed three online questionnaires from parents and carers
- spoke with staff and management
- · observed practice and daily life
- · reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children and young people were provided with opportunities to engage with their wider community.
- The indoor environment was spacious and provided children with ample space to move around.
- Parents appreciated the service and spoke positively about the staff team.
- The setting did not offer a range of rich, stimulating play resources to support and encourage children and young people's development and interests.
- Lack of progress in making improvements meant that children and young people did not experience high quality care.
- Children and young people's rights, needs and choices were not well supported as the service was not well led and managed.
- Gaps in staff knowledge and skills impacted on the quality of children and young people's experiences and outcomes.

From this inspection we evaluated this service as:

In evaluating quality, we use a six point scale where 1 is unsatisfactory and 6 is excellent

How good is our care, play and learning?	2 - Weak
How good is our setting?	2 - Weak
How good is our leadership?	1 - Unsatisfactory
How good is our staff team?	2 - Weak

Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

How good is our care, play and learning?

2 - Weak

We made an evaluation of weak, for this key question. Whilst some strengths could be identified, these were compromised by significant weaknesses.

Quality Indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children and young people experienced inconsistent interactions from staff throughout the day. We saw nurturing responses from one staff member to meet the needs of children and young people. During these times they engaged with children and young people at their level and offered social conversation, comfort and reassurance in a respectful way. This supported some individuals to feel safe and secure. We also saw some interactions that did not positively support children and young people's wellbeing and dignity. For example, at times, staff spoke about individuals over their heads as if they were not present. Additionally there were times when individuals were upset and not appropriately comforted or reassured by staff. As a result, children and young people did not always receive care and support which met their emotional well-being or supported them to feel valued. We made an area for improvement in relation to ensuring staff have the appropriate skills to support children's wellbeing and development at our inspection in March 2023 and this remains unmet. (See Area for improvement 1 under 'What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection?')

Children and young people were not always supported through appropriate use of individual support strategies. Personal plans had been developed in partnership with parents to include individual support strategies and a few staff were able to use this information to provide relevant support. However, most staff did not use this information effectively to meet children's rights, needs, choices and wishes. For example, visual communication supports were not consistently used by staff for individuals. As a result, children and young people's holistic wellbeing needs were not consistently met. We made a requirement about ensuring each child receives appropriate care and support and their needs are met at our inspection in August 2023 and extended the date for meeting the requirement at our inspection in November 2023, which has been restated. (See Requirement 1 under 'What the service has done to meet any requirements made at or since the last inspection?')

Clear support was not in place to support individuals to adjust and feel secure with transitions within the day. During these times, individuals were not always communicated with. The pace of the day and routines lacked consideration of individual needs. This lead to an individual becoming agitated.

Lunchtime did not promote a high quality social experience. Most staff did not recognise the rich opportunities to develop their relationships with individuals through social conversations which meant mealtimes were not as enjoyable. There were some missed opportunities to encourage some children to learn life skills. For example, setting the table.

Quality Indicator: 1.3 Play and learning

Children and young people were not fully empowered to make decisions about their play experiences. They could choose to access different playrooms with a variety of resources. However, many of these resources were not exciting, inspiring or stimulating. As a result, children were not supported to develop their imagination and curiosity. Where individuals did show an interest in their play, choices were not always recognised or respected.

Children and young people were not always supported to engage in fun and meaningful experiences. There were limited approaches in place to plan engaging and interesting play opportunities. Additionally some play resources were not appropriate for children and young people's stage of development. As a result, they were not always being challenged and stimulated. Children and young people experienced inconsistencies in how staff responded to their cues during play. There were some positive interactions which supported individual development and play experiences such as, using communication to support language skills. However, at times staff interactions were not skilful in supporting and extending play. Staff did not always give children and young people sufficient time to process information and respond. As a result, children were not being supported to achieve their potential. This was identified as an area for improvement during our March 2023 inspection and remains unmet. (See Area for improvement 2 under 'What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection?')

