

SC039087

Registered provider: Care Afloat Ltd.

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The service is registered to accommodate one young person who has emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The service is privately owned. It provides young people with single-occupancy accommodation on a 71-foot narrowboat which travels the canal network.

Inspection dates: 7 to 8 November 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	Good
---	-------------

How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
---	------

The effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
---	------

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 5 January 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- The service provides young people with an alternative to community living. It gives them new experiences and allows them to reflect on their background and make positive changes in their lives.
- Young people are integrated into the daily operation of the narrowboat. They are given responsibilities and trust. This provides a strong foundation for building and sustaining quality relationships on board.
- A stable and experienced staff group work to provide young people with a sensitive and nurturing environment in which they can start to address other issues in their lives.
- Young people live in an inclusive environment where their views are listened to and acted upon. They know their plan of care and the expectations that their placing authority has of them. Plans are reviewed and updated regularly to keep them current.
- Established partnership working with external services promotes young people's health, helps them to achieve in education and provides them access to services to support their emotional, social and psychological well-being.
- Staff have access to vehicles for transporting young people from the various locations that they visit. Young people are able to remain in touch with family and friends that live a long way from the service. This reduces young people's anxieties.
- Robust arrangements are in place to identify and manage young people's risks. The locations that young people visit are assessed and risks known by staff. These arrangements help young people to become increasingly safe.
- Young people are safe and say that they feel safe. Their understanding and competency is tested and checked around safety aspects when on board as well as when travelling around the canal network.
- Rural locations prevent young people from enacting previous risk-taking behaviours. Staff are responsive to known procedures should young people go missing or be at risk of exploitation or self-harm.
- Young people's behaviour is managed well by trained staff. There are clear expectations of boundaries and rules on board. This promotes young people's well-being and allows them to manage their behaviour.
- A new manager is making a positive impact on the service and is being well supported by the staff team. The overall management and organisation of the service are good.

The children's home's areas for development:

- The manager should ensure that placing authorities provide appropriate detail about any young person being admitted to the service on an emergency basis and that any transport required is timed to get the young person to the service at a reasonable time of day.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/01/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
17/05/2016	Full	Good
24/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
15/06/2015	Full	Good

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- Homes set up for emergency placements as indicated and detailed in their Statement of Purpose will require sufficient staff trained and skilled in the admission and care of children, where their full background may not be known. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 57, paragraph 11.6)

With particular reference to ensuring that placing authorities provide appropriate detail about any young person being admitted to the service on an emergency basis and that any transport required is timed to get the young person to the service at a reasonable time of day.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

This is an unusual service that has considerable success in accommodating young people who are often disillusioned, unhappy, rebellious and anti-authoritarian on admission. Many have experienced a number of placements and moves around the care system. A strength of the service is that it gives young people time away from their previous environments, and the pressures they were under. They get the opportunity to reflect on past events and change their ways, in preparation for a return to their own community or group living accommodation.

A small, stable, experienced staff group provides young people with a supportive, nurturing environment that allows for strong and trusting relationships to develop. Often the strength of these relationships can be life-changing for a young person. For example, a young person who has just moved on from the service told the inspector, 'It wasn't being on the boat that turned me around but the relationships I have with the staff. Being away did me good. It gave me time to think and sort myself out. I could make plans for my future.'

The young person's social worker also gave a positive response when asked for her views on the service and what had been achieved with the placement. 'I have to say we were very impressed with the service offered. She made such positive progress within the placement and formed good attachments to all of her carers. For her, this was a major breakthrough as she had never felt able to trust carers such as she did with the staff team. Communication was always good and no request was too much trouble. The outcomes have dramatically improved for her following her period of time within this placement.'

Referrals are scrutinised before a placement is offered as careful consideration is needed. Space on board the narrowboat is limited and not all young people will adapt to this new kind of lifestyle. Although emergency placements are accepted, there is a preference for planned admissions to take place. Receiving the correct information and documentation

from a placing authority who recently placed a young person under emergency circumstances proved to be problematic. For example, there was a lack of information provided by the placing authority about the young person and the time of their arrival at the narrowboat was far too late due to delays during the day with transportation.

Young people are part of a crew of three and as such consultation is a daily occurrence. They become involved with the decision-making process that takes place on board. This inclusivity helps to develop the trust, respect and the strong relationships that develop between staff and young people. It also gives young people responsibility and confirms to them that their views are important and do matter.

Educational needs are well catered for. For young people of school age, there is the opportunity to attend the organisation's off-site school. Where this is not possible, a qualified tutor can provide education for a young person on board the narrowboat. For school leavers, college courses can be sourced. If this is not appropriate, then a programme of further education linked to developing independence skills can be implemented.

For example, with the young person who has just left the service, a very successful travel training programme was initiated. This took the young person through all the stages of using rail transportation from planning journeys, negotiating changes of trains through to keeping yourself safe when on a journey. As a result, a young person who previously had no experience of travelling by rail is now a confident user of the rail network.

Young people's health needs are well met. Long-standing arrangements with community-based services ensure that young people's everyday health needs are addressed. More specialist services are accessed where necessary, with the company having the ability to bring in specialist services when required. The location of National Health Service direct facilities are known and recorded on the local area risk assessment. This ensures that medical matters that may arise when travelling can be quickly addressed. Detailed health plans form an integral part of each young person's placement plan.

