

2535376

Registered provider: Area Camden Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home's statement of purpose confirms that the home cares for up to three children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

There was one child living in the home at the time of this inspection.

The home was registered with Ofsted in August 2019. The manager was registered in April 2021.

This inspection was conducted on site and involved meetings with children, staff and a teacher involved in the care of a child. Written and telephone discussions were held with one parent, placing authority social workers and other professionals, including an independent reviewing officer. A staff questionnaire was also shared for those staff who were not working but wished to contribute their views.

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.

We last visited this setting on 24 February 2021 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 2 to 3 November 2021

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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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 24 February 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: not applicable

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/02/2020	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The home is characterised by emotional warmth and is an environment where children regularly seek out staff for hugs and support. Staff are patient, nurturing and child centred. These factors help children to build close and trusting relationships with staff.

All of the children make good progress from their own individual starting points and achieve stability in their home. One child reported that being in the home was 'the best time' and another spoke fondly about driving a speed boat on the River Thames. Photographs of such activities are enlarged for display in children's bedrooms and stored in albums.

Positive feedback from parents and placing social workers confirms the good level of care and support provided to children. One parent spoke about his delight at the 'excellent work by staff' and his wish to 'shower praise for all the support staff have offered'.

Children make good progress in education. Staff work in close partnership with teaching professionals to ensure that children enjoy a bespoke timetable adjusted to their own individual needs when appropriate. This helps children to engage well after what are often prolonged periods of non-engagement prior to arriving at the home.

Behaviour management is effective. Staff understand the cause of children's behaviours and support them with patience, empathy and consistency. Engagement tools, such as humour and positive reassurance, work well. Children benefit from this support and learn how to exhibit more positive behaviours when they are struggling.

Children's views are sought regularly. One child reported that he feels listened to and well represented in the home. One child spoke of his excitement at planning activities with his key worker and enjoying two summer holidays with staff this year. In addition, children enjoy good access to independent advocacy and mentoring support.

Children enjoy safe and managed contact with friends and family. Staff have supported one child to begin to re-establish relationships with his family. Additionally, his ability to manage his behaviour more appropriately has been integral to this process. This remains a source of enormous reassurance and pride for the child concerned.

Children benefit from effective key-work sessions to learn new skills and develop their knowledge. Staff discuss a range of issues, such as the risk of county line drug

gangs and maintaining personal hygiene. Children engage well and gain self-confidence from their learning.

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

Children reduce risk-taking behaviours, such as running away from their home. Children and professionals attribute this to the positive relationships established with the staff team.

Missing-from-home procedures work well. Staff use their close relationships with children to gain knowledge of their peer groups and risk assess accordingly. When concerns arise, staff ensure that children are safeguarded. For example, staff will travel long distances to pick up children from difficult environments.

Children are effectively safeguarded by a well-trained staff team. One staff member told the inspector about her use of open-ended questions to seek further information regarding one child's exposure to criminal exploitation. The information obtained from the child was swiftly shared with the police and ensured that the child was kept safe.

Safeguarding practice is good. Leaders responded well to concerns over potential child sexual exploitation and shared their concerns with a placing authority. The placing authority responded by moving the child to a place of safety and worked with the home to serve statutory warning notices on the alleged perpetrators. This ensured the safety of the child concerned and other potential victims.

Children enjoy access to a good range of specialist support services, including therapy. Staff use their close relationships with children to ensure that support is provided at the right time for children. This means that children are not overwhelmed and the proposed intervention is effective.

Risk assessments and care plans are of good quality. Assessments address key areas, such as knife crime, and offer clear and effective strategies to address concerns. These documents are understood by staff and evidence the wishes and feelings of children. This helps children to understand the risks that they face and the actions staff will take to safeguard them.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The leadership and management of the home is strong. The registered manager is a qualified social worker and she completed her management qualification in May 2021. She is motivated and well respected by a small and committed staff team. The responsible individual visits the home on a regular basis and offers effective advice and guidance to the manager and staff.

The use of agency staff is high. On several occasions during the last year, a long-standing qualified agency member of staff has worked alone in the home. However, this has not had a detrimental impact on the care offered to children.

Leaders have addressed the three requirements and one recommendation raised at the last inspection. This has led to improvements, including the elimination of closed-circuit television use in the home's interior, the handling of complaints and the recording of medication.

Leaders advocate effectively for children. The registered manager recently liaised with a placing authority to conduct a specialist assessment to ensure that a child received a service he required. The child subsequently engaged with the service.

Management succession planning is lacking. The deputy manager was seconded away from the home and has not been replaced. Despite managers from an adjacent home providing support, the lack of a permanent deputy manager limits consistency in the home. Leaders are presently seeking to address this shortfall via an ongoing programme of recruitment.

Staff are motivated by the progress achieved by children. Staff feel valued by leaders and enjoy effective regular supervision and performance appraisal. Staff report that leaders are open and eager to develop their professional skill base. At present, the quality of performance appraisal is limited due to the lack of feedback from external professionals.

Practice relating to admitting children to the home works well. Leaders understand the capacity of the staff team and risk assess potential admissions accordingly. This ensures the stability of the home and strong staff morale.

The independent monthly monitoring of the home is ineffective. The independent visitor has failed to evidence any feedback from children since May 2021. This limits the effectiveness of independent oversight and the development of the home.

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
The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month. When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the independent person— 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 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. A visit by the independent person to the home may be unannounced. 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— children are effectively safeguarded; and the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being. (Regulation 44 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3) (4)(a)(b)) In particular, ensure that the independent person documents their attempts to engage with children to ascertain their wishes and feelings.	1 December 2021

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that no more than half of the staff on duty at any one time should be from an external agency. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.17)

- The registered person should ensure the home has a plan in place to maintain effective management when the manager is absent, off duty or on leave. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.20)
- The registered person should ensure that performance appraisals consider the views of other professionals who have worked with the staff member over the year. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 60, paragraph 13.5).

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: 2535376

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Area Camden Limited

Registered provider address: Malvern View, Hanbury Road, Stoke Prior,
Bromsgrove B60 4AD

Responsible individual: Joanne Capuano

Registered manager: Karolina Slaska

Inspector

Barnaby Dowell, Social Care Inspector

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