

SC063219

Registered provider: Children Assisted in a Real Environment (care) Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home provides care for up to five children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home is one of three registered homes operated by a private organisation. The registered manager is in charge of this and one of the other homes.

Inspection dates: 14 to 15 November 2017

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected requires improvement to be 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: 13 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 experience stability and good support. This enables them to make good progress.

- A child said that they 'like living here and feel safe'. Children do not experience any bullying in the home.
- A social worker remarked on the homely environment and happy, engaging staff at the home, and commented that it is. 'fantastic in terms of communication'. Due to a stable staff team, children experience stability.
- There is a strong focus on education.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
13/01/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
24/05/2016	Full	Good
10/02/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
01/06/2015	Full	Good

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 registered person must (b) notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16 (3)(b))	31/12/2017
After consultation with the fire and rescue authority, the registered person must(a) take adequate precautions against the risk of fire. Specifically, not wedging fire doors open as this would render them ineffective. (Regulation 25 (1)(a))	31/12/2017
The registered person must maintain in the home the records in Schedule 4. Specifically, proof of home address. (Regulation 37 (2)(a) Schedule 4 (2)(d))	31/12/2017
The system referred to in paragraph (2) must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff. (Regulation 45 (5))	31/12/2017

Recommendations

- 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. ('Guide to the children's home's regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30) Specifically, provide greater challenge to local authorities to provide such interviews.
- Specify the procedures to be followed and the roles and responsibilities of staff when a child is missing from care or away from the home without permission and how staff should support the child on return to the home. ('Guide to the children's home's regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.28) Specifically, make clear what staff should do when police lines are busy, and ensure that the procedure is in line with regulations.
- Records must be kept detailing all individual incidents when children go missing from the home (regulation 36 (schedule 3(14))). This information should be shared with the placing authority and, where appropriate, with the child's

parents. ('Guide to the children's home's regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.31) Specifically, review records to ensure that they are accurate and reflect the actions taken and messages given and received.

- For children's homes to be nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of their children, they will, in most cases, be homely, domestic environments. ('Guide to the children's home's regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9) Specifically, make sure that a higher standard is maintained by quickly responding to shortfalls in the premises, and review the information displayed in communal areas which appears institutional.
- Each child should have permission for staff to administer first aid and non-prescription medication from a person with parental responsibility for them recorded in their relevant plan. For looked-after children, this permission should be sought and arranged by the child's social worker. ('Guide to the children's home's regulations including the quality standards', page 34, paragraph 7.14)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children experience stability in this home. During this inspection period, no placement breakdowns have occurred. One child experienced a smooth transition to semi-independent living after a settled period of over three years in the home. The staff commit to the children in their care and do not end placements if at all possible. New residents have the opportunity to visit and meet everyone before moving to the home, which helps them to settle in. Children stay in touch with the staff after they move on, and they still regard it as 'home', calling staff for advice or dropping in for a meal.

Children enjoy warm relationships with the staff. For example, by building relationships with staff, one child has made significant progress in managing their own behaviour. A member of staff described the best thing about the home as 'staff relationships with the children and listening to their thoughts'. Children are encouraged to talk about their feelings and worries.

Education is encouraged. All children have education arrangements in place. One child is not engaging, due to their being missing much of the time. However, they did engage for a while at the start of their placement, which constituted progress for this child. Staff are not willing to give up on this child and do not wish to end their placement. However, the local authority is reviewing the situation. Some children have made better-than-expected progress in many subjects or achieved sufficient GCSE grades to enable them to progress to higher education. Staff work well with school staff, for example by giving rewards to acknowledge children's achievements in school.

Children experience a good range of activities, including leisure centre membership and,

for most children, an annual holiday. Children are encouraged to make new friends, for example by joining Cadets, albeit sometimes with limited success. Children are encouraged to bring their family members and friends home. A number of children like to see their friends out in the wider community. For one child, this means considerable travel and a late return to the home. Consequently, they may be tired when attending education the following day. Staff are supporting the child to improve this situation.

Some children have an improved understanding of hygiene. For example, one child said that they can now keep their room clean and tidy and manage laundry and personal care better as a result of help from staff. However, some children still struggle with personal hygiene and require more support to improve this.

Children receive encouragement to change unhealthy habits including smoking. One child said that they have 'cut down a lot'. Others are learning to express their feelings in positive ways, including going for a walk or using the home's punch bag rather than showing aggression towards others. This is a considerable achievement for some. Children who have historically refused the support of agencies, for example, child and adolescent mental health services, are now willing to attend an appointment.

