

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	22/09/2015
Unique reference number	SC042978
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Lincolnshire County Council
Registered person address	Lincolnshire County Council, County Offices, Newland, LINCOLN, LN1 1YL

Responsible individual	Janice Spencer
Registered manager	Margaret Nowland
Inspector	Tracy Murty

Inspection date	22/09/2015
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 exceeds 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:

- Children develop significantly in relation to their confidence, social skills and experiences through accessing short breaks at this home. Parents and involved agencies report exceptionally high levels of satisfaction at the significant progress children make and in their improved outcomes.
- Staff work extremely closely with education providers during a child's stay at the home. They ensure that educational targets for each child are reflected in their short break care plan and work to increase the skills and independence of each child. Staff also proactively support parents and carers by attending all relevant meetings with them and in planning for the transition of their children to adult services.
- Children have all of their complex health needs exceptionally well met by a highly competent and well trained staff team. Bespoke training on health care needs enables the staff team to meet children's complex health needs to an exceptionally high standard. Medication administration and storage is robust and undertaken by highly trained and efficient staff. Parents report very high levels of satisfaction in how well their children's health care needs are met at this home.
- Children enjoy a wide range of exciting and fun activities during their short break stays. They have opportunities to take part in activities which they may not be able to access otherwise. The staff team really promotes the use of local resources and facilities to ensure the full engagement and participation of children in the local community. This promotes a real and positive sense of belonging and inclusion for children.
- Staff and managers constantly strive to improve their own skills and expertise. Individual staff members take on lead roles within the home, in relation to such areas as bookings for short breaks, staff rotas, continual professional development and child sexual exploitation. This promotes a highly competent and confident staff team. They feel highly supported and respected by managers and display an admirable dedication and commitment to the children they care for.
- The home is run and overseen by a highly competent, efficient and skilled registered manager, supported by an equally competent and committed deputy manager. The management team works extremely well together to oversee the smooth, highly efficient and effective running of this home. Managers and staff constantly strive to improve the services they provide and in doing so, have significantly improved the experiences and outcomes for those children who access this service.

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
17/03/2015	Interim	Improved Effectiveness
24/11/2014	Full	Outstanding
24/03/2014	Interim	Good Progress
23/01/2014	Full	Outstanding

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Outstanding
Children have highly enjoyable and positive stays in this short break service. They benefit from being cared for by a highly dedicated and committed staff team. Parents report very high levels of satisfaction and happiness at the quality of care provided to them during their stays. One parent stated: 'My child always smiles when arriving there, they just want me to leave when I drop them off, so they can enjoy their time there!' Staff encourage all children to take part in a wide range of stimulating and exciting activities during their stays. Activities are tailored to the specific interests and needs of the children staying each time. This reflects the extreme efforts staff make to ensure that children get the most out of their short break stay. Children take part in such activities as shopping, walks in the park, swimming, cinema trips and trampoline clubs. For some children, this provides them with social activities they may not be able to access when at home. Staff fully utilise and access local resources and facilities for children. They use local sports venues, children's centres and community parks. This promotes the full and active inclusion of all children accessing this short break provision. As a result of this, children gain in confidence and develop social and independence skills. Staff fully consider the views and feelings of all children. This is recorded clearly and assists staff in planning for future activities and events. Detailed planning takes place for each child's short break stay. Staff consider which bedroom each child prefers to sleep in and personalises their bedrooms to a high level. Personal items, bedding and toys reflect each child's individual likes and personality. Children go out shopping with staff to choose their own bedding and personal items. Staff take photographs of each child's stay and what they have done. Photographs are then sent home for parents following each stay. Several parents commented on how much this means to them, particularly if their child is non-verbal. One parent stated: 'The photos mean so much to us, they show that our child has really enjoyed their stay and done lots of fun things.' The home is visited regularly by an independent advocacy service, as well as having monthly monitoring visits by another independent person. This provides an independent oversight and scrutiny of the care provided to children and for them to be observed during their time in the home. The home has not received any complaints since the last inspection and rarely receives formal complaints. Any issues which parents, professionals or others may have receive prompt attention by the management team. There is a strong learning culture within the staff team,	

with them working very closely with parents and involved agencies to ensure that children receive the very best care and experiences. A social worker stated: 'The staff are always keen to take on new ideas and suggestions. They work closely with parents to ensure there is consistency of care at all times. I cannot think of one negative comment to make about them.'

Children attend their educational provisions during their short break stays, supported by the staff team. The staff team work very closely and proactively with education providers, in order to ensure that all children maintain excellent attendance and achieve their educational targets. Staff attend meetings with schools, share best practice and ensure that short break care plans include a focus on educationally set targets. One child had a target set for increasingly their ability to make choices in relation to food items. Staff provided the child with a choice of fruit to eat during each of their stays and took photos as evidence of how they had increased the range of foods they now eat. Schools consistently praise the staff team for how well they work with them and support children to meet their identified targets.