On the first day of the inspection, children and young people were not offered opportunities for outdoor play. This limited their choice in play experiences and minimised opportunities to support their health and wellbeing. On the second day of the inspection, play and learning was supported through links with the wider community. Children and young people were involved in a cycling session with Cycling Without Age, Caithness. This provided children and young people with access to fresh air and with an opportunity to have fun and engage with their wider community.

How good is our setting?

2 - Weak

We made an evaluation of weak, for this key question. Whilst some strengths could be identified, these were compromised by significant weaknesses.

Quality Indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

The indoor environment was spacious and provided children with ample space to move around. They could choose to move between two playrooms. This resulted in children being able to lead their play experiences, at times. For example, children enjoyed playing on a bouncy castle and playing tennis. All aspects of security had been carefully considered; a secure entrance meant children's safety was promoted.

Since the previous inspection, the service had made limited progress with making improvements to both the indoor and outdoor environment. The indoor playrooms still lacked a homely comfortable feel. Additionally the indoor environment was cluttered, which had potential to distract and overwhelm children and young people. The outdoor space was tired, neglected and uninviting for children and young people. This had potential to impact children and young people's choices and wellbeing.

The setting did not offer a range of rich, stimulating play resources to support and encourage children and young people's development and interests. Some play areas were uninviting due to poorly presented resources and other areas were not well resourced. As a result, children were not interested and stimulated to play in these areas. More messy play opportunities, loose parts and natural materials would have encouraged exploration, creativity and curiosity. This was an identified area for improvement at the last three inspections and had not been met and will be continued. (See Area for improvement 3 under 'What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection?')

Arrangements for children and young people to receive personal care were not well-considered. If individuals required to be changed lying down this was not possible. Poor storage of personal care items, such as paper towels, increased the risk of cross infection. This had potential to compromise children and young people's health and wellbeing. The requirement in relation to ensuring children receive personal care in an environment that supports high levels of infection prevention and control, has been in place since March 2023 and remains unmet. This has been restated. (See Requirement 4 under 'What the service has done to meet any requirements made at or since the last inspection?')

Additionally a requirement in relation to ensuring effective infection, prevention and control processes, has been in place since August 2023 and remains unmet and has been restated. (See Requirement 2 under 'What the service has done to meet any requirements made at or since the last inspection?')

How good is our leadership?

1 - Unsatisfactory

We were very concerned about aspects of the care being provided and we evaluated the service as delivering an unsatisfactory level of care for this key question.

Quality Indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The service explained that there had been some challenges with management cover due to staff absence. However, sufficient arrangements had not been put in place to make necessary improvements in relation to the quality of care and support. A requirement in relation to ensuring the manager had effective time allocated to undertake the role was made in August 2023 and remains in place. (See Requirement 3 under 'What the service has done to meet any requirements made at or since the last inspection?')

Children and young people did not receive an acceptable level of care and support as the service was not well led and managed. There continues to be a lack of leadership and direction in the service. There was not a shared agreement between the provider, manager and staff on service priorities. This meant that there was not a shared responsibility to making improvements, impacting negatively on the ability to deliver improved outcomes. We had significant concerns that important improvements had not been made. Throughout this inspection report we have identified significant weaknesses that require priority action to improve the quality of care and support for children and young people. In March 2023 the Care Inspectorate required the provider to implement effective systems of quality assurance. However, the provider had not prioritised this. As a result, children and young people have continued to receive poor quality care and support. The requirement in relation to effective quality assurance processes has been restated. (See Requirement 5 under 'What the service has done to meet any requirements made at or since the last inspection?')

Three requirements and areas for improvement have been outstanding since our inspection in March 2023 and six requirements have been outstanding since our inspection in August 2023. As we had significant concerns about the provider identifying and addressing issues relating to children's health, welfare and safety. We served an improvement notice to the provider on Friday 26 April 24. In the improvement notice we stated that by 21 June 2024, all required improvements must be identified and addressed through effective governance and management arrangements.

The service had not used thorough recruitment processes to assess the suitability of persons working within the service. This meant most staff did not have the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to effectively support children and young people's health and welfare needs.

