

1257022

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 privately run children's home provides care for up to six children. The provider states in its statement of purpose that it provides care for children with a diagnosed autism spectrum disorder and/or learning difficulties. The home provides long-term care and accommodation, as well as short breaks.

The home and manager registered with Ofsted in July 2017.

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 May 2022

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: 12 May 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/05/2021	Full	Good
30/09/2019	Full	Good
06/02/2019	Interim	Improved effectiveness
05/07/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children are treated as part of a family in this home. They have caring and responsive adults around them who ensure their safety and promote their well-being. Children have positive relationships with staff and each other, which reinforces their sense of belonging. Children make significant progress from their starting points. When asked at her recent annual review what she felt about her home, one child said: 'It's the best! I love everyone and I love my home.'

Children are provided with opportunities to participate in day-to-day decisions, and longer-term plans, whether this is in respect of the running of the home, the weekly menu, or decisions regarding their transition from the home to more independent living. Communication aids, such as social stories, are used for children who are non-verbal or need support to express themselves fully.

Children regularly attend school and staff and managers work closely with education colleagues. This helps them to understand underlying behaviours that may affect children's ability to function fully when in school. For example, the registered manager intervened when staff at a child's school felt that they had no option but to send the child home for an indefinite period when the child was expressing that she was always in pain. The registered manager enlisted the support of the consultant psychiatrist linked to this child to consult with the school about how to respond and manage the child's presentation, so that her education was not disrupted.

Children's health needs are promoted by staff. Specialist health services are arranged for children when necessary. The registered manager explored all options to help one child to sleep, instead of the child being up most of the night and disrupting others prior to the child being prescribed medication to help with sleep. Medication is stored securely and administered safely, with clear recording and authorisation.

Staff and managers provide personal care to some children, and this is done with sensitivity and dignity. Other children have been helped over time to develop the skills and confidence to attend to their own personal care. One child had previously experienced some rejection in aspects of her identity, which had influenced how the child viewed herself. Staff in the home used their diverse backgrounds to help the child to develop a positive sense of herself through seeing positive role models from her own background.

Staff and managers view children's family and friends as important in providing children with a sense of identity and belonging. Although challenges have arisen in some cases when working with parents and guardians, the needs of children have remained at the forefront. Staff have managed some difficult situations well and have shown empathy and a commitment to maintain safe and meaningful communication between parents, guardians and children.

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

Day-to-day observations of children result in very clear risk assessments being developed that are understood by all those caring for the children. These assessments are further informed by information made available from social workers, family and agencies involved with children. Staff and managers know the children well and are able to respond to verbal and non-verbal cues in order to minimise risk and address fears or worries. This ensures that children are safeguarded effectively.

For one child, the registered manager sought advice as a result of the independent visitor raising a question as to whether the child was at risk of child sexual exploitation. The specialist child sexual exploitation agency confirmed that the child did not meet the criteria. This demonstrates that managers are open to reviewing their own assessments of children and consider the views of others, in order to ensure that children remain safe.

Staff and managers support children to develop their independence through their understanding of children's cognitive abilities and developmental age rather than their chronological age. Targets and plans for children are therefore much more achievable. Children have a real sense of having made progress and are praised for this.

The registered manager has helped staff to understand children's behaviour in the context of their complex needs. For instance, a child with autism, who regularly grabbed at staff and held them tightly, created anxieties in staff, who were wary of working with this child. The registered manager researched this behaviour and discovered that children with autism benefit from Deep Pressure Stimulation (DPS), a firm but gentle squeezing or holding that relaxes the nervous system. The registered manager hopes that this understanding will mean that staff are able to work more effectively and the child's need for physical contact is met safely.

There are detailed positive behaviour plans in place for children. Where possible, children are involved in completing these plans. The behaviour plans help staff to understand and respond appropriately to behaviours. They also help children to engage in recognising the triggers themselves and potential strategies for managing their own behaviour.

