

SC039087

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 organisation and can accommodate up to one child who may be experiencing a period of difficulty or crisis.

Accommodation is provided on a narrowboat that travels the canal network. The organisation offers an education service and therapeutic support from an external contractor.

The manager was registered with Ofsted in November 2017.

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 July 2022

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: 9 March 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
09/03/2020	Full	Good
08/01/2019	Full	Good
07/11/2017	Full	Good
05/01/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Two children have been admitted to the home since it reopened in February 2022. Both were emergency admissions that required quick decisions with limited information. The manager was able to describe in detail how she had come to the decision that the placement could meet the needs of each child. However, no record of this is maintained. Furthermore, it is not custom and practice to inform the local authority when a child from outside the local authority is admitted to or discharged from the home.

Children benefit from a flexible programme of support that this type of service can offer. Care plans are bespoke and consider past experiences. Crisis and chaos are quickly replaced by stability and calm.

Children are supported to establish positive routines that provide opportunities for success. The effectiveness of this approach is evident in the positive progress that children make. A social worker said: 'The standard of care was exceptional. There was a clear trauma-informed approach, which helped [name of child] to address past experiences. This was the first placement out of three others where [name of child] was able to build routines, understand and respect boundaries, and receive educational and therapeutic support.'

Staff recognise the importance of positive relationships and are skilled at establishing these quickly. The nature of the service provides purposeful opportunities for children to have fun and develop a more positive outlook on life. A child spoke with enthusiasm about learning how to navigate the boat and work the locks on the canal network, which will become part of an accredited award. The child said: 'I have only been here a week and it has been great. The staff really care and being here has made me want to change and make better choices going forward.'

Staff recognise the importance of helping children rebuild relationships and maintain contact with the important people in their lives. They are responsive to each child's situation and work hard to overcome barriers, such as fragile relationships and distance. A social worker said: 'Contact was supported with care and diligence. The placement was willing to make many adjustments to ensure [name of child] could have quality contact. This was helpful when making decisions about her long-term future.'

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

Children are suitably protected by a range of safeguarding policies, procedures and risk assessments. This includes processes that consider the individual features associated with living on a narrowboat, such as safety on the water and mooring at different locations.

The manager understands and takes seriously her safeguarding role and responsibilities. Good links are maintained with social workers and external safeguarding professionals and agencies. These were used well when responding to an incident that involved a child going missing, being arrested and a restraint-related allegation. The right action was taken in relation to each aspect of the incident, including learning lessons and making improvements to practice.

Risk management plans are detailed and contain age-appropriate strategies that are understood and implemented by staff. Known and emerging risks are a constant topic of conversation and are the focus of key working and direct work. This helps children to develop an understanding of their own behaviours and make better choices about keeping themselves safe. Consequently, children are much safer from the dangers of going missing from home, child sexual abuse, and criminal exploitation.

Staff take a patient and tolerant approach to supporting children to manage their behaviour. Supported by therapists, they offer good emotional support and make use of positive relationships and de-escalation techniques to minimise the need for physical intervention, which has only been necessary on one occasion. A social worker said: 'I had the opportunity to work with a range of different staff who all embodied a trauma-informed method of working. Everyone was supportive of [name of child].'

Medication records do not include accurate information about the administration requirements of one child's medication. This has not posed any actual risk to the child, partly because they have refused to take their medication, which staff are failing to record.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is run effectively by a suitably qualified and experienced registered manager. The manager is also registered for a second solo home and splits her management time between the two homes. She has the support of an extremely competent deputy manager. Together, they provide strong leadership and are effective in modelling a child-centred approach that is fully embraced by the staff team.

Children benefit from the care and support of a largely experienced staff team with a diverse range of interests and skills. The recent recruitment of staff has provided additional flexibility in how the service can be delivered.

All staff spoke with enthusiasm about their work and a pride in what the children achieve. One staff member wrote: 'I think that our service is one of the best in the company. We offer our children a unique experience where they can relax and be themselves. Our team is committed to them. I look forward to coming to work each shift.' Another wrote, 'I am proud to say many of the children who have been placed with us will still contact us to pass on how they are doing or to seek advice.'

New staff are inducted well, and all staff receive regular and purposeful supervision. Staff express a confidence in the manager and are highly complimentary about how she supports them professionally and personally.

Staff have access to a range of training opportunities. However, some mandatory refreshers are overdue, and several staff are yet to complete needs-led training in working with children diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and children at risk of child criminal exploitation.

The manager has a good understanding of what the service can offer the children. She maintains good oversight to ensure that care practice is responsive to the needs of each child. Internal monitoring is generally strong, and identified areas for improvement are addressed quickly. These processes are further strengthened by monthly visits from the independent visitor, who applies a high level of scrutiny when assessing the conduct of the home. This process could be strengthened by improving consultation and better evidencing how parents and staff have contributed to this process.

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 care planning standard is that children receive well-planned care from the home and have a positive experience of admission and transition processes. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care, as set out in the home's statement of purpose. (Regulation 14 (1) (2)(a)) Specifically, ensure that when assessing the suitability of any child's admission to the home, a detailed record of how their needs have been considered and can be met is maintained.	24 August 2022
The registered person must notify, without delay, the local authority for the area in which the children's home is located of every admission of a child into the home and every discharge of a child from the home. (Regulation 41 (1))	24 August 2022
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))	24 August 2022

Recommendations

- The registered person must ensure that medication records include accurate information about the administration requirements of each child's medication, and

when prescribed medication is refused. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.15)

- The registered person should ensure that staff complete or refresh any outstanding mandatory training, and that staff are trained in working with children diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and children at risk of child criminal exploitation. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11)

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: SC039087

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: Claire Russell

Inspector

Paul Scott, Social Care Inspector

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