

SC006010

Registered provider: Care Afloat Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for one young person who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home is privately owned and managed.

Inspection dates: 30 November to 1 December 2017

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

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

Date of last inspection: 1 March 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- The young person has taken some ownership in creating a cosy, homely and comfortable environment where they feel safe.
- Consistent boundaries, coupled with a consistency of care, provide the young

person with the structure and security needed to develop a strong sense of belonging and emotional security. The young person enjoys trusting and meaningful relationships with a stable staff group.

- The home develops strong relationships with others who play an important role in the life of the young person. Good safeguarding practice protects the young person from harm. This creates inclusive working partnerships which reflect the team-centred approach taken by the home.
- Staff are strong advocates for the young person's education. They strive to ensure that young people are engaged in education or training. They work closely with external agencies to help young people make positive decisions about their futures.
- Staff work flexibly and creatively to promote and encourage contact between young people and those important to them. This allows for damaged relationships to be repaired, so that meaningful contact arrangements can be put into place.
- The new registered manager is committed to improving outcomes for young people. She has a clear understanding of the strengths of the provision and the areas for development.
- With the backing of the staff group, the manager is meeting with some success in revising the culture, ethos and working practices of the home. This has created a more supportive and less confrontational environment.

The children's home's areas for development:

- Record-keeping is not yet consistent.
- Enhance the management arrangements in the home for when the registered manager is not available.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
01/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
08/06/2016	Full	Good
04/03/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
03/09/2015	Full	Good

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 make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received into the children's home. In particular, the registered person must ensure that a record is kept of the administration of medicine to each child. Regulation 23(1)(2)(c)	29/12/2017

Recommendations

- Ensure the home meets the young people's basic day-to-day needs and provides a welcoming, supportive, and homely environment. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.7)
In particular, address the maintenance issues, including the hole in the young person's bedroom wall and the external surrounding wall to the side of the property.
- Ensure that all records held on young people are kept fully up to date. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)
- Ensure that there are clear arrangements in place to maintain effective management when the registered manager is absent, off duty or on leave. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.20)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

This solo home provides respite for young people who are often at a crisis point in their lives, or running out of options following a series of placement breakdowns. The current occupant of the home is benefiting from a long-term placement which is allowing her to reassess her previous lifestyle. With the support of a staff group that she knows well, the young person is adopting a more socially acceptable and safer lifestyle. The strong relationships and trust developed with staff provide her with a sense of security and calm. This allows for clearer thinking and improved decision-making to take place.

The strong relationships created have impacted positively on the young person. For

example, the young person said, 'Of all the places I have been in, this is the best. It has the best staff who really do care for me.' As young people settle into the home and develop a sense of security, other areas begin to improve. This allows for good progress to be made in all areas of a young person's life. This is recognised by others, such as a social worker who reported, 'She has done brilliantly. She has responded well to the structure they have been able to impose. They have built up good levels of trust and they can work flexibly to meet her needs.'

Staff are skilled in developing relationships with young people which remain strong even when tensions may run high. Staff work collectively and with a team-centred approach to provide consistency for the young person. Staff buy into the home's changing culture and ethos, which is to support and be positive as opposed to being punitive and negative. Staff work with a sense of professionalism, which is recognised by the young person, who told the inspector, 'When staff come on duty, they have their minds set on me and want to help me. They are not just thinking of themselves and their own problems.'

Plans and assessments of risk map the journey to be taken. Along with other documents, such as monthly reviews and reports prepared for formal reviews, they provide a record of achievement and progress. The documents also identify areas still being worked on with regard to the young person, for example in stabilising behaviour, developing self-confidence, enjoying new experiences that turn into interests and hobbies, becoming engaged with their education, developing social networks and preparing for adulthood.

Education is built into the daily routine, with staff promoting the importance of attendance and engagement. The organisation has its own registered school and professional tutors who can work flexibly to meet individual needs. A creative educational package has been agreed for the young person and, while attendance has been consistently good, the levels of positive engagement are rising.

The young person has a good understanding of her own health needs, for example in recognising what a healthy diet consists of and the importance of maintaining regular exercise. Her everyday health needs are well catered for and more specialist services have recently been brought in to address specific needs. Due to the persistence of staff, the young person recently had a long-term medical issue correctly diagnosed and is now receiving the correct treatment and medication. Unfortunately, discrepancies with the recording of medication administered were found as the inspection progressed.

