

SC061678

Registered provider: Care Assist Children's Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

A private company owns and manages this children's home. It can provide care and support for a maximum of four children or young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 15 to 18 December 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 **Requires improvement to be good**

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

Date of last inspection: 16 January 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- Young people live in a safe, nurturing and comfortable home. They are receiving a good quality of care that is bringing structure, reliability and emotional security to their lives. Young people have strong and positive attachments with their staff and very much feel that this is their home.
- When young people do go missing, the staff work well with other agencies and professionals to try to locate them and to bring them home safely.
- Young people are engaging well with staff to overcome hurdles to their future education, employment and training opportunities. A young person said that they are looking forward to starting their new job. Others are working with employment and careers agencies to find the right course for them.
- Social workers said that the staff work hard to build and sustain positive relationships with families and that this helps to keep young people safe.
- Contact with families is a strength. Family members are complimentary about the support given to the young people. They talked proudly of the progress young people are making in rebuilding and sustaining positive relationships.
- Well-established and effective partnerships with the police and social workers help to protect young people from harm.
- Young people move into the home in a planned and coordinated way. As a result, young people settle quickly.

The children's home's areas for development:

- Enhance the monitoring of the home by the registered manager. Reports by the manager are not evaluative and do not identify shortfalls in record-keeping, staff training and staff's personnel files.
- Improve the quality of record-keeping to help young people to understand their life histories.
- Improve the training opportunities for staff.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
16/01/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
26/04/2016	Full	Good
30/09/2015	Full	Good
11/08/2015	Full	Inadequate

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 promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that the staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13(1)(a)(b) and (2)(a)(c)) In particular, ensure that the staff's training is up to date and improve the quality of record-keeping.	02/02/2018
The registered provider may only employ an individual to work at the children's home if the individual satisfies the requirement in paragraph (3)(b). The requirement is that the individual has the appropriate qualification for the work that the individual is to perform. For the purposes of paragraph (3)(b) an individual who works in the home in a care role has an appropriate qualification if, by the relevant date, the individual has attained, the level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England) ("the Level 3 Diploma"); or a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the Level 3 Diploma. The relevant date is in the case of an individual who starts working in a care role in a home after the 1st April 2014, the date, which falls 2 years after the date on which the individual started working in a care role in a home. (Regulation 32(2)(3)(b)(4)(a)(b)(5)(a)) Specifically, ensure that all staff who work in a care role have	02/02/2018

the necessary qualification by the period set out in this regulation.	
The registered person must maintain the records in Schedule 4 and ensure that the records are kept up to date. (Regulation 37 (2)(a)(b)) In particular, ensure that the staff files include all of the required information.	02/02/2018
In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the quality of care provided for children; the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care that they receive; and any actions that the registered manager considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. (Regulation 45(2)(a)(b)(c))	02/02/2018

Recommendations

- Ensure that the staff are familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. Staff should record information on individual young people in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes fact, opinion and third-party information. Information about young people should always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to them now or in the future. Case record must be kept up-to-date. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3, 14.4 and 14.5)
In particular, ensure that the home's records on each young person represent a significant contribution to their life history.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Young people enjoy trusting and meaningful relationships with the staff. Staff know the young people well and work out the best ways to engage with them. Staff are patient and understand how difficult it may be for young people to learn to trust adults. Staff's nurturing approach gives young people strong messages that staff care about them. Young people know that staff are interested in their lives and want what is best for them. Young people also become aware that this is a safe place for them to live. One young person referred to the staff as their 'second family'.

Young people receive individualised care and support. Staff know the young people well and provide support on a day-to-day basis effectively. They understand the support

needed for some young people regarding their ongoing medical issues, but this is not recorded in their individual plans. However, this is a recording issue and does not affect the care provided. Parents, family members and social workers are complimentary about the home. A parent said, 'The home is brilliant and the staff give my child 100%. I can't thank them enough. He is settled, happy and has a good relationship with staff and his attitude to life has changed since living here.' The young person said, 'I have not settled anywhere, but I am settled here.'

Education has been problematic for the young people. However, staff have persisted and sourced support from other agencies to help secure appropriate courses and employment. One young person is due to start his induction for a new job. He is ecstatic about this. He said that he had to undertake two interviews and staff were there supporting him. He explained how being employed will help to reduce his use of cannabis, as he will be out all day and will not be able to smoke at work. His parent said, 'I'm thrilled for him. It's so nice to see how much more confident he is. He is now content. He would not have been able to achieve all he has if he still lived at home.' Another parent explained that the staff are doing all that they can to get her child into education or employment. The parent acknowledged, 'He is resistant and will only do things on his terms,' but is pleased at the support the staff are providing to secure a placement

Staff have high, but realistic aspirations for young people's education. They work hard to make sure that young people are listened to and their views are taken into consideration when looking for college placements. Some young people have attended several college taster days, but have not yet identified the right course. Young people said that they do not know what they want to do and that their anxiety can affect how they are feeling and their ability to engage. Social workers said that the staff are working well with the young people to try to reduce their anxieties and have supported them effectively throughout the interview process.

Good support is provided for those young people who are moving on. Staff spend considerable amounts of time helping young people to plan their futures. They provide good advice about whom the young people should talk to and who can support them. A number of young people are planning to stay at the home until they are 18 years of age. They confirmed that the staff are talking to them about where they may like to live and what they need to do to achieve this.

