

SC042994

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 a residential short-breaks service for up to six children who have disabilities, complex medical needs and challenging behaviour.

An appropriately qualified and experienced registered manager leads the service.

Inspection dates: 3 to 4 September 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: 14 August 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/08/2017	Full	Outstanding
17/02/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
03/08/2016	Full	Good
12/02/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children who have complex needs and a wide range of disabilities benefit enormously from a variety of exceptionally positive experiences during their short breaks. They enjoy coming to the home. Their parents are extremely confident about leaving them in the care of the committed and competent staff team. One parent said: 'It's a real positive in his life. It gives him extra and helps him achieve. I can't speak highly enough of the staff.' Another parent said: 'It's brilliant. She loves it.'

Children do things that they may otherwise not do at home, such as outings to museums and wildlife parks, going swimming, trips to the cinema and shopping. In addition, the home provides a wide range of facilities that children use. These include an adapted bath that children who can only shower at home really enjoy. The outdoor facilities are extensive and offer a range of play and sensory equipment so that children can explore their environment in a safe and exciting way. Staff and artistes from an external company provide children with a range of creative activities, including messy play, arts and crafts, music and theatre. Staff, using their creative talents, have developed story sacks. This is an interactive way of telling stories using dressing up, soft toys and sensory experiences. Children really enjoy this new and inventive way of telling stories.

Although children spend most of their time with their families, when they have their short breaks they make progress on agreed targets. They become more independent, they develop their self-confidence, they become more sociable and they make friends. They also improve their sleep routines and try different foods. All their achievements are celebrated through displays throughout the home.

The voice of the child is very strong. Although many of the children do not communicate verbally, staff know them well and use other means to hear their voice. The implementation of social pedagogy has enhanced this practice and there are displays of 'my voice' around the home. It is evident that children make choices about all aspects of their short breaks.

The planning of the short breaks is exceptional. It takes into account the friendship groups, special requests, children who should not be placed together and how staff can meet a diverse range of needs safely and effectively. This ensures that as far as possible children enjoy their short breaks and benefit from them. A social worker described the coordination of the short breaks as 'amazing'.

Staff know the children extremely well. Introductions to the home are exceptionally well planned. They are undertaken at the child's pace and with the full involvement of the family. Children's routines and care needs are fully explored during this period and these then translate into very detailed care plans, risk assessments and behavioural management plans. This ensures that children's care and support are delivered consistently. A social worker commented: 'Staff bend over backwards to accommodate the needs of the children.'

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

Children's safety is exceptionally well promoted through high staffing levels, detailed and effective risk management strategies and a comprehensive understanding of the particular vulnerabilities of the children using this service.

Many of the children display challenging behaviour. This is exceptionally well managed because staff implement detailed behaviour management plans that are consistent with those used at school and by families. Although physical intervention is occasionally used, this is always as a last resort and is appropriate. Prompt managerial oversight and excellent analysis of all such incidents ensure that any learning to improve practice is highlighted.

Staff have safeguarding training that is specifically related to children who have disabilities. This ensures that staff are attuned to recognise and respond to non-verbal indications that there may be a concern.

Effective joint working with other safeguarding partners ensures that children are protected from harm. The home is able to offer emergency accommodation so that a child is in a familiar environment while enquires are being made. There is very thorough and prompt information sharing with other partner agencies in order to facilitate any investigations. If children are on a child protection plan, the manager, or a representative from the home, attends all the review meetings and contributes fully and effectively. This promotes safe decision-making.

The 'signs of safety' model is embedded in practice and is used as a tool to assess and respond to concerns. For example, it was used effectively for a particularly complex situation in order to support a child and the family while protecting other children using the service.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The management team provides strong, supportive and inspirational leadership to the staff. Managers promote a culture whereby everyone takes responsibility for developing the service for the benefit of the children. Creativity is welcomed and valued. Consequently, children benefit from highly motivated staff who use their personal and professional skills to promote high standards of care. For example, a member of staff, using her creative and technical skills, has made an attractive and child-friendly protective cover for a child's bed to prevent harm from knocks against the bed frame.

The managers promote a learning environment. This is supported by systematic, thorough, analytical and highly organised monitoring of all aspects of the service. If there have been shortfalls in practice, staff are encouraged to reflect on how it could be improved. This is evident in the handling of complaints and feedback from parents and social workers. The manager is not defensive and is keen to use every opportunity to develop and improve the service.

Staff are caring, committed, highly competent and child-focused. They are well trained and well supported through regular supervision, team meetings and handovers. Social pedagogy is now embedded in the home as more staff have been trained in this approach. This provides a robust theoretical underpinning for the provision of child-focused care and support.

Partnership working is excellent. Staff and managers work exceptionally well with parents, carers, social workers and other professionals. Communication is excellent. Parents are provided with a detailed written report after each short break so that they know what their child has done while they have been away from home. Social workers speak very highly of the staff and the managers and quote examples of how working together has improved the lives of children and families. One social worker said: 'There has been absolutely mega working together.'

Staff are aware of the importance of information for the child about their stay in the home. They provide memory books that start at the beginning of the child's journey and are added to throughout their short breaks so that they have a lovely pictorial book of positive memories to take with them when they leave the service.

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: SC042994

Provision sub-type: Children's home

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

Responsible individual: Janice Spencer

Registered manager: Theresa Clarke

Inspector

Ros Chapman: social care inspector

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