

SC006017

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This children's home provides care and accommodation for one child or young person who may have emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is operated by a private organisation.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since January 2018. The registered manager is currently on long-term carers leave. An interim manager is managing the home.

Visit dates: 22 to 23 September 2020

Previous inspection date: 6 August 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

Since the last full inspection, the home has been refurbished to a reasonable standard. However, the home would benefit from a deep clean. This is important to minimise the contamination and spread of the COVID-19 virus. The home would also benefit from a thorough risk assessment to manage and reduce any likelihood of cross-contamination from visitors.

The young person currently living in the home has lived in the home for some time. This has provided stability to her home environment. During the pandemic, the young person has kept in touch with her family, and staff have supported family contact time. The young person continues to make slow but steady progress.

There have been improvements in education. The young person attends a mixture of on-site learning and home tutoring. Although overall attendance is marked as high, actual levels of her engagement are varied. There are also some inconsistencies in overall levels of attendance, which was verified by her headteacher. The young person has engaged in some creative projects in the home and has a good relationship with her home tutor. An application for an education, health and care plan is in process.

The young person has access to primary medical services in the community and is registered with local services. There is focus and there is intention to improve the health and well-being of the young person. Because there was not an up-to-date statutory health assessment on record, a robust health action plan is not in place for staff and the young person to work towards.

The young person has minimal engagement with therapeutic services. Some of the barriers to social interaction and engagement are due to her having high levels of anxiety. The young person would benefit from a consistent approach to improve her attendance at therapy sessions.

There have been several changes in management and staffing. Clear communication and a consistent therapeutic approach are key to ensuring that the young person continues to feel safe in her home environment.

The safety of children

The home has risk assessments and behaviour management plans which ensure that staff provide a safer environment.

There have been no reported incidents of the young person going missing from the home.

During the COVID-19 lockdown, the home has remained relatively stable. Safeguarding incidents were appropriately reported to Ofsted in a timely manner. Senior managers have liaised with the local authority designated officer to ensure that all of the home's protocols are followed.

Staff continue to access the online training portal. This ensures that staff keep their knowledge up to date and understand the impact of abuse and neglect.

Leaders and managers

Due to unforeseeable circumstances, there have been unexpected and sudden changes to the management of the home. At the time of the assurance visit, it was apparent that there was confusion as to who assumed the day-to-day responsibilities of the home in the absence of the registered manager. A robust handover is important to ensure the smooth running of the home.

The registered manager is reported to have a good relationship with the young person. This ensures that there are trusting relationships with key members of staff. It is important to maintain this as new staff arrive at the home.

In recent months, some staff have left the home. Shortfalls are covered by new members of staff, or staff from another home. New staff are developing positive relationships with the young person.

Staff maintain positive relationships with key stakeholders, and the local authority social worker reported positive relationships.

There has been an improvement in the reporting of internal monitoring of the home.

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 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	31/12/2020

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; 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) and (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 attend education or training in accordance with the expectations in the child’s relevant plans. (Regulation 8(1)(2)(i)(ii)(iii)(x))	31/12/2020
The enjoyment and achievement standard is that children take part in and benefit from a variety of activities that meet	31/12/2020

their needs and develop and reflect their creative, cultural, intellectual, physical and social interests and skills. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff help each child to— develop the child’s interests and hobbies; participate in activities that the child enjoys and which meet and expand the child’s interests and preferences; and that each child has access to a range of activities that enable the child to pursue the child’s interests and hobbies. (Regulation 9 (1)(2)(a)(i)(ii) and (b)) Specifically, ensure that staff encourage and support children to overcome their worries about taking part in activities that they enjoy in the community and provide opportunities for children to spend time with other children and make friends.	
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;	31/12/2020

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)(2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv))

Specifically, ensure that health plans are on file and that staff are able to follow a clear health plan. Staff should encourage young people to engage in the therapeutic advice and treatment, and attend appointments with the child and adolescent mental health service.

Recommendations

- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4). Ensure that records are accessible to young people and that staff do not use language that may be considered punitive.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC006017

Registered provider: Care Afloat Limited

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

Responsible individual: Michael Fletcher

Registered manager: Carol McKenna

Inspectors

Kamal Bhamra, Social Care Inspector

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