One teacher praised the staff team for their close and proactive working with the school, parents and involved agencies. They stated that this has led to targets being met and exceeded for one child. Parents also report very high levels of satisfaction at how well the staff team support them and their children to achieve set goals and make progress. The staff team and managers constantly strive to improve the progress made by each child. They celebrate each child's successes and work tirelessly to ensure that they maximise their potential in all areas of their lives.

Staff support children over time to develop independence skills. This includes them being encouraged to assist with laundry tasks and clearing up following mealtimes. This increases their confidence and self-help skills. Staff also enable children to take age appropriate risks. An example of this involved a child being supported to go out into the community without their wrist strap. Staff carefully assessed any actual or potential risks and ensured that these were minimised. This enables children to develop in confidence, safely and with high staff support. Parents feel very happy at the new skills and experiences their children have, as a result of their short break stays. It enables some parents to then feel confident in trying out new things with their children when they return home.

Children receive excellent support and care in relation to their complex health care needs during their stays. Staff receive bespoke training from local specialist nursing staff, in order to be able to meet individual children's needs. One placing social worker praised the competence of the staff team in being able to provide short breaks for one child who had recently had an operation. They stated: 'The staff are so skilled in dealing with complex health needs, that I doubt another service would have been able to offer a service to this child so soon after a medical procedure. They go above and beyond my expectations, in order to offer support to children

and their parents at times of most need.'

The staff team work very closely and positively with a wide range of professionals and agencies. This is done in order to ensure that the complex and specific needs of each child are met at all times. All agencies contacted during this inspection gave consistently high feedback about the staff and managers commitment to promoting the best possible outcomes for children. Staff demonstrate a hugely detailed understanding of the holistic needs of each child accessing the service and plan for how those needs will be met. Staff also work exceptionally closely with parents, both during the children's stays and at other times. Parents really value this support for them, with one stating: 'The staff are all angels in my view. They are like an extension of our family. We could not manage without them and we will be so sad when our child has to stop going there.'

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding
Children receive exceptionally high levels of care and support from a highly competent and dedicated staff team. They present as feeling safe at all times. Very close communication with parents and involved agencies ensures that children's complex needs are met at all times. Very careful matching and planning for each child's stay further ensures that they receive the highest possible standard of care and support during their stay. Each child has an allocated key worker. This person takes responsibility for ensuring that plans, risk assessments and all documentation reflects the current and changing needs of the child. Staff communicate on a very regular basis with parents and allocated social workers. Parents feel fully engaged in the care their children receive, through phone calls, communication reports and photos. Numerous parents praised the staff team for how well they share all information with them. One parent stated: 'The staff are all amazing. They know my child so well and I know they are totally safe in their care. I never worry about my child and can see that they love their time at this home.' Children do not go missing from this home. This is due to the very high staffing levels, the detailed risk assessments in place and the diligence of staff at all times. The home also provides a very safe and nurturing environment for children. Children can, and do, experience very safe care and support at all times, both inside the home and when out in the local community. This is due to the excellent planning for each child's stay by the staff team. Shift leaders fully consider the complex needs of each child prior to their admission and use the handover meetings to share full information and plan for their stay. Each child has a missing	

risk assessment in place, in the unlikely event that they were to go missing. Staff display a very detailed awareness and understanding of their roles and responsibilities and in what action they would need to take.

The recruitment and selection of staff for this home is very robust and prevents unsuitable people from working with such vulnerable children. There have been no allegations made about any member of staff working in this home since the last inspection and none for a considerable period of time. This reflects managers' commitment to safe recruitment and in the excellent induction, mentoring and training opportunities provided to all staff.

Children enjoy spending their short break stay in a home which is maintained to a very high standard throughout. The environment is exceptionally safe and well maintained, both internally and externally. There has been a recent addition of a garden hut for children to access during their stays. Children can use this space to watch television or take part in soft play. The hut has been constructed to a very high standard and includes fire alarm links with the main house. This reflects the total commitment of the registered manager to ensuring the safety and well-being of children at all times.

Staff know and understand the complex needs of each child extremely well. Risk assessments covering such areas as use of the home's mini-bus, accessing community resources and individual children's needs receive regular review and updates. Staff communicate with each other on any and all changes to a child's needs and support each other to reduce risks at all times. As a result of such careful planning, children's behaviours improve and they increase in confidence.

