

Norman Mackie & Associates Limited

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number:	58507
Name of lead inspector:	Paul Cocker, Her Majesty's Inspector
Inspection dates:	5, 19 and 20 October 2021
Type of provider:	Independent learning provider
Address:	Ambleside Stalybridge SK15 1EB

Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Norman Mackie & Associates Limited, locally known as Works4U, is a small independent learning provider based in Stalybridge, Greater Manchester. The company offers programmes to young people, many of whom have significant barriers to learning. These barriers to their learning include emotional, social and behavioural difficulties.

At the time of the inspection, there were 46 learners enrolled on provision for learners with high needs, from entry level to level 1. Most learners study qualifications in personal and social skills and vocational skills in construction (carpentry), catering, art and animal care. For most of their education and training, learners attend the main centre, the farm and industry-standard facilities at a local football club.

Learners come from Tameside, Manchester, Salford and Stockport. The company also provides alternative provision for local schools. As part of this visit, the safeguarding arrangements for these children were also taken into consideration.

It was necessary to carry out two visits in order to conclude this monitoring visit.

Theme

How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place? Insufficient progress

The leadership of safeguarding is weak. While leaders have the best intentions to care, educate and safeguard these very vulnerable children and learners, their execution of their own safeguarding policies and procedures is ineffective. They do not ensure that the principles that underpin effective safeguarding practices are followed. For example, despite leaders putting in place appropriate policies and procedures in relation to the safer recruitment of staff, managers do not follow these policies. This leads to important checks on applicants' suitability to work with children and young people not being completed. This lack of oversight puts very vulnerable children and learners at risk.

The advisory board does not have appropriate personnel with sufficient understanding and authority to hold senior leaders to account for safeguarding. The recently appointed chair has recognised this and is currently in the process of recruiting a board member with the necessary knowledge and experience to strengthen safeguarding practices.

While staff receive safeguarding training, too many are not able to recall its content and implement its principles. Some staff are unaware of the processes that they should follow if they have any concerns about the safety of children or learners. Their lack of understanding of the organisation's safeguarding procedures could potentially put children and learners at further risk.

Despite managers explaining that children and learners receive extensive training on safeguarding and the risks in their local community, children and learners are not aware of how to identify the signs of radicalisation and extremism in their peers. To compound this issue, a few members of staff are not aware of how they should refer any concerns in relation to potential radicalisation or extremism.

The designated safeguarding leader and the deputy safeguarding leader have received the appropriate training to allow them to execute their roles. They receive regular updates and training to inform their practice on safeguarding matters. They attend training courses that are particularly pertinent to the children and learners they work with, such as strategies to safeguard learners throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, where face-to-face contact was limited.

The safeguarding leaders follow up any referrals that they receive in a timely manner and work with a range of external organisations, such as the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), to help children when they most need it. They have also nurtured close working relationships with a number of local charities that support young people in areas such as alcohol and substance misuse, housing and mental health and well-being concerns.

Learners are clear about whom they should contact if they have any safeguarding or welfare concerns. They feel safe at the main site, on the farm and at the catering site. Learners unanimously report that they are happy at the provider. There is a very strong relationship between learners and their key workers. This is built on mutual respect, openness, honesty and support.

Leaders and staff are very committed to supporting learners' mental health and well-being. Some staff have accessed additional training in their own time to follow up on the mandatory training that they have received. Learners report that they can openly discuss issues about mental health and well-being with any member of staff. They feel that they are supported effectively.

Leaders place an appropriate focus on health and safety. Children and learners can articulate the protective equipment that should be worn in construction and used in the catering facility, and explain the procedures for maintaining safety and welfare on the farm. At the time of this monitoring visit, effective risk assessments were in place. There was a supply of first-aid kits. At these sites, there were appropriate areas for learners to take time out should they need it.

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