Young people are supported to engage in any hobbies or interests they may have. A comprehensive list of community-based facilities in all the areas frequented is available on board. A number of activities are planned to include an educational element, such as trips to museums and places of interest. Young people become involved in route planning and map reading when planning routes and journeys on the canal. During the inspection, photographs of the young person who recently left were viewed. They showcased the range of activities enjoyed, which culminated with a summer holiday in France.

Since the last inspection, the narrowboat has had a lot of work completed to upgrade its facilities. This includes refurbishment of the kitchen area with a new cooker and fridge, a new bathroom and shower and new storage areas that provide security for medication, records and valuables. Following a suggestion from a young person, plans are in place to increase the width of the bed used by young people. Some small but personal changes have been implemented by the new manager. For example, a young person, when first

admitted to the service, now receives a new duvet and pillow. They also get a new bag that contains personal items that will prove useful. This personalises admission and helps a young person to feel welcomed.

Plans for future placements are drawn up quickly with placing authorities and the young person themselves is involved. This allows for a gradual integration back into community life. An excellent transition for the young person who has just left the service has been completed. This included a carefully planned reintegration package with the young person's family into the local community where the young person is now settling into. Staff from this service stayed in the area that the young person moved to, providing support to both the young person and staff in their new placement.

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

The risks that are associated with living in a small space and on water are well known and reflected through a range of risk assessments that are reviewed and updated regularly. Young people are quickly introduced to safety issues and the expected etiquette of living on board a narrowboat. They sign up to a competency crew course. In time, their learning and experiences of being involved in the running of the narrowboat, together with health and safety awareness, reduce the risks to young people travelling on the waterways.

There are strong, well-developed professional relationships with the external agencies charged with keeping young people safe in the areas visited by the service. Safeguarding procedures have not been tested since the last inspection, but have been in the past where they were found to be effective in keeping young people safe. When activated, a multi-agency response is initiated. Staff are familiar with and understand the safeguarding procedures and recognise their own roles and responsibilities in this area. All staff have received training in this field which is refreshed regularly.

The young person who was discharged recently was in placement when the previous inspection took place. Staff worked well with the young person, who in previous placements had exhibited some seriously challenging and unsafe behaviour. Living with a small, consistent and experienced staff team allowed the young person to settle, take stock of their life and work towards the plans agreed. The strength of relationships and the respect that staff and the young person have for each other are reflected in the fact that during the placement, there were no serious behavioural incidents, physical intervention, missing from care episodes or sanctions imposed.

Plans and assessments of risk to cover incidents where young people go missing are in place. Local protocols along with the home's own procedures are followed. Staff have details for all of the areas where the service operates and can instantly alert the appropriate authorities in any area where a young person may go missing.

The recruitment and clearance procedures for new staff are thorough and meet with regulatory requirement and current guidance. Longer-serving staff are being rechecked regularly, which is deemed to be good practice. This ensures that young people are only being looked after by staff who have been suitably cleared and recruited. All visitors are

required to produce identification and sign in, and as space is limited on board, young people are never left alone with visitors. This applies when young people leave the narrowboat as staff will accompany them in the local areas.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Since the previous inspection, a new manager has been appointed. All of the processes to register her with Ofsted have been carried out, with only the final outcome decision still to be completed. The new manager is beginning to impose her personality on the service and implement some of the plans she has to develop the service further.

For example, since taking up her post, she has introduced a new recording tool used to capture conversations made on board that can later be explored during formal supervision. A revision of the additional and positive measures file has been completed and a new audit system for medication has been introduced.

The manager took over a well-established and experienced staff team. Feedback from members of the team about the manager's impact on the service and the changes being implemented has been positive. The manager is being well supported by the staff team, which is reflected in the team-centred approach that was apparent throughout the inspection. Young people benefit by receiving care that is consistent.

Staff report that they feel well supported by the manager. The formal programme of supervision and staff meetings is taking place with improved consistency. Staff performance is formally appraised annually. When possible, the views of young people are taken into account and form part of the appraisal process.

Staff are encouraged and supported with their training needs. There are clear expectations placed on them to complete the core staff training programme. This develops and refreshes the skills required to address the ever-changing needs of young people. More specialist training can be accessed when necessary. For example, two staff recently completed training linked to radicalisation, with similar training planned for the rest of the team.

The internal monitoring of the service is good. The manager monitors and evaluates practice, which is critically analysed and used to highlight areas of strength and weakness. This transfers into the home's own development and workforce plan, with areas for future development clearly identified. External senior managers are active in monitoring the service regularly, providing good support to the manager. External monitoring of the service takes place regularly each month. Reports are detailed, thorough and evaluative.

This is a specialised service, which for the right young people, has a history of success. A change of manager means that areas of the service are being refreshed and this is work in progress. However, the ethos and culture of the service remain intact, with the flexibility and transient nature of the service allowing for specific individual needs of young people to be addressed.

No requirements or recommendations were made at the last inspection. One

recommendation has been made as a result of this inspection.

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: SC039087

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Care Afloat Ltd.

Responsible individual: Michael Fletcher

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Graham Robinson, social care inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence>, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

© Crown copyright 2017