

1275649

Registered provider: A Wilderness Way Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and operated by a private company. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 6 to 7 November 2018

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: not applicable

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

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– assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child. (Regulation 12(2)(a)) In particular, young people should not be admitted prior to a risk assessment being undertaken and any risk assessments in place for a child should be up to date and show the level of any risk and explain whether risks are current or historical.	11/12/2018
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that– helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to– lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose, and; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 13(2)(a)(c))	11/12/2018

The care planning standard is that children– receive effectively planned care in or through the children’s home; and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure– that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home’s statement of purpose. (Regulation 14(1)(a)(b), (2)(a))	11/12/2018
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 and; are kept up to date. (Regulation 36(1)(a)(b)) Specifically, looked after child review records and health assessment records should be on file for each child, and there should be a system in place to obtain these, should the placing authority not provide them within an appropriate timescale.	11/12/2018
The registered person must ensure that– within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35(3)(c))	11/12/2018
The registered person must notify HMCI without delay if– an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40(4)(b))	11/12/2018

Recommendations

- 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. Homes should take account of information provided by such interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect each child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

The home was registered in May 2018, and this is its first full inspection. There have been some significant issues in the leadership and management of the home that have impacted on the overall progress that young people make and how well they are protected.

The young people currently in placement are making good progress across a range of areas. One young person is preparing to live semi-independently and is receiving good support to learn relevant skills. This young person has been able to identify a number of areas which have improved for her since coming to live at the home. For example, improved self-control, respect for boundaries and understanding her emotions are cited, amongst many other areas. Another young person is engaging very well with education and enjoys participating in the wide range of outdoor and adventure activities that are on offer. Through his engagement in activities and education he is developing a better routine, and his sleep pattern has improved significantly.

Social workers report positively on the progress that the young people make, the relationships that they develop with staff and the impact of the service on the young people's lives and outcomes. Parents similarly feel that the home is making a positive difference to their children's lives.

The staff team has remained generally stable and consistent since the home opened, which has enabled young people to develop trust and confidence that staff will listen to them and try to help. Young people report that they like the people who care for them, and one young person scored them 10 out of 10. The quality of the direct work observed during the inspection was very high. Staff helped a young person to settle at night by spending time with her to write all her anxieties on slips of paper and then organise them into separate piles: those that she could address and those that she needed help with. This helped to reduce her anxiety levels, and she was able to settle for the night. Young people are encouraged to participate in frequent ARCH (assist, respect, comfort, help) sessions, which help them to make sense of their previous experiences and rebuild their confidence to move on.

The way in which young people have been matched for admission to the home has not resulted in positive experiences for all of the young people who have been placed. For example, when the home first opened two young people were both admitted on the same day. Neither of these young people were previously known to the company, therefore there was insufficient information about either young person to ensure that the matching process was rigorous or that they were correctly matched. A further young person was admitted without any transition planning. It very quickly became apparent that the home was unable to meet the young person's needs, and the placement was terminated almost immediately following a significant safeguarding incident.

Staff have not always had sufficient experience to manage challenging situations and, on one occasion, acted in a way that was against the company's ethos and did not provide good enough care and support to the young person involved. The managers reviewing this incident concluded that the staff were not sufficiently experienced.

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

Risks for some young people have decreased dramatically from their point of placement. For example, one young person had been involved in serious drug incidents prior to admission but has had none since. Another had multiple 'missing from home' episodes, and the number of these has declined sharply. The reduction in risks is partly due to the remote location of the homes and the high staffing levels provided, but can also be attributed to the positive work that takes place to build trust and confidence and educate young people about risks.

There have been some significant safeguarding incidents that could have been avoided with the use of better planning, appropriate matching and ensuring that staff teams have the relevant experience. One young person was left at risk during an incident where she obtained a knife by breaking into a locked cupboard and used this to threaten staff. The staff locked themselves and the other young person in the staff office for their own protection, leaving the young person alone to manage her much-heightened emotions. Additionally, when a neighbour returned the young person, who had been found outside the home, the neighbour was not asked to show any identification or to sign the visitors book.

