

SC062651

Registered provider: Care Focus Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is one of a small group of homes run by an independent provider. It provides care and accommodation for up to four children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. Education is available at the setting. Children have direct access to therapy as part of the services offered to them by the company.

Inspection dates: 25 to 26 October 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: 11 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:

- Children say that they feel safe and are happy at the home.

- Staff set consistent boundaries and challenge unwanted behaviours.
- The children make good progress in their education.
- Children have positive relationships with staff who know and understand their individual needs.
- Staff support the children to develop their independence in line with their age and ability.
- Children enjoy a wide variety of interesting activities, both at the home and in the community.
- There is excellent communication with parents and placing authorities.
- Children benefit from receiving in-house therapeutic sessions and good-quality key-worker sessions.

The children's home's areas for development:

- The home has not requested an independent return home interview from the responsible local authority following incidents of children going missing from the home.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/01/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
31/05/2016	Full	Good
06/01/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
29/09/2015	Full	Good

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

Recommendations

- 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 homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children receive high-quality care, make good progress and have improved life chances because they live at this home. Managers and staff provide a stable and happy environment in which the children respond well. Children recognise that the experienced staff team has the skills to support their individual needs. A child said:

'The manager and staff support me well and always want what is best for me. They have high expectations and tell me what they expect of me. I used to kick off a lot but I haven't done that for a while. This home has helped me change. It is the best home I have been in. I want to stay here until I am ready for semi-independence.'

The stability provided supports children to maintain long-term placements. One of the children has resided at the home for over two years, and another child for 20 months. These children are content to remain at the home for the foreseeable future and have taken full advantage of the support available to them. They are proud to acknowledge that the practical support provided has enhanced their self-care abilities. One of the children enjoyed receiving praise for her baking skills after making delicious mascarpone and white chocolate tarts for all during this inspection. Other skills gained include budgeting, laundry and general housekeeping tasks. Learning vital life-skills helps children to achieve successful independent living.

Education is an area in which all of the children have made very good progress. Prior to moving into the home, many of the children were not attending school regularly. All of the children are now engaging in academic studies. On arrival at the home, they initially attend the on-site school where they study for GCSEs before moving on to local colleges. A social worker said:

'She [child] sat her GCSEs this year and although she didn't get the results she was hoping for it is significant progress that she was able to sit them. It's

interesting that a child who never liked education now wants one and has ambition.'

A parent of another child commented:

'She has progressed 100%. Everything has improved. She sat her GCSEs and is now at college. I couldn't be prouder. Staff have helped her achieve this through their encouragement. They have done wonders. Whatever they are doing, it is working.'

Children benefit from receiving in-house therapeutic sessions. Children who previously found it difficult to engage now participate weekly with the provider's therapist. Alongside this, staff undertake regular key-work sessions that cover a wide variety of topics, including life-story work. The sessions help and support the children to look at past and present behaviours and anything that may be worrying them. The children receive support in a safe environment to help them work through previous experiences of trauma.

Regularly held children's meetings ensure that time is spent gaining the children's views on future activities and plans for the home. Staff dedicate a section of the meetings to celebrating achievements by recording how many gold stars the children have received in the home's incentive reward scheme. Children say that they like the opportunity to earn extra pocket money in this scheme and feel fully included in the running of the home. They spoke about enjoying participating in local charity runs and helping decide the new decor at the home. The girls particularly like spa days out, holding pamper nights, attending the local gym and the local cadet clubs. These trips and activities ensure that children grow in confidence and increase their social skills.

Transitions are very well planned. Children are encouraged to visit the home prior to admission and they receive a detailed child-friendly guide to the home. The children took part in making this guide and each has a section introducing themselves. The guide explains the routines of the home and how to make a complaint. One child said, 'I know how to make a complaint. I have made one and I received a response.' Including children in the process ensures that their views are valued and respected.

Two children have left since the last inspection. The manager ensured that their moves to semi-independent living went smoothly. Staff visited the children's future placements with them and supported them to familiarise themselves with the local area. The staff and children took buses together to gain knowledge of the routes. This gave the children confidence and skills to independently attend college and visit their friends and family.

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

The home provides a settled environment for the children. The staff respond in a consistent manner. They challenge any inappropriate behaviours and reinforce boundaries. A social worker of a child recently placed said:

'I am very happy. This placement has so far lasted well and she [child] is settling well in comparison to previous placements. I think this is due to good boundaries and relationship-building with her. The staff are able to apply boundaries consistently and there is a structure to her day now.'

A parent of another child said:

'I know she likes it, she didn't at first as didn't like the boundaries. She is now able to take responsibility for her actions and has learned to respect people. Now she has the possibility to really achieve in life.'

