

SC006011

Registered provider: Care Afloat Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home provides care and accommodation for up to two young people who may have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is operated by a private company.

There has been no registered manager in post since 04 July 2019.

Inspection dates: 30 to 31 July 2019

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: 6 February 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/02/2019	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
24/04/2018	Full	Good
24/01/2018	Full	Inadequate
16/11/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

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 health and well-being standard is that the health and well-being needs of children are met; children receive advice, services and support in relation to their health and well-being; and children are helped to lead healthy lifestyles. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff help each child to achieve the health and well-being outcomes that are recorded in the child's relevant plans; take part in activities, and attend any appointments, for the purpose of meeting the child's health and well-being needs. (Regulation 10 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)) Specifically, this refers to young people's attendance at child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) appointments and to promoting healthy eating.	13/09/2019
The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on mutual respect and trust; an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff— help each child to develop socially aware behaviour; encourage each child to take responsibility for the child's behaviour, in accordance with the child's age and understanding; communicate to each child expectations about the child's behaviour and ensure that the child understands those expectations in accordance with the child's age and understanding. (Regulation 11 (1) (2)(a)(ii)(iii)(v)) Specifically, this refers to putting in place consistent boundaries and consistently manage challenging behaviour.	13/09/2019
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.	13/09/2019

In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff help each child to understand how to keep safe; and that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(ii)(b)) Specifically, the staff are to undertake meaningful direct work with young people and seek input from other specialist services in a timely way.	
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(2)(h)) Specifically, the registered person should consistently respond to the recommendations made by the independent visitor.	13/09/2019
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The requirements are that full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1)(3)(d)) Specifically, this refers to exploring gaps in employment, obtaining references, and verifying discrepancies in employment dates.	13/09/2019

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that all incidents of control, discipline and restraint are subject to systems of regular scrutiny to ensure that their use is fair and appropriate. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.36)

Specifically, this refers to reviewing the effectiveness of sanctions.

- Records of restraint must be kept and should enable the registered person and staff to review the use of control, discipline and restraint to identify effective practice and respond promptly where any issues or trends of concern emerge. The review should provide the opportunity for amending practice to ensure it meets the needs of each child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.59)

Specifically, this refers to making a record of the debrief undertaken with the staff and the child following the incident.

- The registered person should undertake a review that focuses on the quality of the care provided by the home, the experiences of children living there and the impact the care is having on outcomes and improvements for the children. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.2)

Specifically, the report should provide a clear analysis of the quality of care and the impact that the service is having on young people's lives and experiences.

Inspection judgements

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

Young people's disruptive and unsafe behaviour is hindering their progress. The staff team struggles to instil consistent boundaries and the young people are reluctant to accept staff's guidance and support. Consequently, staff have not been successful at helping the young people to reflect on their actions and improve their behaviour.

The sanctions used by the staff are not always appropriate and do not help the young people to link their behaviour with its consequences. Furthermore, the sanctions used by staff are not sufficiently scrutinised to ensure that they are appropriate and successful.

Staff do not ensure that young people attend all health appointments, for example with the local child and adolescent mental health service. Consequently, young people are not getting the therapeutic help and support that they need. Furthermore, young people frequently eat fast food and takeaways, which undermines a healthy lifestyle.

The staff have supported young people to re-engage with their education and their school attendance, and learning outcomes are improving.

Additionally, young people enjoy an active life and the staff encourage them to pursue hobbies of their choice, such as skateboarding, fishing and going to the cinema.

The staff team is, without doubt, friendly, caring and committed to the young people in their care. This is reflected in a young person's comments: 'I like staff and I get on with them. Yes, I feel cared for. They are trying to help me to sort my head out.'

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

improvement to be good

Young people do not have the benefit of consistent boundaries or consequences. Additionally, input from specialist services to support young people to change their behaviour is not always sought in a timely way. As a result, young people do not learn about the effects of their negative actions, and their unsafe behaviours continue, for example smoking in bedrooms, using cannabis, and verbal abusing others.

Although the staff team is alert to risk-taking behaviour and understand their safeguarding responsibilities, protective strategies to reduce harm are not diligently implemented. For example, the daily checks in the home lack consistency and rigour.

Young people do not have the benefit of any meaningful direct work provided by staff. Consequently, young people do not understand their vulnerabilities, and they are not learning how to keep themselves safe.

Physical intervention is rarely used. However, restraint records can be strengthened by making sure that the debrief with the young person and member of staff involved in any intervention is documented and informs the manager's review of the incident.

The recruitment of staff is not yet robust. Some shortfalls in safer recruitment practice place young people at potential risk.

Incidents of young people going missing from the home are reducing. In the majority of incidents, staff are aware of young people's whereabouts when they are away from the home. and they provide the young people with a high level of supervision when they are out in the community.

The home's locality is risk assessed annually. This comprehensive risk assessment alerts staff and the young people to any potential dangers in the local area.

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

The registered manager resigned on 4 July 2019. A new manager has been appointed and he took up post on the week of the inspection. He will apply to register with Ofsted as required.

The new manager is highly experienced. He has worked for the company since 2009, and was previously the deputy manager of a sister home. He demonstrates a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the service, as well as an enthusiasm to make the necessary improvements.

Although the previous registered manager had a child-centred working practice, the support and guidance that she provided to the staff was variable, thus weakening the quality of care provided to the young people.

Encouragingly, the responsible individual has taken steps to strengthen leadership. Systems are now in place to ensure that all staff have regular professional supervision, which includes constructive guidance and reflection and appraisal of their work.

The independent visitor's monitoring of the service is thorough. However, the shortfalls identified by the independent visitor are not always actioned. Furthermore, the home's internal quality monitoring of the care provided in the home lacks analysis. Monitoring and review systems are not therefore supporting continuous improvements in the quality of care provided to young people.

There is evidence of collaborative working with other professionals involved in the young people's care. The feedback from external professionals is positive, praising the team's commitment to the young people.

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: SC006011

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Care Afloat Limited

Registered provider address: 158-160 Birkrig, Digmoor Parade, Skelmersdale WN8 9HP

Responsible individual: Michael Fletcher

Registered manager: post vacant

Inspector

Marina Tully, social care inspector

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