Young people are increasing in confidence and self-esteem. They are confident to work with the staff and to make decisions about their care, for example, successfully negotiating who is taking them Christmas shopping. Young people understand the negative impact of using drugs, such as cannabis. This is because of the support that they receive from staff and other professionals. However, some continue to use cannabis. Some young people are confident to self-administer medication and to take responsibility for healthcare routines.

A strength of the home is the commitment to work with the families of the young people. Staff strive to build positive relationships with families. This helps to keep the

young people safe and means parents and family members feel involved in the young person's care. Several parents commented on the notably improved relationships with their children because of the support and approach of staff since their children have been living at the home. Young people echo this sentiment and say they are more able to manage their emotions and to talk to family members constructively. Young people now feel confident to remove themselves from a situation before it escalates into an argument. Another parent said about their child, 'He has matured since he came to live here'. As a result, they are enjoying a much better relationship.

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

Young people live in a safe place and are protected from harm. They feel safe and are able to talk to members of staff if they are worried or upset. The registered manager and staff understand their roles and responsibilities in protecting young people. Their care and support are helping young people to be increasingly safe from the risks of abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Staff take appropriate action to involve social workers, the designated safeguarding officer and the police when they have concerns about young people's safety. Staff work with young people, social workers, youth offending teams and the police effectively to understand and manage the risks to young people's welfare. However, this is not always reflected in their individual risk assessments.

Young people do go missing. There has been a high number of missing from home episodes for three young people since the last inspection. A social worker said, 'The staff are doing all that they can to locate [name of young person].' The social worker acknowledges that this is hindered because the young person will not tell anyone who his friends are or where he is going. Although this is known behaviour, it is now affecting his placement. The social worker said that they and the home are doing all that they can to maintain this for him as they recognise the benefit and progress that has been made.

Staff promote acceptable behaviour based on positive relationships with young people. They give young people clear and unambiguous expectations for behaviour. Staff constantly praise, reward and celebrate young people's achievements. Staff are very aware of the young people's individual anxieties and the stressors in their lives.

Staff work tirelessly to help young people to overcome these anxieties and to manage the unwanted behaviours that can arise because of these. There have been no physical interventions for some considerable time, and sanctions are used sparingly. Young people said that they know and understand the house rules, but do not always come home on time. They said that they know staff care and ask them whom they are with. However, they do not want to tell them where they are, as they do not want the police coming to their homes. Young people said that they do answer the phone to staff and the police to reassure them that they are safe.

Young people live in a warm, welcoming environment. A social worker said, 'When I am looking to place a child in a children's home, this is one of the first homes I come to.'

This is because of the calm, homely environment. You would not know that four teenage boys were living here.' Staff recruitment is not yet robust. This is because some of the staff files do not have copies of staff contracts, interview notes and explanations of gaps in employment. This is an administration error and does not affect the safety of young people at present, but has the potential to do so if not addressed.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

An experienced registered manager manages the home. He holds a level 4 qualification and has commenced his level 5 in leadership and management. Two members of 'bank staff', who have worked at the home for over two years, have yet to commence a level 3 qualification. This was raised at the last inspection. While the manager took advice from a training agency, he has not moved this forward. A number of staff have not attended or updated their training in relation to safeguarding, child sexual exploitation and radicalisation. The registered manager is aware of this and is taking action to resolve the issue. Regular professional supervision enables staff to discuss their professional development.

Record-keeping is not yet robust. This is because records, such as healthcare plans and risk assessments are not updated to reflect the current position and they contain out-of-date information and/or conflicting information. Some, such as healthcare plans, are not sufficiently detailed regarding existing medical treatments and the support provided to young people. This does not provide clarity in records, especially for young people when they access their records now or in the future. The impact is reduced, as staff are able to relay verbally what support is provided on a daily basis to the young person.

Monitoring of the home is not yet effective. This is because the manager's monitoring has failed to identify the shortfalls identified at this inspection. Reports by the registered manager do not effectively scrutinise the quality of care provided. Nor do the reports take into consideration young people's views, or identify any patterns, trends or the action to address any shortfalls. This hinders the manager's ability to drive forward improvements. Reports by the independent person are more evaluative and have identified shortfalls. These shortfalls have been rectified by the home.

The statement of purpose is current. It reflects the care and support provided to all young people. This is shared with placing authorities and carers so that they have realistic expectations of what the home can do. In addition, young people receive an informative children's guide when they arrive.

Staff's priority is that the young people are happy and settled. This means that young people can make consistent progress in all areas of their development. Staff have high but realistic aspirations for the young people. They confidently challenge others when they feel that a young person is not getting the support they need. For example, they successfully argued that a new placement for a young person was not appropriate, as he did not yet have the independence skills to equip him for that arrangement. Consequently, an alternative placement with more support was identified that would be more able to meet the young person's ongoing needs.

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: SC061678

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Care Assist Children's Services Limited

Registered provider address: 1 High Barn, Back Lane, Aughton, Ormskirk, Lancashire L39 6SX

Responsible individual: Peter Jones

Registered manager: Edward Adams

Inspector

Chris Scully, social care inspector

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