Restraint records demonstrate that restraint is only used as a last resort to manage children's behaviour when there is a risk of harm to themselves or others. Records shows that incidents are reviewed with children and staff, through supportive debrief sessions. Management oversight of these incidents enables both staff and children to consider what could have been done differently. However, one incident of restraint could have been averted if staff had considered fully the information held in the child's behaviour management plan.

The manager has dealt appropriately with the one allegation received in the review period. The designated officer wrote: 'Staff are very quick to report concerns and these have always been dealt with effectively by management. I have had no concerns in respect of the way in which concerns/allegations have been managed. The registered manager will contact me for advice or guidance as well as in relation to any allegations and responds back to me very quickly.'

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager has developed a great level of knowledge and experience in his role. Leaders and managers have high expectations and ambitions for what all children can achieve. The registered manager views the home as providing a specialist service to children and has high expectations of staff in ensuring that standards of individualised care for children are the best they can be.

Leaders and managers work hard to ensure that a stable staff team exists to offer consistency to children. The registered manager has been instrumental in modelling to staff how they should interact, respond to and interpret children's behaviours and staff appreciate this level of support. One member of staff said: '95% credit to the registered manager for his leadership role as the manager of the home; his care and love for young people is absolutely awesome and adorable.'

Leaders and managers develop comprehensive care plans in respect of children which address the range of children's complex needs, for instance engaging speech and language services, dieticians and psychiatrists to provide a highly personalised plan for each child. This ensures that plans set by the local authority for children are carried out effectively.

Managers and staff are aware that children could become 'invisible' or 'hidden away' as a result of presenting behaviours that may be exhibited in the community. Therefore, managers and staff work hard to ensure that children are part of the community they live in, and they have made positive links with a local church youth group, local barbers, local shops and neighbours. This has helped children to develop their independence and feeling of belonging.

Managers and staff receive regular supervision and challenge to support them in their roles. They also have access to clinical advice to discuss specific practice issues relating to children. The registered manager plans team meetings meticulously to ensure that there are opportunities to share learning, undertake training, share new ideas of working and reinforce policies and procedures. Staff report being very happy with the level of induction and the range of development opportunities made available to them.

Leaders and managers pride themselves on having created an environment that feels like a family home. Dinner time is a focal point for children and staff, where everyone sits at the dining table to eat together and communicate. Staff report working with a supportive and consistent team of colleagues who are all committed

to ensuring that children feel 'at home' and that their needs are met well. Staff speak warmly about the children, describing them as 'sweet'.

A parent of one child using the short-break service described the child as being very happy to see staff when they arrive at the home. This parent also reported having positive relationships with staff, who regularly update them on what has happened with their child during their stay.

Case records for children are comprehensive and contain relevant statutory documentation and information about work undertaken with children. The use of social stories and picture communication symbols shows how children have been engaged to help them to understand their plans, celebrate their achievements and comment on their day-to-day experiences, whether positive or negative.

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

- The registered manager should ensure that staff understand factors that affect children's motivation to behave in a socially acceptable way. Staff should encourage an enthusiasm for positive behaviour through the use of positive behaviour strategies in line with the child's relevant plans.
This specifically relates to the reading and understanding of behaviour support plans. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 39, paragraph 8.13)
- The registered manager should ensure that staff continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. Where there are safeguarding concerns for a child, their placement plan, agreed between the home and their placing authority, must include details of the steps the home will take to manage any assessed risks on a day-to-day basis.
This is in relation to reviewing completed risk assessments to ensure that decisions for children are made in line with these assessments. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)
- The registered person should ensure that all staff consistently follow the home's policies and procedures for the benefit of the children in the home's care. Everyone working at the home must understand their roles and responsibilities and what they are authorised to decide on their own initiative. This relates specifically to the home's procedure for managing the spread of COVID-19. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.20)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, 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: 1257022

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: Ricky Phelan

Inspector

Colin Bent, Social Care Inspector

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