

# SC405985

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Full inspection

Registered provider: ERA Care Limited

## Information about this children's home

This children's home is owned and managed by a private provider. It provides care and accommodation for up to three children, irrespective of gender, who have behavioural and/or emotional difficulties.

**Inspection dates:** 20 to 21 June 2017

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,</b> taking into account	<b>good</b>
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of last inspection:** 20 December 2016

**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

- The staff build meaningful relationships with the children. This helps each child to accept help in their own way.
- The children learn that they can ask for help, and this helps them to make progress in different ways.
- The staff help the children to manage difficult feelings and emotions.
- Incidents of children going missing decrease significantly, for some children.
- The home has good relationships with external agencies.
- Agencies speak very positively about the home and the work that has gone into supporting their child.
- The registered manager knows the home well. She is responsive to the individual needs of the children.

The children's home's areas for development

- For those children who are not in education, the expectations around engagement with learning should be clear and consistent.
- More is required to demonstrate to the children the action that the staff take when the children make suggestions about the day-to-day running of the home.
- The arrangement for staff who smoke needs to be revised.
- Staff should encourage the children to see the home's records as living documents.

## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
20/12/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
13/07/2016	Full	Good
11/01/2016	Full	Requires improvement
15/06/2015	Interim	Declined in effectiveness

## 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 with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— That staff understand the barriers to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child to overcome any such barriers and promote opportunities for each child to learn informally. (Regulation 8(1)(2)(iii) and (v))</p>	04/09/2017

### Recommendations

- Ensure that staff understand that it is their responsibility to observe, notice and respond to children who are expressing their views. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.10)
  - Ensure that staff work to make the children's home an environment that supports children's health, in line with the approach set out in the home's Statement of Purpose. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 33, paragraph 7.3)
- In particular, review the arrangements for staff smoking.
- Ensure children are encouraged by staff to see the home's records as 'living documents' supporting them to view and contribute to the record in a way that reflects their voice on a regular basis. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 58, paragraph 11.19)

## Inspection judgements

### Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The strength of this home is the staff's ability to nurture good and meaningful relationships with the children. In times of difficulty or challenge, the children come to recognise that the adults in their network know what to do to help them to make a difference in their lives. The staff empower and help the children to feel that they are cared for and valued. One child, who was being given structured help and support during this inspection to prepare to leave the home in a positive way, said: 'I have learned a lot while I have been here. I can see that, for me, it is better that I came into the care system because, if I had not been living here, things would be a lot worse for me. Being in this home has helped to make me who I am. I know that I need to make things different for my child.' The staff support has a positive impact on the children's self-belief and understanding.

The same three children have lived together since the last inspection. The outcomes vary from child to child. This is because, while there are similarities in this group's social history in relation to experiences of child sexual exploitation, they each respond differently to their experience of living at the home. One child, who has a history of placing herself at significant risk in the community and has had over 15 previous placements, has remained living here and is accepting help. She said, 'I don't want to be in this area. I know how to break a placement and I could leave here anytime.' Her interaction with the adults around her is improved, and she is asking staff for help.

The staff encourage the children to become involved in the local community, and the success of their involvement varies from child to child. For example, the children have spells of interest in activities such as attending army cadets or in keeping fit. The staff work hard to find the balance between moving things along at the child's pace with putting pressure on them to take part. A child said, 'The staff are always offering. It's just that sometimes we can't be bothered.' The staff routinely talk with the children. Records show and the children say that the staff seek their opinion. However, the records also show that there is no clear response from the staff group when the children give their opinion by telling the staff how, sometimes, some of them spend too long in the office. This does not fully demonstrate to children how the adults are acting upon their views about their experience of being cared for.

The staff encourage the children to eat healthily. They go shopping with the children and ensure that there is a good choice of food available for them to access a balanced diet. A new, brightly coloured menu display encourages the children to talk to the staff about what they would like to eat. When children have individual dietary requirements, the staff make sure that they have what they need. The staff encourage the children to cook. They explain why it is important to make good decisions about eating. This support helps the children to make better choices about what food to eat, and their routines around eating regularly improve.

Relationships with other agencies are positive, and are focused on achieving the best outcomes for the individual child. More than one agency said 'communication is good'. Care planning is individualised, and the children are routinely helped and encouraged to access general and specific physical and mental health services. The result is that the children attend appointments and access the right services to help them to take better care of themselves.

The education plans for each of the children vary according to their circumstances. For example, one child successfully attends college, while another child, living further away from her placing authority, does not have an education placement. The registered manager takes a proactive approach to addressing this issue with the placing authority by seeking to identify an alternative meaningful provision, but the expectations for informal learning have slipped. For example, records show that, some days, one child is not getting dressed and is spending a good deal of time in the home, watching television. While she is safe and this is an improvement for her, she has been in the home for a number of months. This does not demonstrate how the staff help all the children to overcome barriers to learning.

The records show and the children say that the staff discourage them from smoking. The staff talk to the children about the dangers of using drugs and this helps the children at different times to make better decisions. For example, one child surrendered a recreational drug following discussion with the manager. However, some staff do smoke outside of the home when the children are in the house. This practice compromises the work of the staff on the importance of promoting a healthy lifestyle.

