

SC042978

Registered provider: Lincolnshire County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned by a local authority. It provides short breaks for children with learning and physical disabilities. It may only provide care for up to five children at a time. The service currently provides short breaks for 52 children at varying times.

The registered manager is suitably qualified and experienced.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 November 2021

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	good
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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: 6 January 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/01/2020	Full	Outstanding
09/10/2018	Full	Outstanding
20/09/2017	Full	Outstanding
28/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children receive outstanding care from a staff team who display warmth and provide nurturing, skilled care. Staff know the children exceptionally well. They are skilful in communicating with the children. They adapt their care practice to meet the children's individual needs. Children are treated with dignity, respect and as individuals. Staff support children to develop communication and independence skills. For some children, there has been notable improvement in their communication from when they started receiving breaks at this service.

Meticulous planning processes mean that the children's stays are specifically tailored to their needs. Planning considers children's health and support needs, friendship groups and the views and wishes of families. This process also considers the compatibility of the children living together and opportunities for promoting shared activities. For some children, this means that they have started to build friendship groups, which enhances their experiences even further.

Children have opportunities to participate in a wide range of activities in the local community. Although COVID-19 restrictions have had an impact, staff have been enthusiastic in creating additional activities in the home. These activities have been designed to provide sensory enrichment and are inclusive for all children. This has helped some children to further develop their independence skills. For example, children have contributed to a sensory garden and in planting and growing vegetables.

The home is warm and welcoming. There is a wide range of photos of children participating in activities and events. Bedrooms are personalised daily, to meet the needs of the child who is staying overnight, taking into consideration their individual tastes and needs. The communal areas are also tailored to the children staying at the home. This means children are provided with their preferred toys and personal items, which supports them to feel settled overnight.

Staff work well with parents in implementing detailed care plans. These plans accurately reflect the children being cared for. Plans are kept under review and parents and professionals are regularly consulted to ensure information remains accurate. For one child, observations and analysis of data by the home, which was shared with external professionals and the family, led to changes in their medication. Consequently, this has led to a significant reduction in difficult behaviour being displayed.

Before any child stays at the home for the first time, there is a detailed induction process. This includes visits to the home by the child and family. Staff also visit the child and their family. This helps to inform plans and supports staff to start to build relationships with family members and children before overnight stays start.

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

Parents are confident that their children are safe. Detailed and individualised risk assessments mean staff know and understand the children's vulnerabilities and how best to support their needs and safeguard them. Staff receive specialist training to help them manage complex needs and de-escalate more challenging behaviour.

There is a strong emphasis on safeguarding. Staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities. Accidents, injuries and any unexplained marks or bruises are clearly documented, and explanations obtained from parents and professionals. There is a clear system in place for the management of concerns, allegations and complaints.

Recruitment processes are designed to prevent unsuitable people from working at the home. For example, the manager was not satisfied recently with suitability checks for temporary staff and has referred this back to the recruitment agency. This provides consistency of care for the children and minimises the risk of unsuitable people working at the home.

Health and safety is a priority in the home and regular checks are undertaken to ensure the home remains a safe environment. All the children have personal evacuation plans. Staff regularly review safe evacuation from the building through scenarios and fire drills. Specialist equipment is regularly serviced and checked for safety.

Incidents where physical restraint may be required are rare. When these incidents have occurred, they have been appropriate and meant that children and others have been kept safe. However, staff and children have not consistently had opportunities to debrief and reflect on the incidents. This prevents staff from learning from incidents, and for children to communicate their views. Management oversight and evaluation of the use of restraint has not consistently happened in a timely way.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The manager in the home is inspirational, knowledgeable and focused on providing children with exceptional care. The manager is passionate about leading and managing a home where child-focused practice is at the centre of everything they do. The manager is well supported by a capable assistant manager and senior team. The manager has good oversight of the home, its strengths and weaknesses and has clear plans for ongoing development and improvement.

When shortfalls or concerns have arisen, the manager has taken swift action in response. They have undertaken lessons learned exercises to identify where improvements can be made and have made changes in response. This has led to new documents and processes being implemented to further support staff.

Staff benefit from regular supervision, team meetings and appraisals. These give staff opportunities to reflect on and review their working practice, and identify areas

for further training and development to keep their knowledge and skills up to date. Staff are supported and encouraged to develop their skills and their roles to improve the quality of care provided to children.

Staff are actively involved in the development of the service and contribute to the overall development plan. The manager uses staff skills and interests to develop activities for the children and staff respond enthusiastically to this. Staff are invested in the home and the children and want to provide positive experiences and outcomes.

All staff have completed mandatory training in key areas, such as safeguarding and how to keep the home safe and free from hazards. Most staff have completed the necessary qualification for working with children. Staff also undertake a wide range of training specific to the individual needs of the children accessing the service. Additional training is provided by external health specialists and this ensures staff are competent to manage children's health needs, which are sometimes complex.

The home's preferred model of care is well embedded in practice and underpins all the work that staff undertake with children in the home. Staff receive training and guidance to ensure work being done is meaningful and purposeful.

Multi-agency working and communication are key strengths. Staff at the home attend children's multi-disciplinary meetings, contributing their insights into the children's progress and care. The reports completed by staff are meaningful and detailed. The manager has worked closely with other professionals in reviewing children's care plans and in contributing useful observations to support changes that have benefited children. External professionals speak highly of the manager and the high standards of care provided.

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 registered person must ensure that— within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes— the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(vii)(b)(i)(ii)) This specifically relates to management oversight of the use of restraint, staff and child debriefs and evaluation of incidents involving the use of restraint.	1 January 2022

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: SC042978

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Lincolnshire County Council

Registered provider address: County Offices, Newland, Lincoln, Lincolnshire LN1 1YL

Responsible individual: Janice Spencer

Registered manager: Margaret Nowland

Inspector

Sarah Orriss, Social Care Inspector

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