Arrangements were not in place to effectively support and supervise staff to develop their skills and knowledge. This was contributing to poor outcomes for children and young people. There was limited understanding of childcare practice and training, and development opportunities were not having a positive impact. As a result, there were significant gaps in professional knowledge and skills which compromised children and young people's health and wellbeing. Clear direction is needed to ensure staff are fully involved in improving the service to support improved outcomes for children and young people. We made a requirement about this at our Inspection in March 2023 and it remains in place. (See Requirement 5 under 'What the service has done to meet any requirements made at or since the last inspection?')

We met with the provider during the inspection to offer improvement support. Additionally, we contacted The Highland Council Children's Disability Services team, to inform them of our findings and to discuss what further improvement support could be offered to the service.

After the inspection the service notified the Care Inspectorate of their intent to cancel the service on the 30 July 2024. The service advised that they were reviewing their vision, values and aims and were exploring other options to support children, young people and their families.

How good is our staff team?

2 - Weak

We made an evaluation of weak, for this key question. Whilst some strengths could be identified, these were compromised by significant weaknesses.

Quality Indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

During the inspection the provider advised they were short staffed. As a result, they had made changes to service delivery to ensure they were meeting the minimum adult to child ratios.

A few staff demonstrated an awareness of when and how to effectively intervene, picking up on cues to support children and young people's wellbeing and extend their play experiences. This resulted in positive engagement and interaction. However, not all staff were able to take responsibility to highlight gaps in staffing, there was an over reliance on the senior playworker to identify this. This was not always possible as they were working with individual children. As a result, there were gaps in interactions across the day and poorer experiences for children and young people.

Communication across the staff team had improved since the previous inspection. However, there were times when communication between some staff was inappropriate and did not respect individual children and young people.

The provider told us that due to the rural nature of the setting staff recruitment had been challenging and this had impacted on the mix of skills and experience within the staff team. Staff were committed to their role in childcare. However, most lacked the in-depth knowledge and experience necessary to provide high quality experiences and outcomes for children and young people.

Following the last inspection, staff had undertaken some professional development and training. This was not yet consistently leading to positive outcomes and there continued to be an overall lack of knowledge and skill in supporting children with additional support needs. As a result, children and young people were not being effectively supported to reach their full potential. We made a requirement in relation to staff deployment to ensure staff had the right skills, knowledge and experience, at the inspection in March 2023, August 2023 and November 2023. We found limited progress or improvement had been made in relation to this. As a result, we have restated the requirement. (See Requirement 6 under 'What the service has done to meet any requirements made at or since the last inspection?')

As we had significant concerns about the provider making the necessary improvements to support children's care, health and wellbeing through effective staff deployment, we issued an improvement notice to the provider. In the improvement notice we stated that by 21 June 2024 the provider must ensure that children and young people's health, welfare and safety needs are consistently met. In particular they must ensure, children and young people receive the right support at the right time and at all times suitably competent persons are working in the care service.

What the service has done to meet any requirements we made at or since the last inspection

Requirements

Requirement 1

By 8 October 2023, the provider must ensure each child receives appropriate care and support and their needs are met.

To do this the provider must at a minimum:

- a) Ensure personal plans set out children's current needs and how they will be met.
- b) Ensure all staff are aware of and understand the information within the personal plans and use this to effectively meet each child's needs.
- c) Ensure personal plans are regularly reviewed and updated in partnership with parents.

This is to comply with Regulation 5(1)(2) (Personal plans) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

This is in order to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices' (HSCS 1.15).

This requirement was made on 12 September 2023.

Action taken on previous requirement

Children and young people's personal plans set out how their basic needs would be met. However, opportunities continued to be missed to meet needs and interests in a holistic manner as there was insufficient information to effectively meet individual choices and wishes. This meant that some children and young people's play, learning and development did not effectively support their interests.

Some staff were not using information in children and young people's plans effectively to meet individual needs. As a result, some identified support strategies were not used consistently to support individual communication and support needs.

Children and young people's personal plans are being reviewed regularly. The service needs to consider how to gather and record more detailed information to more effectively meet individual needs, choices and wishes.

This requirement has not been fully met and has been extended to 21 June 2024.

Not met

Requirement 2

By 8 October 2023, to ensure children's wellbeing and minimise the risk of infection, the provider must ensure that effective quality assurance processes are in place in relation to infection prevention and control.