There is a real and strong learning culture within the staff team. Staff take on lead roles and actively seek opportunities to increase their skills and knowledge. One member of staff has a lead on child sexual exploitation. They have extensive skills in this area and attend training and development events, sharing their learning with the wider staff team. Other staff have recently taken a lead on improving the continual professional development portfolios and systems for staff. Managers have also supported staff to implement other research informed practices within the home. These reflect practices in the wider local authority and have been commended by other professionals. An independent reviewing officer commented: 'The staff and managers constantly strive to improve what they do and how they do it, in order to improve the experiences of all children. They use national and international research and methods and adapt them to meet the needs of the children. They are inspirational in how they work.'

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding
The home is managed by an exceptionally talented, committed and competent registered manager. She has led the staff team to deliver outstanding services for children receiving short breaks for over five years. Staff recruited to work in this home receive a very detailed and comprehensive induction and mentoring support from more experienced staff. Training and development opportunities enable staff to perform their roles with very high levels of competence and skill. Managers and senior care staff work together to ensure that learning is embedded in the culture of the home for all staff. This leads to children receiving care and support from staff who fully understand their complex needs. The management team undertakes very regular and detailed monitoring of all aspects of the services they provide. They constantly seek ways to improve their practice and use research and specific models of care to achieve this. The development plan for the home is excellent and a working tool for managers in this home. It reflects the aspirations and goals set by the staff team for children and their families. Staff fully contribute to its progression and take lead roles to further improve the effectiveness of the services provided. The staff team is particularly outstanding in its multi-agency working. There is a team around the child approach, which provides them with timely and relevant care and services. Staff attend or convene meetings, to support children and their short break care plans. Agency feedback about this home is consistently positive. One professional commented: 'Strong effective managers and senior staff take development of the team as a priority. There is very good partnership working between families, the home and any key agencies involved in the child's life.' Such excellent multi-agency working also contributes significantly to the smooth and positive transitions, which children make from this home to adult services or other provisions. Staff and managers support parents to consider their options for future services and support them fully by attending meetings, visiting new provisions and advocating fully for children. Staff demonstrate exceptional skill in working with difficult to engage parents and enable them to overcome their fears and anxieties with real empathy. An independent reviewing officer stated: 'I cannot fault this service on any level. If I had a child with a disability, this is where I would want them to come for a short break.' Staff celebrate the achievements of all children receiving a short break service. Throughout the home, there are an abundance of photos of children involved in various activities. This provides children and their parents with a real sense of the	

fun that children have during their stays. Parents report looking forward to receiving the photos of their children, and the huge value this has to them now and for the future. Staff fully engage children in making decisions about what they want to do during their stay and display real flexibility in their planning of activities. As one parent commented: 'The staff always ask and include the children in making choices of where they go to.'

Staff receive regular and detailed supervision and appraisals. Their professional development needs are fully considered and actioned. One member of staff stated: 'I love coming into work. I feel hugely valued by managers and other staff and am encouraged to contribute my ideas and take the lead on things. I wouldn't want to work anywhere else.' Team meetings and practice days for staff reflect the learning culture within the home. Guest speakers come to meetings to share research and practice developments. Staff attend a wide range of training events to further enhance their skills. Staff feel highly valued and supported and this is evident from feedback from parents, who refer to the 'family feeling' of the staff team and home environment.

Children benefit from very comprehensive and clear short break care plans. Targets for each child enable the staff to support them to increase their social skills over time. The coordination of education plans within short break plans further enhances the excellent work done by staff to support children to reach their full potential in all areas of their lives. Records for each children set out their holistic needs and how these will be met. Many plans are written in the first person, providing a real sense of the individual child and their likes, dislikes and needs.

Managers set very high aspirations for children and the staff team. They constantly strive to improve the outcomes and experiences for every child receiving a service. The outstanding care and support they provide for children is a reflection of the commitment, skills and dedication of managers and all staff. Managers and staff work tirelessly to ensure children and their families have the best possible experiences and work with agencies in a very proactive manner. An independent reviewing office praised the staff team for appropriately challenging other agencies, if they felt the needs of a specific child were not being met.

The statement of purpose for the home clearly sets out the ethos and objectives of the home and is fully understood by parents and involved agencies. Recent work has been completed with some children to update the children's guide. This is a very child friendly booklet for children to have access to and reflects the commitment of staff in making all aspects of their service child focused and inclusive. The quality of care and the value it has for children were summed up well by one parent, who stated: 'My child won't happily stay anywhere, when he goes to the short break service, he spends the previous week counting down, he is that excited about going.' Another parent stated: 'The staff are all part of our family now. We would not have got this far without them. It will be a very sad day when we have to say goodbye and one we dread. There will not be another service

who can be as excellent as this one has been for us and our child.'

No shortfalls were identified during this inspection and none were identified at the previous inspection.

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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