

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	26 April 2016
Unique reference number	SC061678
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Care Assist Children's Services Limited
Registered person address	1 High Barn, Back Lane, Aughton, Ormskirk, Lancashire, L39 6SX

Responsible individual	Peter Jones
Registered manager	Edward Adams
Inspector	Michelle Edge

Inspection date	26 April 2016
Previous inspection judgement	Good
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC061678

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Young people enjoy good relationships with staff, with mutual respect, understanding and nurturing care being evident. This creates a good atmosphere of acceptance and warmth where young people can make progress.
- Staff work in partnership with health, education and specialist services. These professional relationships are effective and allow young people to access the services that they need.
- Skilled, committed and experienced staff members support young people to make progress in all areas of their lives.
- Young people live in a safe environment. They are kept safe by good staff practice that is in line with procedures and policy. Risk assessments are robust because managers regularly review and update them.
- Young people become less vulnerable to abuse and exploitation because staff help them to reduce risk-taking behaviours, including being away from the home for long periods.
- Young people have support in their education and training provisions. However, they do not have access to a computer within the home to further develop their learning.
- The environment is homely, clean and suitably furnished. The young people are encouraged to personalise their home.
- Encouragement is provided, helping young people to express their wishes and feelings regarding the care that they receive.
- Areas for development have been identified. This includes the registered manager redesigning the children's guide with the input of young people and also looking at evaluating records to identify patterns, trends and areas of improvement to further develop the service provided.

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

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further, the service should take account of the following recommendations:

- Ensure that the children's guide is available to all children when their placement in the home is agreed (or on arrival at the home if the placement is made in an emergency) and must be age appropriate, provided in an accessible format and explained to each child to make sure that they understand ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 24, paragraph 4.21).
- Ensure that the children have access to a computer and the internet to support their education and learning, unless there are specific safeguarding reasons why this would be inappropriate. In such cases, the home should consider whether and how it can support the child to access a computer and the internet safely ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 29, paragraph 5.19).
- Ensure that the records of incidents of going missing are evaluated to identify any patterns or trends in young people's behaviour and/or gaps in staffs training, skills or knowledge, including what practice worked well. The evaluation should inform the review of the quality of care ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 15.2).
- Ensure that the registered person is responsible for deciding what each quality of care review should focus on, based on the specific circumstances of the home at that particular time and any areas of high risk to the children that the home is designed to care for, such as going missing or exploitation. They will also consider what information or data recorded in the home will form part of the evidence base for their analysis and conclusion ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph, 15.4).

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is a privately run home. It accommodates up to four young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
30 September 2015	Full	Good
11 August 2015	Full	Inadequate
17 March 2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
29 August 2014	Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
Young people make good progress while living at the home. They benefit from consistent care, which enables them to reflect on their past and to develop positive coping and social skills. This has led to a significant reduction for some young people in episodes of going missing from care and risks associated with gang affiliation. One young person said, 'Since I have been here, the staff talk to me and actually listen. They have helped me understand I can choose a right or wrong path and even though I sometimes still make mistakes they don't give up.' There are good, supportive and nurturing relationships between young people and staff. The staff and managers demonstrate both perseverance and determination to work through challenging times with young people. They listen to young people and provide encouragement, positivity and guidance. One young person said, 'Staff are always pecking my head [nagging], but I know that they just want me to do the best I can.' Staff are optimistic and talk freely and passionately about the qualities and strengths of the young people who they care for. A social worker stated, 'He has make [made] significant progress since he has lived at the home. Relationships with staff are excellent and they really care and want the best outcomes for young people. I cannot believe the difference the home has made.' This has led to young people making good and sustained progress from some difficult starting points. Young people are confident that staff listen to them, and discuss their complaints and concerns, as well as their plans and dreams. Although young people have not used the formal complaints process, they were all clear that they would talk to either the manager or the staff team if they 'were upset or worried' and all staff would 'help make it better, sorting everything out'. The children's guide contains the complaints procedure and how young people can access this. However, some of the terminology used within the guide is adult focused and may not be clearly understood by all young people. The manager was already aware of this and was considering how the guide could be updated with the input of the young people. Young people also have access to advocates, independent visitors and their social workers, which means that they have adults to turn to if they are worried or concerned. Young people's meetings take place weekly. Within these meetings, young people are encouraged by the staff to voice their opinions and views about the care that they receive and their home environment. For example, young people had requested new kitchen equipment and staff had worked with young people to purchase what was needed. All young people are clear about the reasons they are	

in the home and the goals that they are working towards for their future happiness. One young person said, 'I love it here and I'm staying till I finish school and get a job. I want to do you-tubing [internet videos].' Other young people said, 'This home is so different than the last one I was in. The staff really are interested in you, and just want to make sure we are safe, ringing us when we go out with our mates' and 'I have loved it here and I have done well, the staff are now helping me find my own place and want me to get a good job for the future.' This confidence in staff care and nurture supports young people's self-esteem and improves their emotional well-being.

