

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	15/11/2016
Unique reference number	SC042978
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Lincolnshire County Council
Registered provider address	Lincolnshire County Council, County Offices, Newland, Lincoln, LN1 1YL.

Responsible individual	Janice Spencer
Registered manager	Margaret Nowland
Inspector	Caroline Brailsford

Inspection date	15/11/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Improved effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Outstanding
The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the home contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help, protection and care.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding

SC042978

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is outstanding because:

- This home is not just a short break for young people. It positively affects their life in many ways, particularly in relation to their health, behaviour and confidence.
- Young people with complex healthcare needs are particularly well cared for. Staff are highly skilled and constantly look for ways to make the young people healthier, happier and more comfortable.
- Young people take part in activities that they would not normally experience. This opens up new opportunities and areas of interest which will be of great benefit to them in their future life. They have the chance to experience success, which helps them to feel proud.
- Staff at every level are kind, caring and extremely inspirational in their approach. They are highly creative and go the extra mile for young people. Their practice is so good that it warrants sharing with the wider sector.
- There is a tremendously open, reflective and learning environment. Staff and managers never stop seeking to find better ways to protect young people.
- Young people and their families receive the help that they need to keep their family together.
- Joint working with other relevant professionals is managed extremely well. Other professionals consistently praise the service for the quality of communication.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is registered to provide short breaks for up to five children and young people at any one time. It is owned and run by the local authority. The home provides short breaks for children and young people with learning disabilities and physical disabilities.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/01/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
22/09/2015	Full	Outstanding
17/03/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
24/11/2014	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Outstanding
Short breaks have a very positive impact on the young people who use this service and their families. One parent said: 'they are an absolute life saver'. Young people grow in confidence and self-esteem. They develop a wealth of skills that they can use now and in the future. For example, they learn how to regulate their own behaviour and how to use their own methods of communication so that they are better understood. Staff completely understand that young people communicate through their behaviours. Their extremely positive approach guarantees that young people are highly respected and listened to. Young people's characteristics and personality are always cherished, whatever their behaviour. This very positive ethos helps them to feel good about themselves. There are extremely good links with healthcare professionals, schools, parents and carers to ensure a highly consistent approach. Staff know that they can help young people to make excellent progress. They actively persuade young people and parents to access the facility, because they know that they can make a very positive difference to young people's lives. Young people's health needs are extremely well met and there is excellent joint working with the health authority. A designated nurse works with staff to ensure that they are well equipped and highly confident to look after young people with complex conditions. Excellent care planning supports staff to care for young people very well. Care plans set detailed and aspirational objectives. Young people often make excellent progress in achieving their targets, particularly in relation to communication and behaviour. Their progress assists them in other aspects of their life, not just during their short break. For example, one young person with very complex healthcare needs is being assisted to develop a means of communicating through facial expression. This will give them more control over their life, because they will be able to make choices more easily. Young people learn that staff really want to listen to them. This fills them with confidence. Managers ensure that no health condition or disability limits access to a short break. In addition, staff ensure that no condition limits young people's access to activities and outings. Young people enjoy high-quality leisure activities. These are facilitated by staff, who go to tremendous lengths to ensure that young people are safe while having a great time. Parents praise staff for this. Their comments include: 'It is enhancing their life overall.' Young people continue to attend their own school during their short break. Good multi-agency working promotes their educational progress. Staff regularly go to the	

children's schools to discuss their care and formulate a consistent approach. This is particularly helpful to young people who are learning how to self-regulate their behaviour.

The home actively promotes positive endings. Young people take many photographs and mementos with them when they leave. This helps them to have fond memories of their short break. Staff continue to keep in touch with some young people, when this is appropriate. Young people look forward to this after they have left. The very positive relationships that young people make with staff have the potential to be long lasting. Young people know that staff really care about them, and this helps them to feel valued. One young person, who recently had an extended stay, arrived at the home in crisis and left having become happier and more confident. He was helped to gain control of his life in a very positive way, preparing him for the next stage in his life. Staff were justifiably very proud of their work and of the young person. One described the experience as a 'fantastic turnaround'.

Staff and managers understand that some disabled young people find transition incredibly difficult. They are particularly sensitive when young people are taking their first short break at the service. A considerable amount of time is taken to ensure that the young person's comfort, confidence and communication are fully considered before their first stay. Staff 'go the extra mile' to make sure that young people feel at ease. This reduces anxiety and ensures that young people are as settled and comfortable as possible.

