

SC033120

Registered provider: Luton Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home provides short-break care and accommodation for up to five children who have learning disabilities and/or physical disabilities and/or sensory impairment. A local authority owns and operates this setting.

Inspection dates: 12 to 13 December 2017

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 **good**

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

Date of last inspection: 10 March 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None.

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- The managers skilfully coordinate the children's respite care to ensure that the children get the best from their stays.
- The children's families learn from the experiences that the children have when they are with the staff. This learning encourages the families to try similar activities with their children.
- The staff set aspirational targets that enable the children to develop varying degrees of independence.
- Parents speak positively about the care that their children receive from the staff.
- Parents say that that the home provides their family with a 'lifeline' and that they have trust in the staff team.
- The staff are able to skilfully identify the children's changing moods and behaviours. They staff subtly communicate the meaning of these behaviours to others, such as visitors, who may be unaware.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
19/07/2016	Full	Good
15/02/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
05/10/2015	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Many of the children who have respite stays have been using the service for several years. The children receive a highly personalised, tailored service that meets their needs fully.

The managers skilfully coordinate the children's respite care to ensure that the children get the best from their stays. New children are encouraged to have a number of tea visits before they commence overnight stays. Some parents described being initially resistant to their children having respite stays, but say that they were soon reassured that their children were having fun and enjoying their stays. One parent said that, because they have seen how the home has successfully taken their child out, they have felt more confident in doing so as a family. This has enabled the child to have experiences with his family members that he would not have had otherwise.

The children enjoy activities in the community, and they have participated in community events to help raise funds for local causes. The staff are keen to ensure that the children have a wide range of opportunities and experiences. They say that they want these opportunities to reflect those that the children would automatically experience if they were attending a mainstream school and activities.

The managers and the staff speak fondly to and about the children. Their interactions with the children are warm and humorous, yet boundaried. These interactions provide the children with clear expectations. Each child has individualised targets that they are working towards. These targets are usually set in conjunction with their family members and school staff. The targets include things that others may take for granted, such as knowing how to put their socks and shoes on. The children's targets are often aspirational, and are reviewed periodically. The ongoing review of these targets enables the children to develop varying degrees of independence and allows them, their families and the staff to easily identify the progress that the children are making.

The staff use methods such as social stories and 'now and next' boards to help the children to have some choice in their activities during their time at the home. Consequently, the children are fully involved in the plans for their stays. The children are supported and encouraged to voice their opinions. A current example of this is the staff skilfully supporting a child to write a letter himself when he said that he wished to complain to the transport department following repeated episodes of driver lateness.

The health needs of the children having stays are becoming more complex. The staff have adapted and undertaken specialised training, such as in managing epilepsy and nasal feeding and gastrostomy training. The staff work closely with the children, their families and other professionals to ensure that the children's emotional and physical health needs are met.

Parents speak positively about the care that their children receive from the staff. A

parent said that the home provides their family with a 'lifeline'. Other parents also described the positive effect that the stays have on their children and on their whole family.

The staff have positive relationships with the staff at the children's schools. Good partnership working enables the children to make the transition from one setting to another smoothly. This positive communication is also evident in the children's transition to adult services.

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

The location risk assessment is well detailed and includes a new potential risk in the area. This risk is scheduled to be reviewed regularly over the coming months. The children's risk assessments are updated at set intervals, and sooner if any new behaviour or change occurs.

The staff, who know the children well, use their shift handovers to discuss current issues and updates for each child. These ongoing conversations and reviews ensure that the children are safely cared for. The staff skilfully communicate any known risks to visitors in a subtle way that enables the visitor to be aware, yet without assuming that the child's reaction will be negative.

The staff have developed personalised behaviour management plans for each of the children. The staff are trained in physical intervention, but only use it in very extreme circumstances. The staff skilfully use de-escalation and diversion techniques. No physical interventions have occurred in this inspection period.

Children do not go missing from this home or when out with the staff. There is readily accessible information that can be provided to the police, should such an incident occur. The children benefit from pictorial information advising them how to stay safe. Topics covered include personal boundaries and what to do if they become lost when out with the staff, family members or school staff.

The staff have undergone training that helps them to identify and manage the risks associated with child sexual exploitation and radicalisation. The staff regularly complete body maps of the children, and include detailed description of any marks or bruises. These body maps are uploaded onto the recording system, which enables them to be shared immediately with the children's social workers. This sharing of information prevents any undue delay in identifying causes of concerns.

When any safeguarding issues or concerns arise, the staff work closely with other professionals to ensure that these are shared. The staff participate in any planning or meetings that occur in response to safeguarding concerns. The home's designated person for safeguarding matters oversees any related correspondence and shares information with the child's key worker. This approach enables the staff to remain alert and to signpost children or families to any additional support or advocacy services that they may require.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager holds a relevant level 4 qualification. She has worked at the home for several years. The deputy manager has also worked at the home for a number of years. Their positive working partnership provides the home with consistent leadership. The managers have high expectations of the children, and they work closely with the staff to ensure that the children continually receive a high-quality service. The managers oversee the key working and planning for the children.

The staff describe the managers as open and approachable. The staff say that they find their supervision and appraisals sessions helpful. They confidently state that, if they have any concerns or worries, they do not have to wait until they have supervision because they benefit from ongoing informal conversations.

The managers conduct regular file audits and use this information, together with that of the monthly independent visitor, to raise standards at the home. The managers are aware of the home's strengths and areas in which they are seeking to develop the service. These areas of development are linked to meeting the needs of children who are already having stays and those who are not yet able to use the service.

At the last inspection, three recommendations were made. These have been addressed, as follows:

- The home's recruitment and employment practices now include ensuring that telephone verification of references is recorded, and that the staff are receiving supervision at the frequency specified in the home's supervision policy.
- The home is now actively seeking feedback from parents and professionals and incorporating this into shaping the service.
- The independent visitor's reports detail the contact made/attempts to make contact with professionals from the placing authority.

The home produces a newsletter for the children, their families and professionals. The publication keeps everyone informed of the events that have occurred at the home, staffing updates and the priorities for the home in the coming six months.

Equality and diversity are reflected in the make-up of the staff team and in the individualised way that the children's needs are met. An example is a staff member recording excerpts of the Quran for a child whose parents wanted it read to their child during each stay as part of the bedtime routine.

Parents speak positively about the care that their children receive. They say that the home provides the support that they need as a family and enables them to spend time as a family. One parent said that she can totally relax, knowing that her child is at the home, and that there is no one else whom she trusts with her child. External professionals were full of praise for the home and its adaptive way of meeting the children's needs. During the course of the inspection, the deputy manager was skilful

in her approach to a parent who was unhappy that the home could not provide emergency care outside of the core hours. The deputy manager was observed making numerous attempts to try to provide alternative arrangements and to ease the parent's disappointment.

There is clear evidence detailing the flexible and creative coordination between the home, parents and professionals to facilitate other children having extended stays. This flexible approach allows the children to be supported during their lengthened stays and enables the families to attend family events or to have a holiday. A social worker described the managers as having 'a solution-focused approach to a family's concerns'.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: SC033120

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Luton Borough Council, Town Hall, George Street,
Luton LU1 2BQ

Responsible individual: Joanne Fisher

Registered manager: Christine Ali

Inspector

Sonia Hay, 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 looked after children, 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.

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, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at 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
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2018