

SC405985

Registered provider: ERA Care Limited 5921904

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is one of a small group run by an independent provider. The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to three children aged between 11 and 18 who cannot live with their own families and require support and help to manage their emotions and behaviour.

The current manager registered with Ofsted in August 2015

Inspection dates: 18 to 19 July 2018

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: 21 June 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/06/2017	Full	Good
20/12/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
13/07/2016	Full	Good
11/01/2016	Full	Requires improvement

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
<p>The health and well-being standard is that—</p> <p>children are helped to lead healthy lifestyles.</p> <p>(Regulation 10 (1)(c))</p> <p>This is in regard to ensuring that children access recreational activities that encourage physical activity.</p>	01/10/2018
<p>If the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005(a) applies to the home—</p> <p>the registered person must ensure that the requirements of that Order and any regulations made under it, except for article 23 (duties of employees), are complied with in respect of the home. (Regulation 25 (2)(b))</p> <p>This is in regard to ensuring that the fire risk assessment is updated to show the action required by staff to prevent children from smoking in their bedrooms.</p>	01/10/2018
<p>The registered person must implement a policy ("the behaviour management policy") which sets out—</p> <p>how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the children's home. (Regulation 35 (1)(a))</p>	01/10/2018

Recommendations

- 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

Living in this home makes a positive difference for many children who, in time, come to appreciate the help and support available to them. The homely environment provides good space for all of the children to relax. An adopted cat helps to create a family atmosphere.

The children receive individualised and carefully planned support. The children build good and trusting relationships with the adults who care for them. The children learn to talk about their previous experiences and how they are feeling. They are able to express their views and manage their emotions more appropriately. Over time, aggressive behaviour reduces.

From their starting points, children improve in their willingness to participate and engage in education. Some of the children achieve good levels of school attendance. Some children sit exams when this had not been considered a likely achievement. When children refuse to engage in learning, the staff's response has notably improved because they are more confident about how to address the possible barriers. For example, staff engage the external network of support around the child and spend time talking with individual children about what they are good at, and this helps them to place value on learning. One tutor visiting the home at the time of this inspection said, 'The staff could not do more to encourage the child to take part in his education.'

Weekly house meetings encourage the children to have their say and promote the concept of the children's involvement in the running of the home. Staff cook for the children and encourage the children to cook and prepare meals for themselves. The approach helps to sow seeds for independence planning. The staff listen to the children's wishes and have ongoing conversations with them when their requests are not possible, for example to have unlimited access to wi-fi.

The children receive money weekly to encourage them to take part in activities. The children go out into the local community for a meal or to the cinema. Staff are aware of individual children's interests and talk to the children about the importance of eating a varied diet. The majority of children continue to smoke or use cannabis and are not engaging in physical activity regularly. Staff say that they try to encourage the children but overall the staff's efforts to motivate the children to be active are unsuccessful. This does not ensure that children lead or maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Staff build good relationships with other agencies who say that communication is very good. Children benefit from continued contact with their families and those who are important to them. For some children, their family contact improves because staff talk to the children and prepare them for spending time with their families. Children's willingness and ability to be social and to mix with peers improves. Many children develop positive friendships in the local community, and this helps those children to have some fun and experience acceptance.

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

Staff monitor whom the children make acquaintance with and swiftly notify other agencies such as the police when concerns arise from individual children's activity in the wider community. The children know that the manager and staff will always prioritise every child's safety.

Staff are knowledgeable about each of the children's background and social circumstances. Individual staff demonstrate a good understanding of the children's personality and character. Clearly written impact assessments help the staff to identify the key areas where children are likely to need the greatest amount of guidance and support. Individualised risk assessments show that the staff recognise signs of risk and have identified strategies in partnership with other agencies and family members where appropriate, to respond to risk-taking behaviours.

Children with a history of going missing have gone missing from this home but the frequency has reduced significantly in recent weeks. The manager and staff follow police protocols and ensure that all necessary action is taken to encourage children's safe return.

Discussions with managers, staff, children and the records maintained show that staff should not allow the children to smoke in the building. As a result, this behaviour is slowly reducing. However, the fire risk assessment is not updated to reflect that the children smoking in their bedrooms is a reoccurring theme. This does not ensure that all staff working in the home are aware of the action to take on shift to reduce the risk of fire.

Staff rarely use physical intervention. A financial incentive scheme helps to promote positive behaviour in the home. Significant incidents in the home and in the local community have decreased significantly, because some children have moved on. Sometimes children shout, swear and hit out at staff. When such incidents occur, the staff are reluctant to criminalise the children. Some staff use their relationship with individual children to manage incidents and this helps to de-escalate potentially volatile situations. Records show that in the home's recent history some incidents have not been managed effectively. This is because staff have given the children inconsistent messages about behaviours that are acceptable and behaviours that are not acceptable. This does not ensure that there is a consistent approach to promoting appropriate behaviour.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager knows the strengths and weaknesses of the staff team and the home well. Her primary focus is to ensure that the children are safe and comfortable. The registered manager is supported by the assistant manager and together they provide good direction and advice to the children and the staff team.

The registered manager is good at sharing information with placing authorities. She is getting to know individual children who feel supported by her and seek her out. The manager is prepared to make difficult decisions about placements. She gave notice on one child's placement because she understood that the location of the home meant that the child could no longer be kept safe. One placing social worker said, 'The home does not give up easily on children.'

The requirement made at the last full inspection is met. The staff have improved their approach to supporting children with education. One recommendation is repeated because records show that the children are not contributing sufficiently to their placement plans.

External monitoring continues to provide a good source of independent quality assurance. There have been some changes to the staff team that do not have an effect for the current children. The provider has made significant improvements to the staff induction and training process and this helps to equip staff to fulfil their responsibilities to the children. One new member of staff said, 'The training I have had has helped me enormously.' The managers provide regular supervision and deal with matters arising from staff conduct and practice fairly, ensuring that the staff understand their responsibilities to safeguard 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: SC405985

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: ERA Care Limited

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

Responsible individual: Stephen Milton

Registered manager: Hayley Roberts

Inspector

Rosie Davie: social care inspector

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