A further incident occurred when a young person was admitted against the instruction of senior managers. This young person was not appropriately matched. No risk assessment had been undertaken. Additional information supplied by her social worker when she was placed was not read or acted upon. There was no pre-placement planning or transition planning. The staffing levels were not increased to counter any potential risks on the first night of her placement and the manager did not remain in the home to ensure the safety of the young people or the staff. A serious incident ensued where a member of staff was hit by a bar stool and another member of staff had her clothing set alight and suffered burns. Senior managers have taken both of these incidents very seriously and have ensured that the learning has been put into practice.

'Missing from home' incidents are infrequent and are documented in minute detail, which can make reviewing the records difficult. It is unclear on one of the incident records whether a young person had an independent return interview. Another record states that the independent return interview was completed by a member of staff. This does not ensure that young people have the opportunity to say why they went missing or what could be done in future to prevent them from doing so.

Risk assessments for young people are detailed, and the risks are number rated. In one young person's assessment, the risk of her jumping out of moving vehicles was not rated in this way or updated, making it unclear what the level of risk is and whether the risk is

current.

The use of physical intervention is rare. However, on the occasions that it has been used there has been no clear debriefing with the young person. Opportunities to understand how the young person feels or what could be done to avoid future restrictive physical intervention are potentially missed. One incident described above could have been prevented, or at least minimised, had staff used physical intervention at the appropriate time. Staff did not feel confident about doing this, which resulted in the incident escalating. Managers have decided to train all staff in advanced 'Team Teach' to improve their confidence to intervene at the appropriate time, should this be necessary.

Managers keep themselves up to date with current safeguarding issues. One manager is keen to embed contextual safeguarding practice in care, and has already met with one parent to begin to address contextual safeguarding issues as a young person's home contact increases and these risks become more relevant. The issue of 'county lines' has also been identified as one which may be relevant to some young people, and staff are trained in its awareness during their induction.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The registered manager resigned her post with immediate effect in October 2018. Senior managers had some concerns about her managerial practice and decision-making, issues which have impacted on this inspection judgement. Senior managers have taken steps to address the issues and have a clear plan in place to address areas of weakness and improve the standard of leadership within the home. An acting manager has been appointed, who has already made a positive impact and is implementing a thorough monitoring process to help to identify areas of weakness.

Some of the issues identified at this inspection have highlighted that the home has not been managed in a way which is consistent with the ethos and approach set out in the home's statement of purpose. This has resulted in significant safeguarding incidents, injuries to staff and a poor outcome for one young person placed, due to immediate placement breakdown.

Staff spoken to are positive about working in the home and can identify clear progression by the young people. They feel that the acting manager provides them with additional support and supervision, as well as clear leadership. The new rota is reported to be an improvement for both staff and young people, who are clearer about who will be on shift and for how long. Previously, the staff rota did not always ensure that staff with a mixture of experience were teamed together, resulting in incidents arising from inexperience.

There are no clear systems in place for ensuring that young people's most recent child looked after reviews and health assessments are obtained from their placing authority. Although social workers report that the home works in line with the local authority plan, the absence of these documents could potentially lead to inconsistency in how the local authority and the home arrange for young people's needs to be met.

Young people's records are not always clear and up to date. As detailed above, 'missing from home' records do not contain information on independent return interviews and physical intervention records do not evidence that young people are debriefed. Supervision logs are confusing and incomplete, although most staff report having regular support and supervision.

One safeguarding notification was not submitted to the regulator within an appropriate timescale, due to the manager leaving at short notice and no system being implemented to ensure that managerial tasks were immediately picked up.

Positively, senior managers identified and took action themselves to address the issues themselves prior to this inspection. The inspection was carried out with a high level of transparency, and no attempt was made to minimize or obfuscate the weaknesses identified. The service manager has a significant presence in the home and is working alongside the acting manager to improve standards.

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: 1275649

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: A Wilderness Way Ltd

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

Responsible individual: Clare Houghton

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Charlie Bamber, social care inspector

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