

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	8 June 2016
Unique reference number	SC006010
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Care Afloat Ltd.
Registered provider address	158 Birkrig, Skelmersdale, Lancashire WN8 9HP

Responsible individual	Michael Fletcher
Registered manager	Post vacant
Inspector	Anthony Kyem

Inspection date	8 June 2016
Previous inspection judgement	Good
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement

SC006010

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Young people are encouraged to develop good relationships with staff, so that they form and sustain positive attachments. They benefit from continuity of care, so they have stability and consistency in their lives.
- Young people make good progress in relation to their individual starting points across most aspects of their welfare and their physical, social, emotional and behavioural development.
- Young people enjoy good attendance at school and receive good support from staff to promote their regular attendance. However, relevant education plans are required from the placing authority to support young people's learning and their educational achievement.
- The home provides positive and enjoyable activities for young people to promote their social skills, friendships, interests and hobbies. Young people enjoy good health and receive the services they need to promote their physical, emotional and psychological well-being.
- The safety of young people is consistently at the centre of staff practice. Young people become increasingly safer as a result of the actions staff take to support and protect them.
- Young people benefit from well-planned, highly personalised care that promotes their needs effectively. However, the home requires an updated care plan from the placing authority to form the basis of young people's care.
- Developmental areas include the monitoring arrangements and the appointment of a registered manager for the home.
- In addition five recommendations have been raised. These relate to; work with health professionals to inform staff knowledge and practice; obtaining 'relevant plans' from the placing authority; reviewing the home's safe location report; staffing arrangements and the activity programme.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person(s) meets 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 with the given timescales

Requirement	Due date
Independent person: visits and reports: Ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month. (7) The independent person must provide a copy of the independent person's report to: (a) HMCI (b) upon request, the local authority for the area in which the home is located (c) the placing authorities of children (d) the registered provider and, if applicable, the registered manager (e) the responsible individual. (Regulation 44 (1) (7))	31 July 2016
Appointment of manager The registered person must appoint a person to manage the children's home if- (a) There is no registered manager in respect of the home. (Regulation 27 (1) (a))	31 July 2016

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendations:

- Seek to identify and provide appropriate opportunities for children to develop themselves in accordance with their wishes and feelings and as part of the home's plan for their care. Each child's talents and interests should be understood and nurtured, with children selecting activities based on their personal preferences and abilities, so far as is reasonable. Staff should also

support children to try activities that are 'new' for them, where appropriate. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 31, paragraph 6.4)

- Ensure that 'relevant plans' are obtained from the placing authority. This relates specifically to an updated care plan, statement of special educational needs and personal education plan. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 14, paragraph 3.1)
- Review the appropriateness and suitability of the location and premises of the home at least once a year. The review should include the identification of any risks and opportunities presented by the home's location and strategies for managing these. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.1)
- Plan staffing levels to ensure that they meet the needs of children and can respond flexibly to unexpected events or opportunities. This relates specifically to reviewing staff's working shift patterns, if necessary. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.15)
- Work closely with health professionals to ensure that outcomes identified and progress made by children in building relationships and achieving socially acceptable behaviours can be recorded and measured. This relates specifically to the involvement of an experienced professional to provide direction, training, consultation and support for staff. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 38, paragraph 8.4)

Full report

Information about this children's home

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

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
4 March 2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
3 September 2015	Full	Good
26 February 2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
7 October 2014	Full	Adequate
17 March 2014	Interim	Good progress

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
There have been no placement breakdowns, disruptions or failures since the last inspection. Young people who have left the home since the previous inspection have done so in a planned and positive way. They have made a smooth transition and have now returned home to live with their own families. Young people new to the home are settling in slowly and they have been made welcome by staff. Young people report, 'Me and [member of staff's name] get on... [member of staff's name] is nice and I feel I can talk to him. I haven't made my mind up yet, if I want to stay here. Some days I do and other days I don't.' Young people who struggle in their relationships receive good support and encouragement from staff. Staff provide them with continuity of care so that they have stability and consistency in their lives. Staff help young people to talk about their feelings and emotions and they actively listen to what young people have to say. Staff invest in building positive and constructive relationships with the young people. Young people are actively encouraged to attend school or alternative educational provision. Their attendance at school is good, taking into account their individual starting points. Staff maintain strong partnerships with the providers of young people's education to support their regular attendance. However, the home requires copies of young people's relevant education plans, such as personal education plans and statements of special educational needs, to assist their learning and educational achievement. Young people benefit from positive and enjoyable activities that the home routinely provides for them. As a result, they have good opportunities to develop their friendships, interests and hobbies. For example, young people attend the local gym, go to watch rugby matches and enjoying playing for a local rugby team. However, young people say they would like to experience different types of activities, such as paintballing, and visiting different sports stadiums. Young people report, 'Wales was my best placement. I was always out on activities. I'm not one for staying in and most issues are caused in the house and not outside.' Social workers report, 'He needs lots of planned activities. I suppose my only concern would be their ability to keep him busy.' Young people benefit from well-planned, highly personalised care that promotes their needs effectively. However, updated care plans are required from the placing	

authority to take account of any significant changes, such as the change in a young person's placement.

