

SC061837

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

The home is part of a small organisation. The home can accommodate up to four children who have had adverse childhood experiences.

The registered manager was registered with Ofsted in July 2020. She is in the process of completing her Level 5 qualification in leadership and management.

Visit dates: 21 to 22 September 2020

Previous inspection date: 18 December 2019

Previous inspection judgement: Requires improvement to be good

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 feel happy living in the home and have developed good and trusting relationships with staff.

Staff listen to children's views and have engaged them in a range of activities. During the period of social restriction due to Covid-19 (coronavirus), children have been going for walks, doing art and playing board games. After restrictions were lifted, children have enjoyed further activities with staff, such as, going to the gym, horse riding and fishing.

Staff have continued to work with children to help ensure their health needs are met. This has included several discussions around the dangers of smoking and drug misuse.

The manager and staff team advocate well for children. They support children to remain in contact with those who are important to them by working with children and their families to build positive relationships.

Staff have been proactive in supporting children in their education throughout this period of COVID-19 restrictions. They have engaged children in home tutoring and online training. As a result, children continue to make progress and have successfully transitioned back into school at the start of the school term.

The home has been redecorated and is now a warm and comfortable home for children to live in. Consequently, children now live in a home that gives them a sense of belonging and self-worth.

The safety of children

Despite some significant challenges from young people, staff have dealt with incidents appropriately. This has ensured children's safety. Placing social workers and police feel that children are safe in the home and that staff do all they can to safeguard children in their care.

Staff engage with children to help them understand boundaries. Frequent conversations with children help them to understand how to keep themselves safe from harm.

On one occasion, the manager allowed a child to have a friend sleep over in the home without first consulting placing social workers. Furthermore, she did not complete thorough risk assessments prior to this taking place. Despite the manager's best intentions, this had the potential to compromise children's safety. She has since reflected on this incident and lessons have been learnt.

Although managers have strengthened procedures to prevent this happening again, the responsible individual's investigation into this incident was not thorough. He did not gain a full picture of the incident to sufficiently consider children's safety.

There have been significant improvements made to the home environment. However, the heating storage tank at the back of the home is not adequately fenced off. This has potential to cause harm to children.

Leaders and managers

The registered manager is new to the home. External professionals and staff speak positively about her and the level of support she has given to the children and the staff team.

Staff feel well supported to care for children in their care. Staff have completed online and, more recently, face-to-face training. This has ensured that staff have continued to be aware of the measures they need to take to care for children effectively.

The manager has a good general level of oversight into the running of the home. She uses external and internal monitoring effectively to make significant improvements to the home. However, external monitoring is not thorough as the independent visitor did not regularly speak with placing social workers or children's families as part of his monitoring visit. As a result, he is not able to get a full picture of children's experiences and welfare.

The requirements made at the last inspection have been met. One recommendation will be reissued. Although managers have developed a way for children to be able to view and add comments on their computerised records, this has yet to be put into action. Consequently, children are not having the opportunity to have their wishes and feelings recorded.

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.	30/10/2020

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; that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child’s health. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(i)(d))	
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children’s home that— promotes their welfare. (Regulation 13 (1)(b))	30/10/2020
When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the independent person— if they consent, to interview in private such of the children, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as the independent person requires. (Regulation 44 (2)(a))	30/10/2020

Recommendations

- Children should be 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)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC061837

Registered provider: Archways Care Ltd

Responsible individual: Christopher Aristidou

Registered manager: Sharon Gwilliams

Inspector

Sue Young, Social Care Inspector

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