

SC006011

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

The home provides care and accommodation for up to two children or young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. A private company operates the home.

The manager of this home was registered with Ofsted in May 2020.

Visit dates: 30 September to 1 October 2020

Previous inspection date: 30 July 2019

Previous inspection judgement: Requires improvement to be good

Information about this visit

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), Ofsted suspended all routine inspections in March 2020. As part of a phased return to routine inspection, we are undertaking assurance visits to children's social care services that are inspected under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF).

At these visits, inspectors evaluate the extent to which:

- children are well cared for
- children are safe
- leaders and managers are exercising strong leadership.

This visit was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000, following the published guidance for assurance visits.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills is leading Ofsted's work into how England's social care system has delivered child-centred practice and care within the context of the restrictions placed on society during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Findings from the visit

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit.

The care of children

This home provides a clean and comfortable environment for young people to live in. The home has implemented their own risk assessment to manage the COVID-19 virus.

At the time of the assurance visit, one young person is living at the home. This young person is living some distance from her family and friends. The young person would benefit from structure to her daily routine to ensure that she is appropriately stimulated to avoid disruptive behaviour.

The young person has been out of education for some time. She has engaged in some on-site education when teachers have attended the home. However, the young person is refusing to attend external education provision. The young person would benefit from a clear education plan that allows her to build her confidence in educational settings, furthermore helping her to develop her confidence in social engagement and learning.

There is a clear health plan in place. However, engagement in therapeutic support is important to help the young person to develop her emotional resilience and recognise risk-taking behaviours. The young person is supported to attend her health appointments and ensure that her vaccines are up to date. Promoting health and well-being is important for any young person and this young person may benefit from smoking cessation advice and guidance.

Staff supported a young person to successfully transition to a semi-independent provision in his placing authority. Towards the end of his placement, the home provided emergency accommodation for another young person. Sadly, this caused significant levels of disruption for both young people. Decisions to accommodate young people must take into account the effect that this may have on the stability of the home.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, staff have supported young people to have socially distanced family time.

The safety of children

The home has detailed risk assessments, which are designed to help staff keep young people safe. Behaviour support plans are used to help identify certain behaviours and how staff can help to manage such behaviours.

The effectiveness of the risk assessments has been challenged due to gaps in the home's impact assessments. Impact assessments have lacked the recording of important information at the point of referral. This resulted in two young people engaging in risk-taking behaviours and the inability of staff to manage challenging and mischievous behaviours. This then led to significant safeguarding concerns. No significant harm came to any of the young people during these episodes. The local authority designated officer has been kept informed of incidents.

Robust care plans and risk assessments are required for young people who are at risk of criminal and sexual exploitation. Clear guidance outlines roles and responsibilities between the home and placing authority. A social worker highlighted her worries and concerns regarding the lack of progress and engagement of the young person she has placed in the home. A care planning meeting has been arranged to ensure clarity of roles and expectations.

The young person is not engaging in therapy. The therapy team guides staff to cover topical areas for discussion with the young person. The young people and staff would benefit from a computer with clear internet security in place. This would help staff to complete specific pieces of work, adding interest and variation to key-work sessions.

Leaders and managers

The manager has been in post since May 2020 and has worked within the company for some years in various roles. As a registered manager, he feels he is 'still learning' and would benefit from some additional support and guidance from senior managers to help develop his role.

During recent months, the inspector noted poor decision making in leadership and management. This is with specific reference to the young person who was accommodated in an emergency.

An unestablished and unstable staff team that had limited experience of working together were unable to effectively manage challenging behaviour. Due to the varied experience of staff, an emergency placement was not the best decision at that time. This had a negative effect on the quality of care provided to young people and resulted in a breakdown of the placement.

The manager has been proactive and developed an action plan to address the shortfalls. This has included additional staff training and development, and development of a core staff team. Improvements in record-keeping are evident which ensures that important and relevant information is recorded correctly. This will require regular management and oversight until it is fully embedded in the team.

The independent visitor has provided good-quality internal monitoring reports and highlighted any safeguarding concerns. The manager is required to produce monitoring reports. These require further evaluation and reflection.

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, the 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; understand the child's health and well-being needs and the options that are available in relation to the child's health and well-being, in a way that is appropriate to the child's age and understanding; take part in activities, and attend any appointments, for the purpose of meeting the child's health and well-being needs; and understand and develop skills to promote the child's well-being. (Regulation 10 (1)(a)(b)(c)(2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)) Specifically, ensure that young people attend child and adolescent mental health appointments (CAMHS). Encourage the young person to engage in a smoking cessation programme.	31/12/2020
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.	31/12/2020

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, ensure that consistent boundaries are in place and consistently manage challenging behaviour.	
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff help each child to understand how to keep safe; 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))	31/12/2020
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— lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose; ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child;	31/12/2020

ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e))	
The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— help each child to achieve the child's education and training targets, as recorded in the child's relevant plans; support each child's learning and development, including helping the child to develop independent study skills and, where appropriate, helping the child to complete independent study; understand the barriers to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child to overcome any such barriers; help each child to understand the importance and value of education, learning, training and employment; promote opportunities for each child to learn informally; maintain regular contact with each child's education and training provider, including engaging with the provider and the placing authority to support the child's education and training and to maximise the child's achievement; raise any need for further assessment or specialist provision in relation to a child with the child's education or training provider and the child's placing authority; help a child who is excluded from school, or who is of compulsory school age but not attending school, to access educational and training support throughout the period of exclusion or non-attendance and to return to school as soon as possible;	31/12/2020

help each child who is above compulsory school age to participate in further education, training or employment and to prepare for future care, education or employment;

help each child to attend education or training in accordance with the expectations in the child's relevant plans; and

that each child has access to appropriate equipment, facilities and resources to support the child's learning.
(Regulation 8(1)(2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(viii)(ix)(x)(b))

Recommendations

- 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, ensure that the report provides a clear analysis of the quality of care and the impact that the service is having on young people's lives and experiences.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC006011

Registered provider: Care Afloat Limited

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

Responsible individual: Michael Fletcher

Registered manager: Mark Craven

Inspector

Kamal Bhamra, Social Care Inspector

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