

SC006017

Registered provider: Care Afloat Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is operated by a private company. It provides care for one child who may have emotional and social difficulties. The organisation offers an education service and therapeutic support from an external contractor.

The home is managed by an experienced and qualified registered manager.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

We last visited the home on 22 September 2020 to carry out an assurance visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 12 to 13 October 2021

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: 6 August 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/08/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good
07/03/2019	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
07/06/2018	Full	Good
31/08/2017	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The child is settled and making good progress. She benefits from the care and support of staff who have her best interests at heart. The child said, 'There is nothing that I would change about living here. I feel safe and know that all staff care about me.'

The staff demonstrate a good understanding of the child's needs. These are captured in records that are detailed and provide a good insight into her behaviours, risks and vulnerabilities. Staff are interested in what the child has to say and provide opportunities for her to contribute to her plans. This enables her to influence the decisions affecting her life.

The child is, without doubt, making mostly good choices about her life. The social worker said, '[Name of child] is no longer in crisis and has made a massive amount of progress. She has invested in the placement, which is bespoke to her needs. She is on a good footing because of the work that the home and the organisation have done.'

The child has a very positive attitude towards education and learning. She spoke with pride about achieving GCSEs and how well she is doing at college. She recognises and is complimentary about the support given by staff, which has helped her make good progress with her education.

The child is supported to attend health appointments and is up to date with routine checks and immunisations. Staff work closely with the therapy team to ensure that the child gets the therapeutic input she needs. This is delivered at a pace dictated by the child and is underpinned by good information-sharing and positive relationships. Consequently, the child has become more resilient and better able to manage her own emotions, fears and anxieties.

Staff promote and support opportunities for positive contact. They have helped the child to rebuild relationships and improve the quality of contact with the people who are important in her life.

The home is furnished and decorated to a good standard. The child has influenced much of the décor which makes the home feel welcoming and homely.

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

The staff take a proportionate approach to managing risk. Historic behaviours are considered and balanced well against the child's need to take age-appropriate risks. For example, free time has been safely increased to enable the child to have friendships and relationships with peers outside of the home.

The child said that she feels safe. She has confidence in the staff and said that she can talk to them about anything, recognising their commitment to keeping her

physically and emotionally safe. When reflecting on a particularly worrying time, the child said, 'I was really frightened when I told staff, but they just hugged me and told me it would be okay. [Name of staff] is like a second mum to me.'

The staff know the child well and keeping her safe is an integral part of care practice. They take a good-parent approach to helping the child navigate her way through life. They provide learning opportunities in relation to issues, such as child sexual exploitation, e-safety and positive relationships. The learning from this is evident in the responsibility that the child takes for her own safety and well-being.

Risk-taking behaviour is extremely rare. However, staff do not take this for granted and are always ready to respond should historic behaviours such as self-harm or going missing from home re-emerge.

The child benefits from living in a structured environment that is based on age-appropriate expectations, boundaries and daily routines. The staff act as any reasonable parent would do and they are good role models. They look for opportunities to acknowledge, praise and reward positive behaviour. On the rare occasions that negative behaviour occurs, issues are resolved using discussion and compromise without any need for interventions such as physical restraint.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

There has been a change of manager since the last visit. The manager is experienced, suitably qualified and child focused in his approach. He has a good understanding of the home's strengths and a clear vision of the type of service that he wants to develop.

The manager is also registered for a second home run by the organisation and splits his management time between the two. The appointment of an experienced deputy manager has improved lines of accountability when the manager is absent. Together, they have been effective in modelling a child-centred and nurturing approach that is implemented by the staff.

The child is benefiting from the care and support from staff, who demonstrate a genuine commitment to supporting her to make positive choices and prepare well for the future. There is good continuity of care, with some staff transitioning with her from her previous placement. The social worker said, 'It is good that staff transitioned from [name of placement]. This consistency in relationships has been a real positive for [name of child].'

Staff talk with enthusiasm about their work and are highly complementary about how the registered manager has developed the home. They confirm that they receive purposeful supervision that supports professional development. However, this was difficult to validate due to records being poorly organised and inaccessible at the time of the inspection.

Staff have access to a range of training opportunities. Understandably, because of the pandemic, the majority of these have been completed online or through distance

learning. The organisation recognises the limitations of these types of training forums and is keen to return to quality face-to-face training.

The manager maintains good oversight of staff practice, care planning and the child's progress. He implements a range of effective internal quality assurance processes that are used to promote an improvement agenda. This monitoring activity is further enhanced by the monthly scrutiny by an independent visitor who is creative in gathering the child's views. However, it is not routine practice to gather the views of parents.

Collaborative working is promoted through good communication with partner agencies. However, although staff keep the child's parent informed of significant events, there is no process in place for staff to provide regular updates. Despite this, the child's parent spoke positively about the home, as did professionals who recognise the consistently high standards of care that have enabled the child to succeed.

The manager has taken suitable action to address the four requirements from the previous visit. This has contributed to improving continuity of care, and education and health outcomes. The recommendation relating to the quality of children's records is also met.

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 ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month. When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the independent person— if they consent, to interview in private such of the children, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as the independent person requires. (Regulation 44 (1)(2)(a))	10 November 2021

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the child's parent is provided with regular updates on the experiences and progress of their child, and that a record of this contact is maintained. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 52, paragraph 10.3)
- The registered person should ensure that staff supervision records are stored in a way that means that they can be accessed by person's authorised to do so. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.3)

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 Limited

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

Responsible individual: Michael Fletcher

Registered manager: George Sumner

Inspector

Paul Scott, Social Care Inspector

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