

1262935

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This is a private run children's home that provides care and accommodation for up to five children and young people. This has temporarily increased to six with Ofsted's approval in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The service provides a settled period of residential care, with a therapeutic emphasis, and multi-agency involvement. The aim is to help children and young people recover from experiences which have rendered them vulnerable and disrupted their primary relationships.

The home changed its function and registered again with Ofsted on 1 August 2017. The manager has been registered since August 2017.

Visit dates: 15 to 16 September 2020

Previous inspection date: 22 October 2018

Previous inspection judgement: Outstanding

Information about this visit

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), Ofsted suspended all routine inspections in March 2020. As part of a phased return to routine inspection, we are undertaking assurance visits to children's social care services that are inspected under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF).

At these visits, inspectors evaluate the extent to which:

- children are well cared for
- children are safe
- leaders and managers are exercising strong leadership.

This visit was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000, following the published guidance for assurance visits.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills is leading Ofsted's work into how England's social care system has delivered child-centred practice and care within the context of the restrictions placed on society during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Findings from the visit

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit.

The care of children

Children are individually supported in one of the home's outreach properties, with those that are remaining with the service long term and compatible, moving on to the hub home when it is safe to do so. In this way, staff provide bespoke packages of care that support children well. This high level of individualised care significantly promotes children's safety and well-being.

Children have personalised plans which are comprehensive and regularly updated. These include a detailed account of the young person's history, their current needs and risks and how these are to be managed. Therefore, children have consistency from staff members which enables them to progress.

Educational needs are varied and plans for children differ. Outdoor activities completed by children are assessed by qualified staff, enabling them to gain qualifications while re-engaging with the national curriculum. Children have said that they enjoy education and have completed awards in outdoor pursuits, such as paddle boarding and ghyll scrambling.

Children that are settled in placement are receiving work on life stories and the implications of these are clearly understood by those who work alongside them. Staff respond well on most occasions to children's mental health needs. They do this by having a thorough understanding of children's behaviours and the difficulties they may be facing. These are responded to in a warm and nurturing way, supported by an appropriate clinician.

Relationships that are important to children are encouraged and fully supported by the home. Robust plans for contact also take COVID-19 (coronavirus) and local restrictions into consideration. Children are aware of their own responsibilities and the plans in place to keep themselves and others safe during this time. Communication with family and social workers has been maintained during lockdown measures using electronic technology. Face-to-face contact has resumed with the easing of lockdown arrangements.

The safety of children

Children's safety is a high priority in this home. Staff focus on helping children to identify and understand the significant danger attached to their former circumstances and behaviours. Because of the individual care and support provided, children's risk-taking behaviours have significantly reduced from their starting points in placement.

Despite the strong safeguarding ethos in the home and staff regularly reviewing children's individual risk planning, two isolated incidents were identified where staff failed to follow the company safeguarding procedure. Although these incidents were

identified, reported and responded to effectively by managers, the omissions by staff did compromise children's safety on these occasions.

Children know how to complain and feel confident in raising any concerns with staff. Where complaints have been made by children, these have been listened to and dealt with but these are not always comprehensively recorded.

The home's recruitment processes are generally very robust. However, managers have strengthened their arrangements further, in response to one former employee's failure to disclose pertinent information that was not revealed through safer recruitment checks.

Unusually for the home, there have been a high number of incidents of children going missing during this period. Records sampled and discussed show that staff members have followed protocols and procedures and actively attempt to locate children. Staff support children returning to placement, ensuring that they are well and unharmed. Routine return interviews are always completed by an independent person.

Leaders and managers

There were no requirements or recommendations from the previous visit and the home was judged outstanding at the most recent inspection. Although some children are living in outreach properties, the registered manager's knowledge of children, their background, their risks and care needs is strong. This level of oversight and good communication within the service promotes the home's effective management.

The manager is suitably qualified and has extensive experience, working with children that have suffered exploitation and abuse. She is also a skilled and qualified outdoor instructor. The manager is supported by an assistant manager, who is also observed as having good relationships with children and an in-depth knowledge around their needs.

Professional feedback suggests that leaders and managers work collaboratively and in partnership with external professionals and agencies. Communication is said to be an area of strength.

Sensible measures were in place to minimise the risk of COVID-19 during this visit. Forward planning by leaders and managers successfully takes account of all possible eventualities. Staff have been provided with detailed guidance to help ensure children are familiar with the measures in place. Staff have achieved this sensitively, maintaining as much normality in the home as possible while taking the necessary steps to ensure safety.

The needs and wishes of children in placement are a high priority. Managers have successfully challenged partner agencies when the home has been concerned that others were falling short in meeting children's needs or failing to give clear messages to children about the plans for their future.

Staff benefit from regular training that they say is always of good quality. Staff are encouraged to reflect upon their learning and how best to implement this into their practice. Children are cared for by a knowledgeable and well-trained team.

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 protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(v)(vi) and (vii))	30/10/2020
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which— include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)) This specifically refers to maintaining records with details of any accident or serious illness involving the child while accommodated.	30/10/2020
The registered person must ensure that a record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of any investigation. (Regulation 39 (3))	30/10/2020

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1262935

Registered provider: A Wilderness Way Ltd

Registered provider address: Manor House, Brisco, Carlisle CA4 0QS

Responsible individual: Simon Barton

Registered manager: Hannah Winn

Inspectors

Gillian Walters, Social Care Inspector

Natalie Bennett, Social Care Inspector

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