

SC006017

Registered provider: Care Afloat Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a private children's home that is registered to care for one child with social and emotional difficulties.

One child has moved out of the home and one child has moved into the home during this inspection period. At the time of the inspection, there was one child living in the home who has lived here for a limited time. The child spoke to the inspector about their experiences living in the home.

The registered manager is suitably experienced and has been in post since August 2023.

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 March 2025

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: 4 December 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
04/12/2023	Full	Good
14/02/2023	Full	Good
12/10/2021	Full	Good
06/08/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Staff create a warm nurturing atmosphere in the home. This allows the child to relax in their environment. The child is settling into the home and is beginning to build positive, trusting relationships with the staff team. The child said they can talk to staff about their worries and concerns and is able to have fun with them.

The child attends school full time. The manager was proactive in ensuring that a school place was found for the child. Staff support the child with their schoolwork, and as a result, the child is making progress at school.

The child is registered with key health care professionals and is attending their appointments. The manager has identified an outstanding hospital follow-up appointment for a specific health need, which has now been referred to the nearest specialist provision.

Staff encourage the child to engage in activities based on their individual interests. Children take part in a range of hobbies, such as going to the gym, football, horse riding classes and climbing centres. Staff encourage and support children to socialise with friends independently, which enables them to form and maintain friendships.

The manager ensures that children's moves in and out of the home are well planned and child centred. One child has moved on from the home since the last inspection. This move was a planned move into semi-independent living. The staff celebrated the child's time in the home with thoughtful gifts for the child. The manager worked with authorities on providing a structured transition with staff providing outreach support following the move. This provided the child with a level of stability from trusted adults at a time of significant change.

Leaders and managers do not ensure repairs are completed in a timely manner. Repairs have been made following a leak in the bathroom and are still ongoing. The kitchen worksurfaces are damaged and some cupboards are misaligned and have backs falling off. This does not provide a homely environment for the child to live in.

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

There is a good safeguarding culture within the home. Staff have a good understanding of safeguarding and whistle-blowing procedures.

The child feels safe in the home and is beginning to build trusting relationships with the adults supporting them. They know how to make complaints. One complaint has been made, this was investigated fully, and the outcomes feedback to the child. This reassures children that they are listened to.

There has been a reduction in incidents in the home. The home's allocated therapist works directly with staff to ensure they have a good understanding of the impact of children's past experiences. This enables staff to have discussions with children on key issues sensitively, helping them to identify their emotions and express them safely.

Staff have a good understanding of the children's individual risks and strategies to support them. The children's risks are documented in behaviour management plans that direct and support staff to prevent and reduce risks. Leaders and managers do not always challenge changes in care plans in order to support isolated circumstances such as hospital stays. These changes are not always shared with the placing authority.

Staff are skilled at managing and calming situations in the home. The staff use a system of positive rewards and incentives for children to promote engagement and provide praise for children. This helps children recognise their achievements and take pride in them.

Restraint is never used in this home. Staff have a calm therapeutic response to the child when in crisis allowing them to vent, validating their feelings and reassuring them they will support them through times of difficulty and escalate concerns on their behalf. This reassures the child that the adults will keep them safe.

There has been a high number of missing-from-care episodes for one child before they moved on to semi-independence. Staff communicate well with safeguarding professionals, such as the police and missing coordinators, to ensure that children are located quickly. Staff look in known areas and check with family and friends. This lets the child know that staff care and worry about them. In addition, the manager has worked with the child and professionals on approving friends' homes for overnight stays which significantly reduced missing-from-care episodes before this child moved on to semi-independence.

Children receive support from the home's therapist. The therapist completes direct sessions with children to help them understand and process past trauma. The therapist also attends team meetings, working directly with staff to ensure they have a good understanding of the impact of children's past experiences. This enables staff to have discussions with children on key issues sensitively, helping them to identify their emotions and express them safely.