This is to comply with Regulation 4 (1)(d) (Welfare of users) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

This is to ensure that infection prevention and control measures are consistent with the NHS Scotland document: Infection Prevention and Control in Childcare Settings (Day Care and Childminding Settings).

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'I experience high quality care and support because people have the necessary information and resources' (HSCS 4.27); and

'I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled and are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes' (HSCS 3.14).

This requirement was made on 12 September 2023.

Action taken on previous requirement

We identified inconsistences which increased the risks of infection spreading. Staff did not always take the necessary precautions in respect of infection prevention and control.

This requirement has not been fully met and has been extended to 21 June 2024.

Not met

Requirement 3

By 8 October 2023, the provider must ensure that children receive safe high-quality care.

They must as a minimum:

- a) Ensure the manager has sufficient time allocated to effectively undertake their responsibilities.
- b) Ensure the manager has the skills, knowledge and expertise to effectively manage and lead the service.

This is to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) (Welfare of users) and Regulation 7(2)(c) (Fitness of managers) of The Social Care and Social Work and Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/2010).

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I use a service and organisation that are well led and managed' (HSCS 4.23).

This requirement was made on 12 September 2023.

Action taken on previous requirement

We were unable to fully assess this requirement due to absence at the time of our inspection. The provider had not considered an effective contingency plan during the absence to ensure the service was well managed. This resulted in an increase in pressure on the senior practitioner's role. As a result, we did not see an impact on improving children's outcomes.

There continued to be a lack of strategic direction from senior leaders. This meant staff did not receive relevant support and guidance to raise standards within the setting. As a result, children did not benefit from consistent high quality care and support.

This requirement has not been fully met and has been extended to 21 June 2024.

Not met

Requirement 4

By 16 June 2023, the provider must ensure children receive personal care in an environment that supports high levels of infection prevention and control.

This is to comply with Regulation 4(1)(b) (Welfare of users) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulation 2011 (SSI 2011/10).

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'If I require intimate personal care, this is carried out in a dignified way, with my privacy and personal preferences respected' (HSCS 1.4).

This requirement was made on 5 May 2023.

Action taken on previous requirement

No progress had been made towards ensuring children received personal care in an environment that supported high levels of infection prevention and control. Short term arrangements remained that had previously been put in place for undertaking personal care. However, these did not meet current standards so did not support high levels of infection prevention and control.

This requirement has not been fully met and has been extended to 21 June 2024.

Not met

Requirement 5

By 16 June 2023, the provider must ensure improved outcomes for children and practice by implementing effective systems of quality assurance.

To do this the provider must at a minimum ensure:

- a) Staff are supported to develop their knowledge and understanding around self-evaluation processes and are involved in the systematic evaluation of their work and the work of the service.
- b) Clear and effective plans are in place for maintaining and improving the service.
- c) Regular and effective support and supervision for all staff is implemented.
- d) The manager effectively monitors the work of each member of staff and the service as a whole.

This is in order to comply with sections 7 & 8 of the Health and Care (Staffing) Scotland Act 2019 (as substituted for regulation 15/regulation 15(a)&(b) of the Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011, SSI 2011/210).

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes' (HSCS 4.19).

This requirement was made on 5 May 2023.

Action taken on previous requirement

Very limited progress had been made towards meeting this requirement. There remained significant gaps in quality assurance systems, including self-evaluation processes. Staff had not been effectively supported to develop their knowledge and understanding around these processes. Therefore, self-evaluation was ineffective in supporting positive improvements within the service or improved experiences and outcomes for children.

There was not a clear and effective plan in place to improve the service or a shared agreement on service priorities. This meant that there was not a shared responsibility or understanding to making improvements, impacting negatively on the ability to deliver improved outcomes.

Support and supervision systems were not yet having a positive impact on outcomes for children. Areas for staff development were not yet being consistently identified and addressed. The service should continue to ensure effective support and supervision meetings take place for the manager as well as other staff members. These should have a clear focus on continuous improvement.