Contact arrangements can be complex, but every assistance is given by staff for young people to repair and maintain relationships with those important to them. For example, staff have brought in an independent advocate who has been successful in furthering contact between the young person and a family member. Staff work hard at encouraging, promoting and facilitating regular contact with other family members.

The young person has taken a real pride and ownership of the home she lives in. For example, since moving in and with staff approval, she has had her bedroom and the lounge redecorated, choosing the décor herself. She has asked for and been provided with matching bedroom furniture and, in the lounge, has chosen and purchased a number of ornaments and a set of new curtains. All of this contributes significantly to the warm and cosy environment created. The home is indistinguishable from others around

it and has a good standard of fixtures, fittings and furnishings. Some minor damage is in need of repair. The manager has reported this; however, as this can take time, she is taking steps herself to get the repairs completed.

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

The young person is able to confirm that she feels safe in the home and surrounding environment. She has a sense of pride in the way that she has settled into the home and how she has behaved during this time, commenting that, 'Soon, this will be the longest placement I have ever had.' Safeguarding is a priority for staff who are familiar with and understand the safeguarding procedures in place. They recognise their own role and responsibilities in this area, having received appropriate training which is refreshed regularly.

Behaviour is well managed. A clear structure, boundaries and consistent implementation of the house rules, which the young person has helped to create, allow her to manage her own behaviour. To date, there have been no serious behavioural issues or incidents that have required physical intervention. This is a significant development based on the young person's previous history.

The manager has implemented a cultural change where greater support is given to help the young person work through times of difficulty and stress. This has created a less punitive environment, giving the young person the confidence and feeling of security to explore her feelings with a group of staff she knows well and trusts.

The home maintains appropriate records linked to all aspects of behaviour management, along with risk assessments identifying hazards in and around the home. These and other records such as the young person's health plan are not always being completed with the required consistency.

Plans and assessments of risk to cover incidents where the young person has gone missing are in place. Work undertaken by staff following two such incidents has proved to be successful, with no further incidents taking place.

The recruitment and clearance procedures for new staff are thorough and meet with regulatory requirement and current guidance. Longer-serving staff are being rechecked regularly, which is deemed to be good practice. This ensures that young people are only being looked after by staff who have been suitably cleared and recruited.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The new registered manager has been in post since June 2017 and is in the process of completing a level 5 qualification in leadership and management. She is also registered to manage another solo home, with support from a team coordinator. There are times when, out of necessity, the manager is drawn away from the home. This can leave the team coordinator, who is rostered to work directly with young people, to oversee two homes. This can lead to ineffective managerial oversight.

The home has a written development plan, although this is currently being revised and updated by the manager. As she has grown into the role, the manager has made a

number of positive changes and developments. For example, the format for recording planning, assessments of risk, and where a young person goes missing, have been revised and updated. Young people's case files have been reorganised and work is ongoing to improve the overall quality and consistency of recording. The staff roster has changed to show more clearly the times that staff are working.

Staff feel well supported by the manager and confirm that they receive regular supervision. Staff performance is formally appraised annually, with the views of young people now being taken into account. This is deemed to be good practice. Staff meetings are also taking place regularly and over the last four months, with improved consistency.

Staff have access to a variety of training programmes, with clear expectations placed on them to complete the core staff training programme. They also have a route into becoming professionally qualified once probationary periods have been successfully completed. The staffing arrangements ensure that there are sufficient knowledgeable and experienced staff available to meet the young person's needs. The young person herself confirms that she has a strong say in what happens in the home and in providing her views around future development. As a result, the young person feels valued.

The home has a good record of compliance. Both the requirement and recommendation made at the previous inspection have been fully addressed. This has led to external monitoring events being implemented with greater consistency, including times when there may be no young person accommodated. The home has also had more success in obtaining the appropriate planning documentation produced on young people by placing authorities.

The internal monitoring of the home is good. The manager monitors and evaluates practice, which is beginning to critically analyse and identify areas of strength, along with areas to be developed. The external monitoring of the home has improved in its frequency and recent changes have improved the overall quality of reports.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: SC006010

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Care Afloat Ltd

Registered provider address: Care Afloat Ltd, 158 Birkrig, Skelmersdale, Lancashire WN8 9HP

Responsible individual: Michael Fletcher

Registered manager: Joy Higham

Inspector

Graham Robinson, social care inspector

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