A key strength of the home is the commitment and aspirations the manager and staff have for young people in education. Staff members said, 'It's important we encourage young people in their education' and 'We want them to have the best opportunities available to get the best education and a good job.' Young people who have moved into the home are also supported to return to education. One young person had not had any formal education for a significant period of time prior to moving to the home. The manager and staff worked closely with education professionals to ensure that a plan was devised, giving the young person the same opportunities as his peer group to learn and develop. The home has also been proactive in their approach around challenging local authorities and the virtual head when young people have been given limited access to education, less than 10 hours, with no clear plan on how and when this will increase. Through regular meetings and continued discussions, a suitable plan was agreed with clear timescales and goals. One school reported, '(Young person's name) has made excellent progress in his behaviour and class work. He is part of the school football team and has improved massively.'

Health and well-being are promoted in the home. Healthcare plans identify individual health needs and support. Statutory health assessments have been completed and most young people have attended all required medical appointments. When young people refuse to attend, staff talk to them about any barriers that are preventing them from going and then look at different support mechanisms to put in place. For example, asking health professionals to come to the home to complete required checks. This particular action proved successful and the young person engaged in his assessment for the first time in several years. This ensures that young people's health needs are fully met.

Staff have good working relationships with young people's families and professionals. They support young people to maintain contact with important people in their lives and develop appropriate friendships in the local community. When issues around contact arise, staff liaise with the local authority and look at how this can be more enjoyable. For example, welcoming family members to the home or facilitating activities. This ensures that young people have continuing relationships with important people in their lives.

Feedback from both social workers and family members confirmed that communication from the home is very good and that they all receive regular and detailed updates from staff. This ensures that those involved are fully informed and

updated and are working together to ensure that the young person's needs are met. One parent said, 'The staff will ring me and tell me the good stuff, like school, as well as when he is being naughty. I really can't believe the difference in my son, who is a lot calmer, in such a short space of time.' All social workers confirmed that communication with the home is very good and that they receive regular updates on their individual young people.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Young people say that they feel safe living in the home. They rely on the support and guidance of staff to help them sustain positive relationships with each other and with staff. The staff team utilises, to good effect, established procedures to support their practice in keeping young people safe. Detailed risk assessments are in place, which identify areas of individual risk and vulnerability. Staff use this information well to inform their daily work with each young person. All assessments, including risk assessments, behaviour management plans and individual care plans, are reviewed and updated to show the ongoing progress of young people and evidence a clear reduction in their risk-taking behaviours. These practices are underpinned by child protection training for all staff and a robust, updated safeguarding policy. This means that staff know how to respond to safeguarding concerns. Some young people have gone missing from care, although this has greatly reduced in frequency. When incidents of going missing happen, staff and the manager act appropriately and in a timely manner, notifying the police and local authority so that appropriate action is taken. Procedures and processes are followed to secure the young person's safe return home. When young people return they are greeted warmly. Staff provide an opportunity for the young person to meet with an independent person to discuss the events and determine the reasons for their absence. However, the manager does not always ensure that an evaluation of incidents of going missing takes place to identify any gaps, trends and patterns or record and retain evidence of what worked well. This is a missed opportunity for learning and prevents a chance to develop further strategies to prevent recurrence. Young people benefit from clear and effective behaviour management strategies. They receive positive and constructive praise for good behaviour, including daily rewards and incentives. They also receive fair and balanced restorative consequences for negative behaviour. For example, young people have been involved in repairs to the home environment, with staff, when they have caused damage. This promotes a sense of personal responsibility for young people and helps them to understand the consequences of their actions. Staff consistently implement clear and unwavering boundaries and this helps young people to	

develop an understanding of what acceptable behaviour is. As a result, the staff do not have to rely upon punitive methods of behaviour management. The young people listen to the staff. The use of negotiation, discussion and compromise have become the preferred methods of resolving difficulties.

