

SC042994

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 and is registered to provide short breaks for up to six children with social and emotional difficulties, physical disabilities, learning disabilities and sensory impairment.

The manager is registered with Ofsted and is suitably qualified.

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: 7 and 8 December 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 6 January 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/01/2020	Full	Outstanding
03/09/2018	Full	Outstanding
14/08/2017	Full	Outstanding
17/02/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

The staff have worked hard during the COVID-19 pandemic to keep the home open and to provide care to children and families. Parents described the home as a lifeline and spoke positively about the care their children receive. They are confident that their children are safe and cared for during their short breaks. However, the quality of care has been affected by shortfalls in safeguarding and this requires improvement to be good.

There is careful planning for any child using the home. Staff work with parents and carers to understand children's needs. Children receive careful introductions, with regular visits prior to overnight stays. This allows for relationships to be built and for care plans to be devised that accurately reflect the child and their individual needs and preferences.

Staff know the children well. They are responsive to children's care needs. Children are treated with dignity and respect. The staff are warm and nurturing in their approach. The home is adapted to reflect the individuality of the child and the things they enjoy when staying at the home.

The relevant plans for children are sufficiently detailed and individualised. They contain a range of information designed to ensure staff know how to support children during their stay. Staff use a range of communication methods to try and capture the voice of the child and provide them with choice. Children's plans incorporate targets that support children in meeting developmental milestones. These are in areas such as communication, independence skills and socialisation with peers.

There have been several errors in the administration of medication to children. This has included children not being given their prescribed medication. On one occasion, a child was given the incorrect amount of medication. The manager has undertaken a review to understand why these errors have been made.

The staff work closely and positively with schools, parents and other professionals. Social workers and schools are happy with the care that children receive and said children love the home. Regular multi-agency meetings are held, which help agencies coordinate the care and support provided to the children and their families.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

At times, the behaviour management practices of staff have been hampered. In the case of one child, this is because approaches to the use of physical intervention have not been discussed and agreed by all the agencies involved. This prevents an

agreed response to the behaviour that is appropriate for that child, known and agreed by all involved professionals.

When physical intervention has been required, it has not always been undertaken in a way that fully safeguards the child and protects their dignity. Recording of the use of physical intervention is not yet robust. Recording does not sufficiently describe actions taken by staff to prevent the use of the physical intervention or the justification for the intervention. For example, one physical intervention was not recorded on the appropriate form and did not contain a staff or child debrief or management oversight of whether the restraint was necessary and proportionate.

Staff failed to alert the manager or external safeguarding agencies when they had concerns for a child. This prevented a thorough and timely investigation into the concerns and had the potential to place the child at risk of harm.

The comments made by some staff members about children's behaviour fails to demonstrate a caring and nurturing approach. The views of team members about children's behaviour are not fully explored with the team or individual staff members, to ensure they are receiving the support they need to understand the reasons that often lead to difficult or challenging behaviour displayed by children.

Children are provided with a safe environment. The home is adapted to meet the needs of the children accessing the service. All children have fire evacuation plans and staff practise scenarios with children of what to do in emergencies. The home is maintained to a good standard in line with guidance in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff have access to personal protective equipment and measures are taken to ensure the safety of children, staff and visitors.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

Leaders and managers have been significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The focus for leaders and managers has been on maintaining the service and continuing to provide short breaks to children and supporting families.

At times, management oversight of all areas of the home has not been sufficient. This has led to a decline in standards in the management of staff, staff training, the professional supervision of staff and overall management oversight.

There has been a lack of staff training and development. Team meetings have not provided the opportunity for staff to discuss and reflect on working practices. Additionally, staff shortages have meant staff have had to work additional shifts and this has reduced their capacity to attend training and take up other developmental opportunities.

Despite significant shortfalls in staffing at times, the staff team has worked together to ensure children's care has remained consistent. They have not had to use temporary staff to cover sickness and self-isolation periods. The team has been

adaptable and supportive and pulled together to cover shifts. This has taken its toll on the team.

The management oversight of incidents and behaviour support practices has not been consistent. This has allowed some poor practice to go unchallenged. Behaviour support plans have not been reviewed in a timely and satisfactory manner and incidents have not always been recorded correctly, which has prevented rigorous management oversight.

Arrangements for working with partner agencies are a strength in this service. For example, when required, external professionals deliver additional training to the staff team to support them to provide care to children with complex needs. Regular multi-agency meetings are attended and communication with agencies is good. This leads to well-coordinated plans for children.

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 protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm; that the effectiveness of the home's child protection policies is monitored regularly. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(v)(b)(e)) This specifically relates to the recording and reporting procedures for any safeguarding concerns.	20 January 2022
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—	20 January 2022

ensure the staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(h)) This specifically relates to staff understanding of safeguarding procedures, administration of medication and management oversight.	
Restraint in relation to a child must be necessary and proportionate. (Regulation 20 (2)) This specifically relates to the use of restraint in managing behaviour that is agreed within the behaviour support plan, including an assessment of environmental factors.	20 January 2022
The registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medications received into the children's home. (Regulation 23 (1)) This specifically relates to staff having adequate training and assessment of competencies to minimise risks of medication errors.	20 January 2022
The registered person must ensure that all employees— receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience; and have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (4)(b)(c))	1 March 2022
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— details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure; the date, time and location of the use of the measure; a description of the measure and its duration;	20 January 2022

details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure;

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; and

within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vii)(b)(i)(ii)(c))

This relates to records of restraint being completed in a manner that meets the statutory requirement and that the manager reviews and evaluates all incidents of restraint.

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: SC042994

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: Theresa Clarke

Inspector

Sarah Orriss, Social Care Inspector

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