

SC042978

Registered provider: Lincolnshire County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority children's home provides short breaks for up to five children who have learning disabilities and/or physical disabilities.

There is a well-established, suitably qualified and experienced registered manager in post.

Inspection dates: 9 to 10 October 2018

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: 20 September 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
20/09/2017	Full	Outstanding
28/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
15/11/2016	Full	Outstanding
11/01/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children love coming to this home for their short breaks. They enjoy the various activities, make excellent progress and have exceptionally positive experiences. The booking and planning of the short breaks are instrumental in this. These arrangements are exceptionally well thought out and take into account the requests of parents, school events, the dynamics of the group, friendships, bedrooms and equipment. The staff rota is then drawn up to take account of, as far as possible, the skills of and relationships with staff. A parent said: 'I love how they prepare for my son coming, so he and I feel special. They think about what my son likes and puts his things out for him.'

Staff know the children exceptionally well. Care plans are detailed and thorough and ensure that the complex and diverse needs of the children are fully met. These plans are drawn up during the planning stage of the short breaks in conjunction with the families and other professionals. Consequently, the care provided is highly individualised and meets the children's needs very well. A parent said: 'Staff are brilliant with [my child].'

All activities are focused on the wishes of each child. A parent said: 'They plan things around his interests. It's what he wants to do.' For example, children go to museums, parks, the cinema, bowling, engage in an arts project and visit the seaside. They play games and music at the home. One social worker commented that a child had 'blossomed' as a result of his short breaks. When asked what was good about this home, a child said: 'I have lots of fun, do great activities, get to spend time with my peers and making new friends, and get to develop my independence away from Mum and Dad.'

Children are at the heart of this service. Their wishes and feelings are paramount, and their voice is listened to extremely well. The social pedagogy used by the home has enhanced this, as this theoretical model focuses on the child and their expressed wishes. It has added focus and structure to an already child-focused service. An independent advocate visits the home on a monthly basis to provide an additional avenue to support this theoretical model. The advocacy service has also been accessed to good effect to provide evidence of the child's voice when there have been conflicting views about what is in the child's best interest.

Creativity, flexibility, a child-centred philosophy and a 'can-do' attitude ensure that children's needs are met exceptionally well. There are many examples of this home using its resources in ways that are unusual in order to meet the child's needs. Other professionals' comments include: 'Staff go the extra mile' and 'Staff go above and beyond.' For example, the home has offered its outside room as a temporary school to enable a child who cannot cope currently with going into his school to access education. This has been so successful that the school is prepared to extend the teaching assistant's hours.

If families are struggling, the home is able to offer outreach support. Staff have supported children while they have been in hospital to provide a familiar face for the child and support to the hospital staff. Staff are also providing transport to school for one child because the arrangements in place were not suitable. The education provider

said of this: 'They were instrumental in making life a lot happier and more settled for this child and made a real difference. He is doing much better in school as a result.'

Children spend most of their time at home with their families. However, they make excellent progress as a result of their short breaks because the targets in their education, health and care plan are linked to the targets they have during their short breaks. This ensures that these targets are worked on consistently. Children make significant progress in relation to developing their independence skills, socialising with other people and trying new experiences. This helps them become more confident. All achievements are celebrated. There are displays of photographs throughout the home, certificates and a tree of achievement. This promotes children's self-esteem as well as providing a visual reminder of what they have done.

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

High staffing levels, competent and knowledgeable staff, comprehensive risk assessments and effective managerial oversight provide children with a high degree of protection from harm. The signs of safety model underpins safeguarding practice and is used to good effect.

The manager and staff have an excellent understanding of their roles and responsibilities in relation to keeping children safe from harm and they take this very seriously. They are very aware of the additional vulnerabilities of children who have disabilities or who are non-verbal. Staff explore possible concerns rather than accepting things at face value. The safeguarding checklist provides a highly effective decision-making tool when there are any safeguarding concerns. Good information-sharing with children's social care ensures that relevant professionals are kept informed and can take appropriate action.

Children are kept as safe as possible because risk is very well assessed, documented and regularly reviewed. This provides staff with clear written guidance that enables them to care for and support children in a way that enables them to have a full and active life within safe parameters.

Behaviour is managed exceptionally well. Staff know the children well and they have detailed and clear written guidance that provides them with information about known triggers and strategies to use to de-escalate situations. There have been only eight instances of physical intervention in the last year, which is testament to the successful implementation of the behaviour management plans. The records of these physical interventions are subject to managerial oversight and staff are encouraged to engage in discussion to improve practice. Children's behaviour improves as a result of consistent structures and routines.

Staff recruitment is taken extremely seriously and there are very robust systems to ensure that only suitable and safe people are able to work at this home. This includes agency staff. Any queries are thoroughly explored, such as gaps in employment or issues in references.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The home is led and managed exceptionally well by an extremely committed manager,

who demonstrates real pride and passion in providing the best possible service for children. She is well supported by her skilled and committed management team. Together, they inspire and support the staff to have high aspirations for the children who use the service.

Staff demonstrate a high level of competence and pride in their work. They are well trained, well supported and they are encouraged to develop their interests and expertise through delegated responsibilities. When practice needs to improve, this is addressed in a supportive way.

Monitoring is excellent and leads to improved practice. The manager has a number of systems to ensure that she has an excellent knowledge of the service and the children using the service. The six-monthly monitoring reports are insightful and analytical, while maintaining a strong focus on the children's progress and experience. The development plan is a working document that is constantly reviewed and updated. The manager's management style ensures that staff are part of the process of improvement. Complaints and comments are always taken seriously and investigated thoroughly so that the manager and staff can learn and improve. Feedback from stakeholders is sought, welcomed and acted on.

This home is very well thought of by other professionals. Social workers are keen to use the expertise of the staff to help them work with families and children. One social worker said: 'They are sharing their ideas, so we can improve our practice and help us develop as a social work team. We can learn a lot from them.' The manager has also disseminated some of the ideas and practices of this home at professional conferences.

Partnership working is exceptional. One stakeholder commented: 'They were key in unlocking health and social care. They have been the conduit, the oil in the wheel.' Another said: 'They have bent over backwards and been absolutely brilliant. I can't fault them.' Communication and information-sharing are excellent. This promotes the provision of consistent and effective care and support. However, the child's welfare is at the centre of the home's practice and the manager is not afraid to challenge other professionals when there are shortfalls that have an impact on children's welfare. She has done this recently and this has had a significantly positive impact on the child's well-being. Communication with parents is also very good. Staff show a great deal of empathy and respect to parents and take their views very seriously.

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 differences 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: SC042978

Provision sub-type: Children's home

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

Responsible individual: Janice Spencer

Registered manager: Margaret Nowland

Inspector:

Ros Chapman: social care regulatory inspector

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