

SC1246449

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

The home was registered with Ofsted in February 2017. It is registered to provide care for up to five children. The home offers short stays (usually of around three months) for children in crisis. The home is based in a semi-rural location and uses a variety of settings, for example, lodges and a cabin, which children may stay in or move between during their time there.

The manager was registered with Ofsted on 7 March 2019.

Visit dates: 13 to 14 October 2020

Previous inspection date: 7 May 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 benefit from warm, trusting relationships with staff at the home. Children receive support that is in line with their needs and are encouraged to learn independence skills to prepare them for the future.

Children engage in education and activities on site. They spoke positively to inspectors about the staff encouraging them to try new experiences and about the facilities that remained available to them during the lockdown period, such as the climbing wall, archery and mountain biking. This creative approach to education has given the children a structured routine and has enabled them to achieve qualifications through the AQA Unit Award Scheme.

Children choose their menus and are supported to cook. One child was preparing his evening meal and talked with inspectors about learning to budget for the ingredients. The staff guide and support children to balance nutrition with health and cultural needs when assisting them with meal planning.

Social workers spoke highly about the level of care provided to the children. They also said that communication is regular, and the staff understand the needs of the children. The staff use key-work sessions effectively; staff have supported the children to consider their behaviours, and some children have changed their outlook as a result.

The children were able to keep in contact with people important to them during the restrictions caused by COVID-19. Children said that the staff appreciated the importance of maintaining relationships with their families. One child said he felt that the staff supported 'my whole family and not just me'.

Children's views are actively considered at the home. However, there is no evidence to demonstrate how this informs practice, or how the action that staff take in response to what children have told them is fed back to the children.

The safety of children

The safety and well-being of children are promoted effectively. Strategies for staff to follow when a child goes missing are clear. The records demonstrate the lengths that staff go to engage with children and their network when children are missing, to ensure their safe return. When the children return they are welcomed and nurtured by the staff. Some children have reduced their incidents of going missing because of the care they have received at this home.

Staff have the right skills to enable them to support the children when they are showing behaviour that might be difficult for staff to manage. The organisation has focused on the reduction of physical intervention through positive behaviour management. As a result, incidents have reduced and when they do occur staff follow clear reporting procedures. The incidents are followed up with medical checks and opportunities for children to debrief. The manager has clear oversight of incidents and ensures that social workers are kept updated.

The children have participated in online learning to promote their safety when using social media. The children have accessed the Learning Hub. This resulted in one child being able to take immediate and effective action when she received unwanted communication online.

Staff use a restorative approach when things go wrong. The children are encouraged to help put their mistakes right as a natural consequence, such as by mending the furniture they have broken. The staff take time to help the children to reflect on what went wrong and to think about how they can avoid similar mistakes in the future. This equips the children with skills for resolving difficult matters in the future.

When new admissions are proposed, the manager considers the matching and management of risk for those who are already living at the home. Careful matching has resulted in successful placements for children. Social workers speak positively about the progress that the children have made during their stay at this home.

The home benefits from links with two specialist provisions, which allow children the space to make progress in a rural environment. One child requested this provision and felt that it was 'the best thing for me'. The child believed this would enable them to work through issues of substance misuse without other distractions.

Leaders and managers

The manager's child-focused ethos is threaded through the care delivered at this home. He leads the team effectively and consistently. The staff spoke positively of his can-do attitude during the COVID-19 lockdown, where no agency staff or staff from other homes were used. This resulted in a greater sense of the team and pulling together to get through the lockdown.

The manager and staff have felt well supported by the wider organisation during the COVID-19 pandemic. A central approach to providing personal protective equipment, and clear risk assessments and risk protocols enabled the staff to work within government and Department of Health guidelines. Some children's placements were extended during this time, which enabled them to continue to make progress.

The manager has good oversight of the children's plans, his reviews are thorough and reflective, and his approach supports staff to continue to develop in their roles. He makes good use of the independent reports to improve practice and values the

independent person's scrutiny and challenge. Staff supervision is regular. However, records are variable and lack clear structure and outcomes.

New staff have been recruited. The organisation has followed safer recruitment practice and has risk assessments in place where necessary for staff during their probation. Some adaptations have been made to the induction and training to overcome the challenges created by COVID-19. This resulted in some courses being moved online and the use of video calls to facilitate direct learning.

The manager has responded to the requirements and recommendations of the last report.

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

Recommendations

- Children must be consulted regularly on their views about the home's care, to inform and support continued improvement in the quality of care provided. Due consideration should be given to the child's cognitive ability in the development and implementation of any consultation processes. Children should be able to see the results of their views being listened to and acted upon. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.11)
- It is good practice for a note of the content and/or outcomes of supervision sessions to be kept and to ensure that both the person giving the supervision and staff member have a copy of the record. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.4)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1246449

Registered provider: New Forest Care

Registered provider address: New Forest Care Ltd, West Shore House, West Street, Hythe, Southampton, Hampshire SO45 6AA

Responsible individual: David Carter

Registered manager: Marcus Lange

Inspectors

Sarah Olliver, Social Care Inspector
Matt Nicholls, Social Care Inspector

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