Monitoring and auditing that had taken place did not have a positive impact on the quality of children's experiences. There were significant gaps in the areas covered by the quality assurance systems, which meant children were receiving a poor service. As a result, we identified concerns in areas which had not been identified or addressed, compromising children's experiences and wellbeing.

There continues to be insufficient capacity and skill to support a programme of continuous improvement within the service. We have restated areas for improvement and requirements from the last two inspections. As a result, we served an improvement notice to the provider on 26 April 2024.

This requirement has not been fully met and has been extended to 21 June 2024.

Not met

Requirement 6

By 16 June 2023, the provider must ensure that children are effectively supported by staff who have the right skills and qualities.

They must as a minimum:

- a) Review the skill mix of staff across the setting.
- b) Review and make appropriate changes to staff deployment, to improve experiences for children.

This is to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) (Welfare of users) of The Social Care and Social Work and Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulation 2011 (SSI 2011/2010).

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes' (HSCS 3.14).

This requirement was made on 5 May 2023.

Action taken on previous requirement

There continues to be an overall lack of knowledge and skill in supporting children with additional support needs. There were gaps in specific skills to enhance children and young people's development to ensure they were supported to develop lifelong skills. As a result, children and young people were not being fully supported to reach their full potential.

Staff deployment had been reviewed in relation to staff absence. However, support for individual children was not yet consistent. Most children did not receive the right support at the right time. This reduced opportunities for high quality interactions and compromised wellbeing.

This requirement has not been fully met and has been extended to 21 June 2024.

Not met

What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection

Areas for improvement

Previous area for improvement 1

To support children's wellbeing, learning and development, the provider should ensure staff access training appropriate to their role and are effectively supported to apply their training in practice.

This should include but is not limited to, training in effective interactions, promoting positive behaviour and effective communication strategies.

This is in order to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes' (HSCS 3.14).

This area for improvement was made on 5 May 2023.

Action taken since then

Children were not being fully supported to progress and achieve their potential. Staff did not always have the relevant knowledge and skills to respond appropriately to individual care, play and development needs.

There was limited use of Makaton, even where this was an identified strategy to support individual communication needs. Children and young people's emotional needs were not always met through effective interactions. As a result, children and young people's wellbeing, learning and development were not consistently or effectively supported.

Previous area for improvement 2

To enable children to receive high quality play, learning and development opportunities, the manager should ensure staff are responsive to children's individual interests and needs.

This is in order to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'As a child, I can direct my own play and activities in the way I choose and freely access a wide range of experiences and resources for my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and creativity' (HSCS 2.27).

This area for improvement was made on 5 May 2023.

Action taken since then

Insufficient progress had been made in relation to this area for improvement since our last inspection. We identified missed opportunities for play, learning and development experiences to build on children and young people's interests. Some staff responded to children and young people's cues for support and interaction which helped them to lead some of their play. Overall, limited progress had been made towards providing high quality, meaningful play and learning opportunities for children and young people.

Previous area for improvement 3

To promote and encourage children's curiosity, creativity, problem solving and imaginative skills, the manager and staff should improve the play spaces available both indoors and outdoors.

This should include but is not limited to, providing suitable resources and materials to effectively engage and challenge children's play, learning and interests.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I am able to access a range of good quality equipment and furnishings to meet my needs, wishes and choices' (HSCS 5.23).

This area for improvement was made on 5 May 2023.

Action taken since then

There had been no progress made in relation to this area for improvement since the previous inspection. During our inspection no resources had been set up for outdoor play opportunities. Indoor play spaces were cluttered and untidy. Resources were not always organised in an inviting way so that children could see clearly to make a selection. There had not been good consideration of how to lay out provocations to play. This meant they seldom fostered children and young people's curiosity, creativity or imagination. Some resources were not age or size appropriate for the children and young people.

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.com.

Detailed evaluations

How good is our care, play and learning?	2 - Weak
1.1 Nurturing care and support	2 - Weak
1.3 Play and learning	2 - Weak

How good is our setting?	2 - Weak
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	2 - Weak

How good is our leadership?	1 - Unsatisfactory
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	1 - Unsatisfactory

How good is our staff team?	2 - Weak
4.3 Staff deployment	2 - Weak

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