There are effective arrangements made to promote young people's good health. They receive the services they need to promote their physical, psychological and emotional well-being. Young people are registered with local health services and have access to any specialist support, such as therapy, if needed.

There are no current issues with risk-taking behaviour for young people. A medical consent is in place and staff are familiar with what health decisions and responsibilities are delegated to them.

Training on attachment is soon to be sourced for staff. The training will provide an opportunity for staff to improve their skills, knowledge and understanding of attachment disorder. Equally, the involvement of an experienced professional, for example a therapist, at team meetings would prove useful for staff, as a means of professional consultation and support.

Staff promote contact so that young people can sustain their close relationships with the people who are most important to them. They work closely with the families and social workers of the young people to ensure that contact is a planned, safe and positive experience for young people.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Young people benefit from effective support, help and protection. Risk-taking behaviours, such as offending, risk of sexual exploitation, going missing from care for long periods and substance misuse are not an issue for young people at the home. Staff have a good understanding of safe working practice. The use of clear risk assessment and one-to-one working contribute to the safety and well-being of young people. Staffing arrangements are organised and managed in line with young people's specific needs. There are sufficient staff on each shift to meet the needs of the young people. Young people are kept safe and this enables them to develop a stronger sense of personal safety. Staff are finding the intensity of young people's behaviours challenging. As a result of working long shift patterns, they are feeling tired and exhausted. This impacts on their ability to remain focussed, energised and positive. There are young people	

in placement who are hypersensitive and who experience enhanced anxiety, which can result in their intense behaviours. Consequently, they need highly motivated staff to keep them busy and preoccupied. The acting manager is aware of this issue and is now considering shorter shift patterns for staff.

The use of restraint is exceptionally rare, and it is only ever used as a last resort to protect young people from harm. The use of sanctions as a consequence of unacceptable behaviour is fair, and these are kept to an absolute minimum. Staff encourage the development of young people's positive behaviour though the use of targeted incentives and rewards. Young people know how to make a complaint and they have access to advocates to make representations on their behalf. This ensures that their rights are promoted effectively.

Staff are trained in child protection so they know how to deal with allegations and how to report suspected abuse. Young people are protected from abuse and all other forms of significant harm. Allegations of abuse are handled quickly and professionally. The home maintains effective partnerships with the police and other safeguarding agencies to promote the safety of young people. Robust recruitment practices ensure that staff employed at the home are safe and suitable people.

The accommodation provided for young people is physically safe, warm, comfortable and homely. There is a good programme of decorative repair. An outstanding repair to a hole in a wall is scheduled to be completed to maintain a high quality environment for young people. There are good arrangements to maintain the safety of the premises to promote a safe environment for young people. However, the home's location review is now overdue in reviewing the suitability of the home's location. A recommendation is made in respect of this issue.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement
The registered manager has left the home since the last inspection. As a result, a senior member of staff is now deputising in their absence. This staff member exercises effective leadership of the home's operation ensuring that the needs of young people are prioritised effectively and the home is sufficiently staffed and resourced. They have a good understanding of the home's strengths and take appropriate action to eliminate any identified weaknesses and to secure improvement. The vacant registered manager's position is shortly to be advertised to ensure that there are clear lines of accountability and that the home is managed in the best interests of the young people.	

Staff benefit from regular, supportive and professional supervision. Annual appraisals are ongoing for staff and these are scheduled to be completed by the deputy manager.

While there are effective arrangements for monitoring the home's activities, not all external monitoring reports have been sent to Ofsted as required. The external monitor's recommendations are acted upon to sustain the home's improvement, but in the absence of the regulation 44 reports, Ofsted has not been able to effectively monitor developments. This matter has been rectified, as the acting manager will oversee this responsibility going forward and the missed reports have been provided for the inspector's reference.

Leaders and managers maintain effective partnerships with all professional agencies to champion the needs of young people in their care. They challenge professional decisions and escalate any concerns, where they believe there is a lack of action, or decisions are not in the best interests of young people. This ensures that others are held accountable and young people benefit from the best possible help and all-round support.

All significant incidents are notified to the appropriate authorities to ensure that young people benefit from effective help, protection and support. Key staff monitor the progress young people make so that they are able to demonstrate change and improvement in their lives. Where young people are not making progress in any aspect of their lives, these key staff take appropriate steps with the placing authority to consider the next steps and the best way forward for young people.

Staff training and development opportunities are effective in ensuring that staff have the right skills and knowledge to meet the specific needs of young people. The staff team is suitably qualified, well trained and experienced. The home meets most of the aims and objectives as set out in its statement of purpose, apart from the provision of a registered manager. However, the home provides a good quality service for young people that makes a positive difference to their outcomes and lives.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of children looked after is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place. However, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, 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 who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service 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'.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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