

2636921

Registered provider: Derbyshire County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and managed by a local authority. It sets out to care for one child or young person. The aim of the home is to offer a short-term placement by creating a nurturing environment in a single occupancy setting, while placement searching can commence. This is to prevent future placements breaking down and to enable children to rebuild their lives.

This is the home's first inspection since it was registered in June 2021.

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 December 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: not applicable

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

This is the home's first inspection.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Staff have a good understanding of children's needs and the particular challenges for children when their placements have broken down. Children often arrive at the home after experiencing one or more placement breakdowns. They are already unsettled, and this is compounded by having to move to the home with very little notice. Staff do all they can to prepare the children and to support them to cope with the situation.

The home allows children space to 'breathe', to reflect on what has happened and prepare for a new placement. They have a chance to talk about their worries and problems in an environment which is relaxed and friendly. There is no pressure from staff, who encourage children to take things at their own pace. Children receive support from a very skilled staff team when they really need it.

Good staffing ratios allow for quality time to be spent with children. Children experience some very good relationships with staff. One child described the staff as 'amazing'.

Staff help children to regain some control over their own lives. Staff listen to them and respond to their needs and wishes. For example, a child recently expressed a wish to change the way the staff were deployed. Her wishes were taken into consideration and relevant changes were made. Children learn that they can and should have a say regarding their own care.

Children are supported to see their family and friends. Recently, a child has been able to have their friend to sleep over on her birthday, which she really enjoyed.

Children receive education during their placement. Children's progress and engagement can be slow at times, especially at the beginning of the placement. However, for some children, this is a significant step if they were previously not accessing education at all. One social worker said, 'It's good that she has started to engage.'

Children enjoy a wide range of activities that meet their needs. For example, children are encouraged to be physically active and they also have fun and create positive memories.

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

Staff are very knowledgeable about how to keep children safe. Anything that has an impact on children's safety and well-being is dealt with swiftly. Staff respond appropriately when children go missing and when concerns about their safety arise. Children go missing less when they move to this home.

Behaviour management is good. Staff are trained in how to physically hold children to keep them safe, but they avoid any form of physical intervention whenever they can. Staff use a range of strategies to manage behaviour first, before they consider holding a child. Staff will only call the police as a last resort. They do not want children to be criminalised and would much rather support the children to learn how to cope with their own anxiety and distress. This approach helps children to deal with their own strong emotions. One child reported, 'I used to get angry, but they have helped me.'

Children learn how to build up trust and how to widen their experiences safely. There are some excellent examples of one-to-one sessions with staff which have helped children to understand risk and how to protect themselves.

Risk assessments are practical and, in some areas, very detailed. However, some aspects of risk have not been included, such as internet safety. Also, there was an isolated example where staff had not followed a child's risk assessment in relation to fire safety. These shortfalls have not had a negative impact on children, but they have the potential to do so if they are not put right.

When staff are recruited, their background is checked to make sure that they are suitable to work with children. However, recruitment records are not well organised. There is the possibility that important information could be overlooked if this is not addressed.

The home does not have sufficient lighting at the front of the property. This is a potential hazard to all who use the building when it is dark.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Managers lead the staff team well and staff and children speak highly of them. Staff referred to managers as being 'very knowledgeable'. A professional also reflected positively about managers and said, 'They treat her like she is their own child.'

The aims of the home are very clear. Leaders and managers make sure that the home does what it sets out to do for children, giving them a place of safety where they can reflect and feel cared about. There is enough flexibility to care for children who present with complex needs in the home, for as long as they need it.

Staff feel supported and talk very positively about the overall team ethos. They say that support from managers and from within the staff team helps them in their role. Staff are trained and able to care for children well. They are well informed about children's needs and work with the most up-to-date information about them.

Staff complete mandatory training, including first aid, safeguarding and behaviour management. Some staff training has been over and above the minimum training required. Recently, staff have attended bespoke training on equine facilitated learning and bushcraft. Staff are very much looking forward to involving children in these new experiences.

Staff speak highly of the children. The way that they work with children demonstrates their caring and highly sensitive approach. Staff see each child as an individual and try their best to help and support them with their differing needs. Staff focus on positive recording so that children know they are cared about, both now and if they look back on any of their records at a later stage.

Managers and staff are dedicated to the children. They have been very committed to them during a difficult year. For example, there have been times during the pandemic when they have isolated in the home with the children, demonstrating their great commitment to them.

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. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(b)) This specifically relates to children's individual risk assessments.	04 January 2022

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that recruitment, supervision and performance management of staff safeguards children and minimises potential risks to them. Leaders and managers should look at the organisation and monitoring of recruitment procedures and records. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)
- The registered person should ensure that the children's home is a nurturing and supportive environment that meets the needs of the children. While this is a domestic, homely environment, there needs to be improved lighting to the exterior of the property for children, staff and visitors. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

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: 2636921

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Derbyshire County Council

Registered provider address: Derbyshire County Council, County Offices, Matlock DE4 3AG

Responsible individual: Patsy Burrows

Registered manager: Christopher Mather

Inspector

Caroline Brailsford, Social Care Inspector

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