Effective and meaningful partnerships between the home, police and other safeguarding professionals promote young people's safety and welfare. Staff are good at recognising young people's vulnerabilities and their potential to engage in risky behaviours. For example, alcohol and drug misuse. Staff are consistently clear about what action they would take in response to any issues arising. They have encouraged young people to work directly with the drug and alcohol team, supporting them to engage in workshops and completing direct one-to-one sessions. This ensures that young people have the right information around the risks associated with drug and alcohol misuse and are fully aware of the support available to them. One young person had said during a workshop in the home around different types of cannabis, 'I never really understood how that [cannabis] could affect my body, I'm not touching it again.' Staff clearly understand their safeguarding responsibilities and give the safety and well-being of young people the highest priority.

Young people are safeguarded through the safe recruitment of staff. Robust and rigorous processes are in place to minimise the possibility of young people being harmed by those caring for them. References are taken and checked, criminal records checks undertaken and employment histories reviewed. These measures serve to deter and prevent individuals of concern working with young people.

Young people's home environment is both safe and comfortable. Health and safety is of crucial importance and, as such, all required checks are undertaken in a timely manner.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
The young people benefit from a suitably qualified registered manager who has held his position since 2014. He has considerable experience and is currently working towards his level 5 diploma in leadership and management. Staff spoken with during the inspection all report high levels of satisfaction at the management support that they receive. One member of staff said, 'He is always available, very supportive and will listen to any new ideas or suggestions we may have.' Young people benefit from individualised and well-planned care provided by a committed staff team. Prior to young people moving to the home, a detailed compatibility risk assessment is completed. This ensures that the group is compatible so that friendships can be promoted and individual needs can be met. Young people have the opportunity to visit their new home before they move in,	

providing opportunities to meet the other young people and their new care team. Transition plans are detailed and personalised to reflect each young person's individual needs. Young people moving on from the home have been involved in the implementation and review of their transition plans. Young people have successfully moved on to semi-independent provisions or returned to live with their families. Staff have arranged a celebration event at the end of their time at the home and provided gifts and photographs for young people to take with them on their next pathway in their lives.

A committed staff team provides good, consistent and nurturing care. All staff, including managers, receive regular professional supervision. This enables them to reflect on their practice and recognise their own strengths and weaknesses. A member of staff said, 'Supervision is helpful in making sure we are getting it right for young people and we are always looking at how we can improve.' Appraisals and development of staff are also in place. These are detailed and evaluate the performance of staff and the care that they provide to young people. Development and training gaps are identified and appropriate training is made available to ensure that staff have the relevant skills. Consequently, young people benefit from a staff team that is qualified, experienced and continually developing.

Staff also feel that the team are mutually supportive and have the ability to reflect and learn from incidents. Team meetings take place regularly, supported by a clear agenda, and the young people's welfare and issues important to them are priorities. Managers and staff also take the opportunity to review their practice, share experiences and reflect on effective strategies in caring for young people. They also carefully consider the young people's individual experiences and progress. Bank staff attend the meetings and benefit from the support of experienced members of staff. Therefore, young people are cared for by a staff team who communicate effectively and provide a consistent, supportive approach.

Internal monitoring systems are in place. In addition, regular appraisal of the quality of care is undertaken by an independent visitor who completes a monthly report. The registered manager also uses internal audit processes and completes monthly reports from the data in place. However, the registered manager does not always use this as an opportunity to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the home and evaluate the effectiveness of practice on the quality of care for young people. This is a missed opportunity to demonstrate how practice is improving the progress and experiences for young people.

The statement of purpose has recently been updated to include all areas of care provided by the home. Both the manager and staff have a clear understanding of the purpose and ethos of the home and how they will achieve this through the care provided. This is kept under review and a copy provided to the regulator in a timely manner.

The registered manager and staff work effectively with other professionals. As a result, social workers, youth offending workers and education and health professionals ensure that young people receive the services and support that they need to move forward with their lives. Professionals praise the work of the home,

citing clear evidence of young people making and sustaining progress. This good practice ensures that young people receive integrated and comprehensive care that addresses their wide-ranging needs.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place. However, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or that result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, 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 who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service 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'.

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