Children say that they feel safe living at the home. One child said, 'I love it. I don't want to leave here. The staff are friendly and supportive. I feel safe with them.' All of the children present as comfortable, secure and happy in the company of staff. During this inspection, it was evident that the caring staff are in tune with the children's needs and respond appropriately. For example, one of the children requiring emotional support instinctively approached a staff member and snuggled up to her for reassurance. A child said:

'I have learned how to calm down by going to my room and having a cry to release my emotions. I would never have cried a year ago as I always thought that crying was for the weak, but staff have showed me it is okay to cry. I now feel perfectly fine with expressing my emotions. The staff and other girls know that when I cry I need a hug after.'

All of the children have comprehensive individual risk assessments that the manager frequently updates in response to any new identified risk. These work alongside the behaviour support plans and positive handling plans that highlight known triggers and aid staff to reduce the need for physical interventions. Records show that any physical intervention is an absolute last resort. Staff are successful in implementing the strategies and de-escalation techniques effectively.

Prior to admission, several of the children had a significant history of going missing from home. Since moving to this home, the number of such incidents has reduced greatly. Staff are proactive and always follow the procedures outlined in the child's individual missing-person protocol. However, following a recent incident of missing from home, a senior employee conducted the return-home interview. This failed to ensure that the child had the opportunity to speak freely with an independent person unconnected to the home.

There have been two safeguarding incidents since the last inspection. Both have been promptly referred and managed appropriately. The designated officer said, 'The manager refers appropriately. I have no concerns regarding this home following procedures.' Staff spoken with are knowledgeable about safeguarding and have a clear understanding about whistle-blowing procedures. They recognise that they have a duty to safeguard the children and they take this responsibility very seriously.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager has been in post since March 2017 and has recently completed a relevant level 5 diploma. She is dedicated and passionate in her management style and strives to ensure that progress is continual. The manager is ambitious for the children and is well supported by an equally committed staff team.

The staff speak very highly of the manager. They are proud to be part of a team that is providing quality nurturing care to children who have complex histories. One staff member said:

'The home is managed very well. The manager is always accessible, and it is a very supportive household. This home is like my second family and we all pull together to make sure that the children receive good parenting, support and love. The motto of the house highlights that boundaries, routine, consistency, positivity, fun and respect are what are important to us.'

Staff are consistent and have taken time to understand the children well. They fully recognise the importance of children receiving care from a team that knows them. During this inspection, when staff cover was required at short notice, the staff immediately resolved the issue by swapping shifts. This positive response means that no agency staff are required to cover any gaps in the rota. This ensures that the children receive care from staff who know their individual risks and how to safeguard them.

The monthly staff meetings are structured and informative. They provide a forum for staff to discuss the progress made and to develop strategies to meet the ever-changing needs of the children. Alongside this, staff receive yearly appraisals and monthly good-quality supervision that enables them to reflect on their practice and any future development needs. This results in staff feeling valued and well equipped to care for the children.

The manager has built excellent relationships with professionals and parents. All who were spoken with commented on the high level of communication and partnership working. Social workers report that they receive good-quality detailed reports and that there is no delay in the reporting of any incidents. One social worker said:

'Communication is constant and I'm always aware of the progress made. [I have] no complaints at all. I have complete confidence in this home. I wish I could place all my children here.'

A parent said:

'The information is free flowing. I have no concerns, not one. It is an excellent home. I'm always made welcome and they [staff] have been supportive to the whole family. It's a complete package.'

The monitoring of the home is of a high standard. The independent visitor provides well-

considered reports that recommend actions for improvement. The provider undertakes its own internal monthly monitoring visits and alongside this the manager undertakes daily checks and monthly audits. This monitoring ensures that any practice issues are promptly resolved, highlights progress made and identifies any further development required.

There were two recommendations from the last inspection, which the manager has met. The older children have good-quality pathway plans that now clearly identify their individual personal goals and the progress that they are making. Under the manager's guidance, the staff have worked hard to ensure that there is a detailed record of the work undertaken, its effectiveness, and any tasks outstanding. Involving staff in the improvements of the home promotes ownership of duties and increases good practice.

The manager has introduced a new training record that is detailed and clearly shows completed training and when updates are required. Staff benefit from having access to a comprehensive programme of training. They are up to date with their mandatory training. All of the staff either hold or are in the process of undertaking the required level 3 diploma. This ensures that they have the skills necessary to provide the service as set out in the home's statement of purpose.

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: SC062651

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Care Focus Limited

Registered provider address: Care Focus Ltd, 3rd Floor, 24 Chiswell Street, London EC1Y 4YX

Responsible individual: Jean Lloyd

Registered manager: Hayley Stoddart

Inspector

Lynne Drage, social care inspector

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