Risks around criminal exploitation have significantly reduced for one child while living in the home. Staff ensure that children have access to specialist services for support in areas such as child sexual exploitation, child criminal exploitation and substance misuse. The manager ensures that services are kept informed of any relevant information and that multi-agency meetings are held if any issues arise. This enables the child's network to be collaborative and proactive. Staff encourage children's engagement with specialist professionals. This means children have access to the adults who are most able to help them with their specific issues.

Leaders and managers follow safer recruitment practices. However, leaders do not have systems in place to ensure that all staff's enhanced criminal record certifications are in date and checked annually.

Managers and leaders notify the regulator when there is a serious incident. However, notifications are delayed. This prevents the regulator from having prompt oversight of incidents in the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager is invested in children's care and advocates on their behalf. Following concerns of treatment of a child in education provision, the manager has communicated concerns to the child's network and has escalated complaints to relevant services.

The manager has good oversight of the home. All reports and plans have evidence of manager's oversight. The manager completes a daily check list and uses independent visits and monthly information-gathering for regulation forty-five reports to identify shortfalls.

Not all staff have completed training specific to the individual needs of the child, such as internet safety, substance misuse, child criminal exploitation, and child sexual exploitation. This has not been completed despite being identified as a requirement in the previous inspection. Some staff have also not completed refresher training in safeguarding and fire safety.

Staff receive regular supervisions, and these provide opportunities to reflect on practice and plan for children. Appraisals take place annually and focus on supporting individual development.

Team meetings take place monthly and are used to discuss the child and strategies of support, plan transitions for children and team consistency. This helps promote working together and team cohesion.

The manager has a home's development plan, which is quite generic and not specific to the home. It identifies general areas of development for the home and staff team, but it does not identify strengths and areas of development or training completed by staff or any training required for staff as part of their professional development.

The manager and staff have built positive relationships with all professionals involved in the care of the children. Professionals report that the manager and staff are communicative and know their children well.

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 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, leaders and managers are to ensure that they are following safer recruitment practices, ensuring that enhanced criminal record certification is in date and checked annually.	7 April 2025
Requires the registered person to— ensure that staff— protect and promote each child's welfare; provide personalised care that meets each child's needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking account of the child's background; help each child to understand and manage the impact of any experience of abuse or neglect; help each child to develop resilience and skills that prepare the child to return home, to live in a new placement or to live independently as an adult; ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child; and enable each child to participate in the daily life of the home. (Regulation 6 (2)(1)(b)(ii)(iv)(v)(vi)(c)(i)(ii))	7 April 2025

Specifically, leaders and managers are to ensure that the home is maintained to a good standard, replacing broken or nonfunctional items, particularly kitchen units and work surfaces, and refreshing decoration and doing general cleaning. Leaders and managers are also to ensure that repairs and damages are repaired to a good standard.	
In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 13 (2)(c)) Specifically, the registered person must ensure that staff have completed training to meet the child’s individual needs. In addition to this, the registered person must ensure that refresher training must be completed within a timely manner. The Requirement was not met following the previous inspection.	7 April 2025

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure care which meets each child’s needs and promotes their welfare, taking into account their assessed needs and any relevant plans such as staffing. (‘Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards’, page 14, paragraph 3.2)
- The registered person should have a system in place so that all serious events are notified, within 24 hours, to the appropriate people. The system should cover the action that should be followed if the event arises at the weekend or on a public holiday. Notification must include details of the action taken by the home’s staff in response to the event. (‘Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards’, page 62, paragraph 14.13)
- The registered person should have a workforce plan which can fulfil the workforce related requirements of regulation 16, schedule 1 (paragraphs 19 and 20). The plan should be updated to include any new training and qualifications completed by staff while working at the home and used to record the ongoing training and continuing professional development needs of staff – including the home’s manager. (‘Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards’, page 53, paragraph 10.8)

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: SC006017

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Care Afloat Ltd

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

Responsible individual: Michael Fletcher

Registered manager: Mark Craven

Inspector

Renée Sims, Social Care Inspector

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