

SC036186

Registered provider: Derbyshire County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

A local authority operates this children's home. It is a short-break service for disabled children. It provides care for up to eight children who have a learning disability, a physical disability and/or a sensory impairment.

The registered manager is qualified and experienced and is supported by two qualified and experienced deputy managers.

Inspection dates: 5 to 6 March 2024

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: 14 March 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: Outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: None

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/03/2023	Full	Outstanding
11/01/2022	Full	Outstanding
21/10/2019	Full	Good
04/10/2018	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

This short break service delivers exceptional consistent care to each child that stays here. Staff know the children incredibly well. Meticulous planning for each stay adds considerably to children's experiences, progress, and development. Children love to visit and have lots of fun whilst here. This is achieved through the provision of a wide range of additional experiences, some of which could not be achieved elsewhere. This provides disabled children with opportunities to develop their independence and meet other children in a safe environment.

Support to families is impressive. The service goes above and beyond to help those that are experiencing crisis. Staff offer professional advice and guidance to parents who need it, both during a child's stay and once they have returned home. One family has received expert training in the safe use of physical restraint in their own home, by staff members who are accredited instructors. A parent told the inspector, 'I have been around disabled services all my life, this is the best I have ever seen'. This support has enabled a family to remain together and prevented a child entering residential care.

Staff understand children's methods of communication. Those who communicate non-verbally have consistent support with alternative systems so that they can participate fully in their short break visit. Staff use signs, symbols, and pictures with children confidently to ensure their voice is heard. Staff recognise that children communicate through their behaviour and are attuned to changes that could indicate upset or distress for each child.

Children receiving short breaks here have complex health and care needs. These are accurately identified and evaluated within care plans and risk assessments. The service's arrangements for managing children's medication and access to healthcare services are excellent. Staff regularly liaise with health professionals to ensure children's lifelong conditions are managed in a safe and effective way. Specialist help is sourced where needed, including consultation with speech & language therapists, occupational therapists, and sensory experts. This promotes good health for disabled children and promotes their independence wherever possible.

This service provides families with a vital opportunity to rest from their caring responsibilities. Feedback from those who access the service is overwhelmingly positive. Families shared with the inspector that the service becomes part of their family, with many describing it as their lifeline. Parents stress that without the service, they would feel unable to cope with one saying, 'I am devastated that at the age of eighteen, our child will no longer have this care, we would let her stay forever if we could'.

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

This is a service that embeds the principle that disabled children are children first. Staff are acutely aware that children with disabilities and complex health needs are some of the most vulnerable. There is a sense of privilege throughout the team at the opportunity to care for, and safeguard, those children who need it the most. This has created an exemplary safeguarding culture throughout the service.

Staff are clear about significant risks posed to individual children. Adult ratios are carefully managed to ensure children who require constant supervision always have this. Additional night-time monitoring is made available to children who need this during their stays. The cost of such additional staffing and resources is not used as a barrier to children's access to short breaks.

One child that visits the service is diagnosed with pica. Staff have used expert guidance from psychologists and paediatricians to inform their care planning. The knowledge and expertise of the child's parents have been carefully integrated into the child's plans, recognising these are the people who know the child best. The child's keyworker has used the learning from a published article to educate the team about this subject. Careful preparation is made for each stay to ensure dangerous pica items which may cause an immediate risk of serious harm or death are removed or restricted. Staff have worked hard to reduce such risks through developing new approaches such as redirecting, restricting access to harmful pica items, promoting self-soothing behaviour, and replacing pica items with similar, safe alternatives.

Significant events are low in number and always well managed. There are detailed records of all incidents and the actions taken. Staff are trained and skilled in de-escalation, meaning that physical interventions are rarely used. When restraint is used managers review and reflect on all incidents as a learning opportunity. Two members of the staff team are accredited restraint instructors, their knowledge and expertise are a real strength of the service.

Staff undertake a broad range of good-quality training in safeguarding matters. There is excellent communication with safeguarding partners in the local authority. Leaders are acutely aware of the additional safeguarding vulnerabilities for disabled children and what those inherent risk factors may look like. Learning from research is a strength of the leadership team and is shared throughout the service through discussions, supervision sessions, team meetings, handovers, and upskilling exercises. Staff understand the importance of an open safeguarding culture and as a result know how to recognise, report and act on any safeguarding concerns that they may have.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The leadership team consists of a registered manager and two deputy managers. They are all inspirational and confident leaders. They lead by example, and between them have decades of experience to share. Managers are ambitious for the children in their care and have become powerful advocates for disabled children. The impact this service has on children and families is quite remarkable, given they see most children only once or twice per week.

In recent years the leadership team has created a culture of positivity. Children access the service for many years throughout their childhood, and staff often work here for long periods of time. The impact of this provision on children is far reaching and impacts positively on their wider family life.

In this short break service, there are effective relationships with parents so that they feel confident leaving their children for their stay. Parents feel involved in the running of the service and consider it a part of their wider family. Families are encouraged to share their views regularly as part of the manager's commitment to learning. Staff are always accessible and keep parents informed about their children's stay each week through phone calls, text messages, photographs and monthly summary reports. Staff collate beautiful memory albums for children to share with their families once their stays come to an end.

Staff hold managers in high regard. They are described as being some of the best leaders staff have ever worked for. Staff speak positively about managers offering support with both work matters and those that are more personal. The inspector was told of, and was able to observe, an 'open door policy' with leaders who are welcoming of staff feedback and ideas. There have been very few departures from the staff team and many have worked here for years. This has contributed to high morale and dedication throughout the service.

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: SC036186

Provision sub-type: Children's home

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

Responsible individual: Luke Impey

Registered manager: Mark Nichol

Inspector

Rachael Sprigg, social care inspector

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