

SC030967

Registered provider: Hartlepool Borough 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 provides short breaks and two longer-term residential placements for children with learning disabilities.

One child was living in the home at the time of inspection and four children were staying at the home for short breaks.

The manager registered with Ofsted in March 2021.

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 November 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 8 June 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
08/06/2021	Full	Outstanding
30/07/2019	Full	Outstanding
06/11/2018	Full	Outstanding
11/09/2017	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children thrive at this home, whether they live here or enjoy short breaks. Children are exceptionally well cared for by a dedicated and committed staff team. Their individual needs, risks and vulnerabilities are well known by all of the staff and well documented in their case files and records. The considerable progress they make from their starting points is outstanding.

The staff are creative and adapt their practice to meet each child's individual needs. Practice in the home is based on a total-communication approach, worthy of wider dissemination. Children have personalised communication passports, and communication packs to support them. This approach helps children to develop their verbal and non-verbal communication skills. One child has made considerable progress with their communication and is now using their words. This has been life-changing for them.

Children share meaningful and trusting relationships with all staff and enjoy spending time with them. Children enjoy the care and affection shown to them by staff and instinctively seek out intensive interaction and cuddles from staff. The strong and unconditional relationships children have with staff allow them to feel accepted, build on their self-esteem and enjoy their time at the home.

Children are provided with a wide range of opportunities to make friends and to be part of fun activities. Staff are skilled in using the resources of the home and wider community to provide positive experiences. Children have opportunities that may not have been possible for them without the service. One parent said, '[Child's name] is doing things I never thought would be possible, it is out of this world. They have friends here and can experience having sleepovers with friends, like other children of similar age would.'

Children's introductions are carefully planned and carried out at the child's pace. The manager consults with the child's family and the relevant professionals to gather all the necessary information to prepare for the child's stay. The children are allocated a key member of staff, who supports the child with their introductions to the home. This helps to reduce the children's worries about being away from their family home.

The home's environment is impressive; it is completely child-friendly and welcoming. The home is maintained to an excellent standard. Children's artwork is on display throughout the home, creating a colourful and child-friendly environment. The staff meticulously prepare for each child's stay by ensuring that each child's bedroom is welcoming and personalised with soft furnishings and their individual comforts. This helps the children to feel comfortable and enjoy their stay.

Children enjoy a healthy lifestyle. Staff encourage children to keep active, to learn and understand how to manage their self-care and to eat healthily. Children enjoy plenty of healthy and nutritious meals provided by the home's cook, who is an integral part of the care team. One professional said, 'The cook is wonderful, there is always a warm, nurturing feeling in the home, with home-cooked food on offer for the children. It doesn't feel like a children's home. It's just like a family home.'

Children's educational achievements are admirable. Staff are fully involved in supporting children's educational achievements. Staff regularly spend time with children reading and keeping their minds stimulated with key-work sessions. One professional said, '[Child's name] attendance at education has improved significantly. They could not attend school because they were so anxious, and now they are attending every day. The staff have been consistent and [child's name] has come on leaps and bounds.'

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

The proactive communication with parents, carers and professionals prior, during and after short-break stays contributes to children feeling safe and secure. Staff commitment to children and their outcomes is evident.

The staff have a wealth of knowledge essential to the provision of high-quality care for children with complex needs. Risk assessments and behaviour engagement plans enable staff to understand each child's strengths, risks and vulnerabilities. Children, therefore, feel safe and protected.

The introduction of shift planners evidences the highly effective planning of the day-to-day arrangements for children. High staffing levels and close, supportive supervision help children to explore their environment safely. Children enjoy play and social time with their friends, free from environmental risks.

Children do not go missing from the home. They do not experience bullying, and physical intervention is only used as a last resort. Its use is closely monitored to ensure that it is safely practised. Staff are skilled in de-escalation techniques and using language that is therapeutic and nurturing. Children respond well to this approach and feel calmer. Consequently, incidents of children becoming anxious, frustrated and displaying self-harm behaviours significantly reduce.

Recruitment practice is strong and effective, and ensures that all staff are appropriately checked and vetted prior to looking after children. This helps to ensure that children are not exposed to adults that may harm them.

Staff have taken relevant online course with the Open University to further understand the potential benefits and limitations of technology and the impact on children. As a result, staff are confident and well equipped to support

children to stay safe online. Children in the home are encouraged to use technology safely and appropriately so that they do not miss out on opportunities. Staff educate children about potential risks while online and how to respond. Some children have discovered new ways to share their views, wishes and feelings, which is making an exceptional difference to their lives.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The home is led and managed by an inspirational and dedicated manager who holds high aspirations for all of the children. The manager is supported by a very capable deputy manager and a diverse, stable staff team. The staff share the manager's enthusiasm and ambitions for changing the lives of children. This ethos enables the children to flourish at this home.

Staff morale is high. Staff are completely invested in the home's approach to care, and support children to build resilience, enjoy learning and feel valued. Although they are professionals, staff take immense pride in children's progress and achievements and treat children with positive unconditional regard. One staff member said, 'It is amazing to work here. Seeing the children blossoming and growing in confidence is extremely rewarding.'

There have been minimal changes to the staff team since the last inspection, which is testament to the support, training and guidance that staff receive. This provides familiarity for the children and continuity of care.

Team meetings go beyond talking about the business of the day. The manager will disseminate learning from research, and will have topical discussions with her staff team on a range of relevant subjects. Staff describe their manager as 'amazing' and say that she will always take time out of her schedule to listen to and advise them. These attributes promote a well-balanced and skilled workforce and benefit the children.

Feedback from professionals is consistently excellent and highlights the positive difference that staying in this home makes for children. One professional said, 'We are so proud to have [name of home] in our town. The town is proud to have this outstanding resource for our children.'

Staff receive regular, purposeful supervision, which is underpinned by the therapeutic model used in the home. Staff feel that the process is empowering and supportive and that their health and well-being are valued. Staff said that they can reflect on their practice. The manager promotes continuous professional development to inform practice and improve the lives of children.

The manager ensures that new staff receive an induction and training programme that is relevant to the individual needs of the children. Staff say they instantly feel empowered and undertake the role of champion with specific areas of focus. One staff member delivers ASDAN, and children who stay at the home

are provided with opportunities to achieve accredited awards. As a result, children become physically, emotionally and socially healthier.

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: SC030967

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Hartlepool Borough Council

Registered provider address: Civic Centre, Victoria Road, Hartlepool TS24 8AY

Responsible individual: Jane Young

Registered manager: Natasha Salmon

Inspector

Claire Webster, Social Care Inspector

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