Children benefit from one-to-one discussions with staff wherever they may be, for example while playing a card game, as well as key-work sessions. During these discussions, staff encourage children to reflect on their behaviour, health and development as well as any other issues affecting them. As a result, one child said that they are more able to express their thoughts and feelings.

Staff manage behaviour safely, using restraint only rarely. They encourage a culture of mutual respect. One child said that this is the best home that they have been in. This child has changed a pattern of behaviour of assaulting adults, which occurred in previous homes.

Children enjoy praise and rewards for positive behaviour and achievements. Staff acknowledge children's efforts and progress, which boosts their confidence and self-esteem.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

One aspect of fire safety requires improvement. There are generally good procedures to protect children from the risk of fire, such as regular fire drills and an updated fire risk assessment. However, one fire door was wedged open, which compromises fire safety in the building.

Some aspects of the home's procedures for managing episodes when children are missing or absent from the home require improvement. Staff check where children are, for example making sure that they have arrived at school after they have been away to visit family. However, records are not consistent in giving a clear picture of missing from

home episodes. For example, in one case, staff have not recorded a date of return and therefore it appears that a child has been missing for longer than they were. Some records are incomplete, for example not showing whether staff got through to police after initial failed efforts to report a child missing.

Staff advocate for children's rights. They have challenged placing authorities effectively and advocated for children, for example when a local authority wanted to move a child just before their exams. However, there is insufficient challenge to secure independent interviews in all cases when children return after being missing from the home.

One child travels a considerable distance to see friends, resulting in a late return and eating at a late hour. Consequently, this affects their learning and attendance, as they are tired the next day. Staff are encouraging more healthy patterns of behaviour.

Children's health records have improved. These now provide a clear record that enables staff and children to see at a glance which appointments they have attended and what treatments are due. Staff obtain consent for some health treatments but not specifically for staff to provide first aid.

The home is comfortable and safely maintained in terms of checks on systems and equipment. Children said that they like their rooms and how the building looks, particularly the soft furnishings in the lounge. However, in places the building is not well lit, appears worn, and a few areas are in need of cleaning. Staff identify maintenance tasks, repairs and cleaning that are required. However, there needs to be a quicker response to maintaining the home to higher standard for children.

Noticeboards in communal areas display positive images, such as certificates that children have achieved in school and pictures of children doing various activities. Staff try to inform children about the risks of matters such as drugs and child sexual exploitation with written information on the noticeboards. However, these notices appear institutional and out of keeping with the homely atmosphere.

Staff recruitment is mostly robust. The service conducts checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service, and with previous employers, to ensure that staff are safe to work with children. An improvement has been in asking children to take part in interviews for prospective staff. However, proof of address is not evident on staff files; this would be a useful further check.

Staff training covers various aspects of safeguarding and helps staff protect children's safety. This includes child sexual exploitation, gangs and anti-radicalisation. Social workers report that staff work effectively with them to reduce risks to children's safety. Although staff know how to make referrals to the local authority about any concerns regarding children's safety, they have not had to do so in this inspection period.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

An experienced and suitably qualified registered manager oversees the management of this home, delegating many tasks to an experienced deputy. There is little change to the staff team and, consequently children experience stability. Staff regard the management team as open and approachable. They said that they find that managers 'listen to their ideas'.

A member of staff described belonging to a 'small but mighty team'. Staff said that they feel well supported, for example through supervision, team meetings and annual appraisals. Another member of staff praised the support from management and the staff team and said, 'We work effectively as a team.' Some staff said that they feel an improved and updated induction pack or a handbook could improve the induction process. The deputy is already working towards implementing this.

Social workers reported that there is effective communication between the staff and management team and other professionals. One child's social worker said that the staff 'communicate well and really try to make changes with the child'.

Good monitoring by an independent visitor helps to develop the service. The independent visitor produces detailed reports of their visits, making clear their opinions of children's safety and well-being. The homes management reviews the service against the quality standards every six months to identify strengths and any areas to improve. However, these reviews do not evidence that children's and parent's feedback is included.

Managers have updated the statement of purpose and this gives people accurate information about the home. However, management has not supplied Ofsted with a revised copy as required by regulation. This has no impact on children.

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: SC063219

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Children Assisted in a Real Environment (care) Ltd

Registered provider address: 144 Old Oak Road, London W3 7HF

Responsible individual: Linda Blakely

Registered manager: Natasha Robinson

Inspector

Jacqueline Graves, social care regulatory inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

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