

1233899

# Assurance visit

## Information about this children's home

This home is owned by a private company. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to two children or young people, irrespective of gender, who have social and/or emotional difficulties and/or learning disabilities.

The home's manager is qualified and experienced in children's residential care and has been registered with Ofsted since October 2018.

**Visit dates:** 16 to 17 December 2020

**Previous inspection date:** 13 June 2019

**Previous inspection judgement:** 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**

The home is currently only caring for one child, who was living at the home at the time of the last inspection. Staff know the child well and share very positive and trusting relationships with her. Consequently, she has settled well in this home and made some very good progress.

Staff offer consistent support and encouragement and have been successful in getting the child back into mainstream education. Staff assisted with home schooling during the first pandemic lockdown and were successful in achieving the child's return to education at the start of the new academic year. The child is regularly attending school and making steady academic progress.

Staff have been proactive in supporting contact with family members as restrictions would allow. Although the child has more recently been able to enjoy weekends at home with her family, contact with family members and professionals during the initial lockdown period was maintained via telephone and video calls.

The child's mental health and emotional well-being have been of key importance to staff throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Although staff have been able to organise the involvement and support of mental health and emotional well-being professionals, the child has been reluctant to engage fully with them. However, staff have actively encouraged the child's participation in daily exercise and a wide variety of activities throughout the summer months to ensure that she was kept fully occupied and had limited opportunity to become bored.

While restrictions allow, staff encourage the child to enjoy friendships within the community and they make her friends feel welcome at the home. The child appreciates this and it gives her a real sense of acceptance and belonging in this home.

The child's parent speaks highly of the home, noting staff to be extremely professional and a manager 'amazing' with her child. The parent commented, '[name of child] has had her moments, but overall relationships that she shares with staff are really very positive. Staff are very sympathetic and supportive towards her. They have helped her make good progress and I'm looking forward to having her home in the new year.'

## **The safety of children**

The home appropriately risk assessed the likely impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and quickly implemented measures to ensure the safety of staff and children at the home.

Staff are familiar with the child's individual risks and how these should be managed. However, documentation reviewed identified that individual risk assessments did not

always accurately reflect events detailed, and some parts of it were not always clear as to whether information was recent or historic.

Since the previous inspection, staff now advise all visitors, on arrival at the home, of the arrangements to be followed should the fire alarm sound. However, records indicated that fire drills have not been occurring on a regular or frequent basis to ensure that staff and children know what to do in the event of an emergency.

Staff have received additional training in the management of infection control and, specifically, additional measures relating to the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff keep the child informed, encouraging her to keep up to date with changes in restrictions and the government health advice intended to prevent further transmission of the virus.

The child says she feels safe in the home and that staff care for her in a way that keeps her safe. Since the start of the child's placement, there has been a significant reduction in incidents involving her being missing from the home. This has also successfully reduced her vulnerability to child sexual exploitation.

During this period, there have not been any other incidents that have required staff physical intervention or the implementation of any other disciplinary measures.

### **Leaders and managers**

The home is led by a qualified and experienced registered manager who has developed and supported a small staff team throughout this period. This has provided good continuity of care for the child in placement and ensured that all have remained safe and healthy during this period.

Staff say they feel well supported by the manager and noted that, during the lockdown period, she would regularly shop and drop off provisions at the home to minimise staff contact with other members of the public. Staff also valued daily and frequent telephone calls from their manager, while she was not at the home. However, despite this, regular professional supervision has not been consistently maintained during the period of the pandemic, to support staff practice and development.

Staff have benefited from a range of online training opportunities which have kept them up to date with best practice and new government guidance as it is issued.

Internal monitoring has failed to identify several concerning incidents that should have resulted in formal notifications to Ofsted. These incidents were clearly detailed in individual risk assessments and appropriately shared with all other relevant parties other than Ofsted.

Additionally, external monitoring reports have not routinely been received by Ofsted within the appropriate timescales. Also, it is identified that despite the availability of remote visiting, contact with the home is not routinely being made on a monthly

basis. These shortfalls in scrutiny reduce the transparency between the home and Ofsted.

Staff work in good cooperation with other professionals and partner agencies and are praised for their professionalism. One professional commented, 'Staff cooperate well with the police and are not afraid to question decisions made by other professionals.'

Some requirements made at the last full inspection have not been met and, as such, have been repeated to improve the quality of care planning and safety in the home. Further requirements and one recommendation have been made to address other shortfalls identified as a result of this visit.

## 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
<p>The care planning standard is that children—</p> <p>receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and</p> <p>have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that arrangements are in place to—</p> <p>manage and review the placement of each child in the home. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(ii))</p> <p>This relates specifically to ensuring that the home's care plans are sufficiently detailed taking into account the child's gender, religion, ethnicity, cultural and linguistic background, sexual identity, mental health, any disability, their assessed needs, previous experiences and any relevant plans.</p>	14 February 2021
<p>After consultation with the fire and rescue authority, the registered person must—</p> <p>ensure, by means of fire drills and practices at suitable intervals, that persons working at the home and, so far as reasonably practicable, children are aware of the procedure to be followed in case of a fire. (Regulation 25 (1)(d))</p>	14 February 2021

<p>This specifically relates to the provider ensuring that practice drills are carried out regularly, during both daylight and night-time hours.</p>	
<p>The registered person must ensure that all employees—receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(b))</p> <p>This specifically relates to the provider ensuring that supervision occurs regularly and is appropriately documented.</p>	<p>14 February 2021</p>
<p>The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if—</p> <p>an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious;</p> <p>there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(b)(e))</p> <p>This relates specifically to notifying Ofsted if a serious incident occurs which may or may not include police involvement.</p>	<p>14 February 2021</p>
<p>The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children’s home at least once each month.</p> <p>The independent person must provide a copy of the independent person’s report to—</p> <p>HMCI;</p> <p>upon request, the local authority for the area in which the home is located;</p> <p>the placing authorities of children;</p> <p>the registered provider and, if applicable, the registered manager; and</p> <p>the responsible individual (if one is nominated). (Regulation 44(1) (7)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e))</p> <p>This specifically relates to ensuring that visits occur on a regular monthly basis and that reports reach Ofsted within the required timescale.</p>	<p>14 February 2021</p>

## Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children’s records are clearly recorded, and that information is up to date and relevant, making sure to distinguish between fact, opinion and third-party information. This relates specifically to the

recorded detail in children's risk assessments. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

## **Children's home details**

**Unique reference number:** 1233899

**Registered provider:** Active Ark Limited

**Registered provider address:** Active Ark, Unit E, Baron Way, Kingmoor Business Park, Carlisle CA6 4SJ

**Responsible individual:** Louise Matthews

**Registered manager:** Heather Rooke

## **Inspector**

Gillian Walters, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted).

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2020