

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

This home provides care for up to four children who may have emotional or behavioural needs. The home is owned and operated by a private provider.

There is a manager in post who registered with Ofsted in July 2014.

At the time of the inspection, there were three children living in the home.

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.

Inspection dates: 24 to 25 August 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **inadequate**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **inadequate**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **inadequate**

There are serious and widespread failures that mean children are not protected and their welfare is not promoted and they are not making progress.

Date of last inspection: 12 December 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/12/2019	Full	Good
16/01/2019	Full	Good
15/12/2017	Full	Good
16/01/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

Some children's progress has not been positive. Their engagement with staff has declined, and there are increasing concerns about children's safety and well-being.

Children say that they like staff. However, staff have failed to develop meaningful relationships with some children, which means that opportunities to support children to make safer choices and to develop their aspirations are limited.

Children's care planning is not consistently effective. Not all their needs are clearly addressed. For example, one child is diagnosed with a neurodevelopmental disorder but there is no information in his care plan about how this may affect him on a day-to-day basis. This means that staff are not clear about how to support him.

Children have not made progress in education. Some children have not attended education or training for a significant amount of time. Arrangements to support children to overcome their barriers to learning are ineffective. There is evidence that staff have attempted to support children to engage. However, one child's education, health and care plan could not be located in the home, which indicates that staff were not aware of it or its contents.

The children are all approaching independence. Despite this, there has been very little work completed with them to help them to prepare. This is partly due to children not wishing to complete the work with staff. However, a lack of planning in this area means that children's individual strengths, needs and progress are not understood.

Arrangements for ending children's placements are not always effective. One child, who had lived at the home for several years, recently left in an unplanned manner and in unpleasant circumstances. This was a poor experience for him and the other children who live at the home.

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

Some children remain at risk of harm. There have been increasing concerns in relation to children going missing from home and being involved in unsafe situations.

Risk management is poor. Not all risks to children's safety or well-being are identified. In some cases, risks are identified but strategies to manage them are unclear or are not consistently followed.

The manager shares relevant information with the appropriate professionals and seeks multi-agency input when new concerns emerge.

Staff actions to safeguard children who are missing are inconsistent. Attempts to locate or to contact missing children are not always carried out as frequently as is prescribed in their risk management plans. In addition, records do not demonstrate that children always can take part in an interview with an independent person when they return.

Some property issues have not been addressed in a prompt manner. For example, an electrical report listed some significant matters which have not been addressed. Standards of cleanliness in some areas of the home are poor and do not support children's good health or well-being.

Overall, incidents of crisis behaviours do not occur frequently in the home. There have been no incidents of physical restraint since the last inspection. This indicates that staff can de-escalate challenging situations and help children manage their emotions.

The use of consequences for inappropriate or unsafe behaviour require review. Currently, these are limited to supervising children's spending money which has not been effective in helping children develop their understanding of safer behaviour.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

There is a suitably qualified and experienced manager in post who registered with Ofsted in July 2014.

There are examples of positive action on the part of the manager in terms of sharing information with relevant professionals and partnership working. However, in some examples, the manager has failed to challenge external services sufficiently when that service has fallen short.

While staff turnover is low, there are low numbers of contracted staff employed at the home. Staff rotas show that staffing levels are set at a minimum and are not assessed in line with children's needs.

Staffing rotas also demonstrate that the manager is required to carry out a residential care worker role frequently. During one recent month, the manager was not allocated any hours to complete management duties, such as monitoring.

Despite a recommendation made at the home's last inspection, the home's workforce development plan has not been updated. Staff are provided with training in a range of areas but some learning, which would be useful in assisting staff to develop their practice and understanding of children's needs, remains outstanding.

Internal monitoring is not currently effective. In some cases, monitoring does not identify areas that require improvement. In others, required improvements have been identified but not addressed. Failure to monitor standards effectively or to act

when concerns are identified means that opportunities to make improvements are missed and that shortfalls are allowed to continue.

It was identified that Ofsted was not notified in a timely manner about a significant event that occurred in the home. Failure to notify Ofsted of significant events impedes our ability to monitor and, as such, does not promote children's safety or best interests.

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
In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— seek to involve each child's placing authority effectively in the child's care, in accordance with the child's relevant plans; seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child's needs; and if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 5(a)(b)(c))	17 October 2021
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;	17 October 2021

help each child to understand the importance and value of education, learning, training and employment; help a child who is excluded from school, or who is of compulsory school age but not attending school, to access educational and training support throughout the period of exclusion or non-attendance and to return to school as soon as possible; and help each child who is above compulsory school age to participate in further education, training or employment and to prepare for future care, education or employment. (Regulation 8 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(viii)(ix))	
*The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child’s relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; and that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child’s health. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(d))	17 October 2021
*The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children’s home that— promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; and use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(b) (2)(d)(h))	17 October 2021

The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that arrangements are in place to— ensure the effective induction of each child into the home; manage and review the placement of each child in the home; and plan for, and help, each child to prepare to leave the home or to move into adult care in a way that is consistent with arrangements agreed with the child's placing authority. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(i)(ii)(iii))	17 October 2021
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation; an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious; there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; a child protection enquiry involving a child — is instigated; or concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry); or there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(a)(b)(c)(d)(i)(ii)(e))	17 October 2021

* These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendations

- The registered provider should ensure that staff record information on individual young people in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between 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. Specifically, key-worker records and young people's healthcare plan. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraphs 14.4 and 14.5)
- The registered provider should ensure that there is a review of the service to enable the registered manager to identify areas of strength and possible weakness in the home's care. The report should clearly identify any actions required for the next six months of delivery within the home and how those action will be addressed. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.4)
- The registered provider should ensure that staff have clear guidance about how to respond to each child's individual behaviour to enable them to manage conflict, maintain constructive dialogues and react appropriately and consistently if challenged by a child in their care. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards, page 39, paragraph 8.14)
- The registered provider should ensure that when a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority must provide an opportunity for the child to have an independent return home interview. Homes should take account of information provided by such interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect each child. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards, page 45, paragraph 9.30)
- The registered person should ensure that all sanctions are subject to systems of regular scrutiny to ensure that their use is fair and proportionate and that they are relevant and restorative in nature. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards, page 46, paragraph 9.36)

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: 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

Inspectors

Marie Cordingley, Social Care Inspector
Judith Birchall, Social Care Inspector

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