

2626773

Registered provider: Hertfordshire County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority home provides care for up to three children. The children have a range of highly complex needs and cannot be placed in mainstream care settings at the time of admission. These include significant trauma, mental health needs, risk of exploitation, significant attachment issues and associated challenging behaviour.

The home consists of three flats that provide accommodation for three solo placements.

The manager registered with Ofsted in February 2021.

Inspection dates: 31 January and 1 February 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 1 February 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
01/02/2023	Full	Good
19/07/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Since the last inspection, one child has moved into the home. At the time of this inspection, three children were living at the home. There are three flats that make up the accommodation. Each child has a separate door to enter their flat. Staff working with the children remain largely separate to the other flats. This provides appropriate levels of privacy for the children and encourages their independence.

Two of the children have been living at the home for more than a year. They both have experienced childhood trauma and have developed emotional well-being difficulties that mean they need high levels of sensitive support. This ensures that they are appropriately cared for by staff who know and understand them. The third flat is being used by another local authority home to provide care for a child needing solo accommodation. Staff from his previous home are working with him to ensure that consistent care is provided by staff who know him well.

Each flat is decorated to a very high standard. The children enjoy the opportunity to personalise their homes. It is clear from the photos how they change their personal space by adding pictures and personal items. One child has two cats, which were a birthday present. She was able to talk about how homely the cats make the flat feel.

There is a wonderful sense of playfulness at the home. Staff encourage children to have fun, learn from their experiences, and try new activities. The integration of a well-researched therapeutic model has supported the children to build secure and meaningful relationships with staff. One of the children has a friend who stays overnight, and they support each other to develop independence by preparing and cooking meals to share with staff.

All three children are engaging in education. One child has recently passed level 2 in functional skills. Each child has a tailored education plan that helps them to learn at their own pace. The children's education, learning and overall development are encouraged by staff, who confidently apply a holistic model of care.

The children have a number of achievement books that capture their journey from the time they moved to the home. Staff are enthusiastic about the children having records of their accomplishments, which they will make a memory box for when children move to independent living. The books contain personal photos and records of activities. Staff record the progress that each child has made, which, for each of them, is quite significant.

One of the children is being supported to develop alternative communication methods to explore their feeling and emotions. Staff have used pictorial symbols to help their understanding. They have used the symbols to help to prepare the child for a meeting with their advocate. The planning and preparation by staff ensured that the child achieved the best outcome from the meeting.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

The manager and staff understand how trauma affects how children respond to staff. Regular therapeutic support helps them to develop and apply strategies that directly address concerning behaviours. This helps children to understand how they can overcome adverse experiences by developing emotional resilience. Children know that building resilience starts with the supportive environment of the home.

Children are encouraged to express their feelings at every opportunity. Staff model compassion and tolerance. This helps the children to develop emotional intelligence and empathy for others. The children are learning how their behaviour affects others. They have learned to apologise and work restoratively to mend relationships.

Physical restraints are used as a last resort. Staff talk to children about why they might have to use restraint. Children are helped to understand how this will happen and they are spoken to during and after restraints to explore how this could be dealt with differently. It is important that children feel supported when they are emotionally upset.

Staff are confident and knowledgeable when managing safeguarding concerns. They are competent in using dynamic risk assessments. This helps to reduce risk to children. They apply missing-from-home protocols consistently, which help the children to know that staff will look for them and work with the police to get them home safely. There are strong external partnerships that ensure that all agencies share information. One of the children is currently subject to a deprivation of liberty order. The child has found this difficult, but is able to talk about how this has meant that she can prioritise her own safety and well-being.

All the children take part in planned key worker and one-to-one conversations. These are based on the topics in the children's lives, including online safety, positive relationships, and future-based work. Staff work hard to ensure that the children understand how to keep themselves safe. The children know that staff prioritise personal safety in the community as well as online.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager is qualified, with a breadth of experience in managing children with complex behaviours. He shows a high standard of leadership and management, and is committed to providing excellent standards of care for the children. His attention to detail regarding the children is unquestionably child focused. He actively encourages children's families and friends to visit and is creative in his ideas to sustain family ties.

Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the manager and deputy manager, who are advocates for developing practice. The opportunities for career development through enhanced training at the new local authority social care training academy were described as 'life changing' by one member of staff. Leaders use the academy to

support the development of therapeutic approaches that provide staff with additional skills that are informed by research. Staff value the chance to practice relationship building with managers, who lead by example.

Managers have highly effective quality assurance systems. Managers were praised for their attendance at multi-agency risk and safeguarding meetings. They encourage feedback from parents and families as this helps them to understand their perspective and tailor support. Managers have a forward-thinking understanding of the strengths and opportunities of the home.

Staff receive regular supervision sessions and annual appraisals. They are encouraged to develop new ideas, linking research to their practice. Leaders support staff to contribute to the development of the home. They confidently show staff how to review, plan and update risk assessments as required. Leaders know the strengths of their staff team.

The relationships with partner agencies and stakeholders are very strong. A social worker and a reviewing officer said that the communication with the home could not be better. A team manager said, 'The child's journey has been amazing. It really is down to the home. The improvements she has made in a year are huge.'

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, 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: 2626773

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Farnham House, Six Hills Way, Stevenage SG1 2ST

Responsible individual: Miranda Kumar

Registered manager: Christopher Davis

Inspector

Trudy Potter, Social Care Inspector

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