Young people develop skills that they can use to become more independent in the future. For example, one young person told the inspector about learning to cross the road, and another regularly locks the windows and doors at night with the staff to learn about keeping themselves safe. One parent reported that their child is much better prepared for adulthood as a result of their short breaks.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding
Managers promote a very open safeguarding culture that fully encourages honesty and transparency. Staff know that it is their job to speak up for young people. There is a team ethos of reflection, and staff actively share their own learning with the rest of the team. This promotes excellent safeguarding practice and protects the young people from abuse or exploitation. Staff are completely aware of the additional vulnerability of disabled children in residential care. Each young person is extremely well protected by the vigilant monitoring of his or her mood. Any marks or bumps, however small, are noted and unfailingly followed up by discussions with parents and social workers. This means that very well-informed decisions are made at the earliest opportunity.	

High-quality risk assessment helps to protect young people. Risk assessments are comprehensive and detailed. For example, there are photographs of how a young person should be positioned in their particular equipment and maps of where they should sit in the minibus. This level of detail reduces the risk of harm. Staff spend time discussing and thinking about every eventuality to minimise risk. Staff always consider that safety can be further improved. They make adjustments to risk assessments so that young people become safer, over time.

A highly creative approach to behaviour management ensures young people's safety at all times. Risks to individuals and to others are fully considered. Staff try to see the overall picture and to understand the reasons for the behaviour. The very positive approach ensures that physical intervention is kept to a minimum. Young people's safety, well-being and dignity are always at the centre of staff practice. One social worker said, 'they have really, really tried, and never give up trying'.

New members of staff are robustly vetted to reduce the risk that young people are exposed to unsuitable adults. However, when agency staff are used, a commissioned organisation undertakes vetting and audits of recruitment files for agency workers on behalf of the local authority and registered manager. This means that it is difficult for her to obtain full details of the checks that have been undertaken. She is aware that it is difficult to see a clear picture of the suitability of these staff and so already has plans in place to improve monitoring in this area.

Some young people's health conditions mean that their health could quickly deteriorate. One health professional was very clear about the staff's expertise in this area. They said: 'Practice is beyond anything that I have ever seen.' Young people are safe in the hands of staff who are highly skilled, trained and knowledgeable about their needs.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding
The manager is registered with Ofsted and is suitably qualified. She is very skilled and experienced. A very effective management team supports her. The managers work extremely well together to champion young people's progress, whatever their disability. They are highly ambitious for young people. This approach influences young people's lives overall, particularly with regard to their behaviour and the development of their confidence. Managers are happy to work over and above their contracted hours if young people or staff need their support. This approach is filtered down to staff and young people, ensuring that there are no limits to young people's achievements. One parent said that managers 'always keep on top of everything; they are great'.	

There is a stable staff team, many of whom have worked at the service for a number of years. There have been some vacancies recently, but staff turnover has not impacted on the quality of care. This is testament to the managers and staff who work hard to cover the shifts. The use of agency staff has been kept to a minimum and they always supplement the home's core staff. The already high staffing levels are sometimes increased further to reflect young people's changing and complex needs. Staff feel very well supported in their role and continue to be highly motivated by young people's progress.

Managers lead an approach in which everyone is expected to reflect on their own practice and make continual improvements. This means that the quality of care provided to young people is always improving. Team meetings are used to scrutinise the progress of young people. Every opportunity is taken to improve young people's experiences. Development planning is focused on improving young people's progress and addressing any barriers that they face.

Staff are very well trained. The list of their mandatory training grows all the time, as managers seek to improve the team's knowledge and skills continually. Because children and young people have complex and changing needs, bespoke training is commissioned and provided. This ensures the momentum of progress in all areas of the home's work.

The organisation has employed an independent person to visit the home each month to assess how the home is functioning. These visits are thorough and robust, further reflecting the ethos of continuous improvement. The manager's own formal monitoring is always centred on young people and their needs. Her reports are highly reflective of this approach, meticulously detailing how young people benefit from the service and capturing their progress.

Managers work well with other agencies and professionals to ensure that young people make excellent progress in all areas of their development. Comments from professionals about the home's communication with them include, 'the quality of information and reports is superb'. Leaders also ensure that they respond to any concerns as soon as possible, so that families can continue to feel very positive about the service. Young people are always listened to, whatever their disability or communication method, and some have learned how to gain an element of control over their own life in a positive way. They will be able to use this learning in their future.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place, however, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, 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 who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service 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'.

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