The building provides a welcoming and homely environment for the children. It provides ample communal space for relaxation. The staff facilitate family contact by providing transport, and they provide emotional support. The staff listen to the children when they are upset and offer reassurance. This helps the children to process their feelings while working through complex family matters. For some children, contact with family has increased and improved. This gives these children hope. One child, preparing to return to live with her family, said, 'Being here has been good for me. When I look back to before I came here, I can see that I have changed.'

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

There have been no physical interventions since the last inspection.

The children know how to complain and have confidence in the management of the home. The children trust the staff. They know that the staff will take seriously any concerns or worries that they have about their placement plans. The result is that the children volunteer information about what is happening in their relationships with friends and family. The staff are quick to involve or update any other agencies that need to be made aware of potential safeguarding issues. One agency said, 'Through a combination of different approaches, they have done really well with our child.'

There are few sanctions and consequences. The staff use their relationships with the

children to help to influence them to modify behaviours. The numbers of disputes between the children have reduced. When there are incidents at the home, the staff talk to the children in the moment about making better behavioural choices. The staff routinely offer praise for and recognition of the children's good effort, for example when they make positive choices and do not become involved in arguing with other children. The atmosphere improves at the home and helps some of the children to see the benefit of using alternative coping strategies when faced with aggression.

A financial incentive system helps the children to earn extra money to add to their pocket money. The children like the approach, because it helps them to save up for any additional items that they would like to purchase that the home has not already provided. This incentive helps the children to invest in their environment and take pride in their home.

For two of the children, incidents of going missing have decreased significantly from their starting points. One professional said, 'This home has worked well with us to understand the concerns that we have had and to implement the safety plan.' In recent months, the home has been working closely with other agencies to support one child to learn how to manage an intimate personal relationship. The balanced approach enables this child to take age-appropriate risks with putting in place firm boundaries about what is acceptable. The child said, 'The staff at the home have done all that they could to help me. But at times I have not listened.' One member of staff said, 'When I look at difficult situations, I think to myself, would what I am asking be good enough if this was my daughter? And I know then what I need to do to help to keep the child safe.'

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

Leading the home for over two years, the registered manager continues in the post. She has the support of the staff team, and the children are very fond of her. One child said, 'I don't always like what she has to say, but she is fantastic. I can go to her about anything.' Another child said, 'One time I had hit out at her, and it was not good. I have learned that she does not hold a grudge, and that's a good thing.'

The ethos in the home is as described in the statement of purpose. One of the professionals with experience of working with the home for over a year said, 'Rather than looking at the symptoms, the registered manager likes to look at the root of the problem.' The registered manager plays a critical role in strengthening the relationships with the children. She works hard to balance the impact and complexities of the children's previous experiences with giving them a choice and encouraging them to have fun and form new friendships. Working in partnership with other agencies and involving the children, she sets the limits around acceptable behaviours. One child said, 'The manager, she gives me what I need, which is not the same as what I want.'

The registered manager has worked hard to be responsive and to improve relationships with other agencies. One social worker said, 'Everything that we have asked to be put in place, the home has put in place.' These relationships ensure that the right services are available to the children when they need them. The improved approach to working with

the police has helped each of the children to see that there is a network of support around the home which is helping to keep them safe, both when they are in the home and when out in the community. These are effective working partnerships which prioritise children's safety.

The registered manager is responsive to complaints. The responsible individual works with her to look into and address matters raised about staff practice. This helps the staff to learn about the impact of their work with the children and other agencies. There have been no allegations or referrals made to the local authority designated officer.

Care plans and assessments provide clear information about the actions that the home intends to take to support and help the children. The registered manager oversees and monitors written documentation. The staff are not consistently writing up key-work sessions with the children. The paperwork does allow for children's input and comments about their plans, but the staff could be more proactive to encourage the children to see the home's records as living documents.

The staff receive regular supervision and are encouraged to talk about and reflect on the impact of their work with the children. Staff with more experience provide support to newer members of the team, and this helps to build confidence when dealing with, for example, the verbal challenge from the children. The provider uses e-learning resources to ensure that staff complete the required training, which includes safeguarding and 'Prevent'. The registered manager uses team meetings to focus on specific areas to help to improve practice. This helps to ensure that she and the team continue to develop professionally.

The three regulations raised at the last inspection are met. For example, through supervision and team meetings, staff are clear about how to implement the behaviour management policy which sets out how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted. One quality standard in relation to education is not met, and is raised as a regulation.

Internal monitoring processes help the registered manager to track and evaluate the significance of events. She has a firm grasp on what is happening at the home and is prepared to make difficult decisions in the best interests of the children. A recent change to the arrangements for the external monitoring of the home helps to focus the registered manager on the areas of strength and the areas of development for the home. She says, 'I think we have a good team, and we are working hard to support these children and give them what they need.'

## **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 difference 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:** SC405985

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** ERA Care Limited

**Registered provider address:** Unit G22, Allen House, The Maltings, Station Road, Sawbridgeworth, Hertfordshire CM21 9JX

**Responsible individual:** Stephen Milton

**Registered manager:** Hayley Roberts

## Inspector(s)

Rosie Davie, social care inspector

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