

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC042994
Inspector	Tracy Murty
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	Theresa Valerie Ann Clarke
Date of last inspection	17/02/2014

Inspection date	11/06/2014
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	None

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	adequate
Outcomes for children and young people	good
Quality of care	good
Keeping children and young people safe	adequate
Leadership and management	adequate

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	adequate
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Children enjoy their short break stays in this home. Parents consistently praise the staff for the care they provide and their commitment. Children receive care and support from a well trained and supported staff team, who place the needs of the child at the centre of their practice.

Particular attention is given to ensuring that children and their parents feel well prepared before starting their short breaks. Introductory visits enable parents and children to learn about the services on offer and to meet the staff team before they come for their first stay. Managers also focus on ensuring that the specific needs of each child are well matched for each stay, including arranging for them to come at the same time as known friends. This leads to a positive experience for the children and provides their parents with peace of mind.

Children enjoy a wide and varied range of activities during their stays. Staff ensure that every child has a positive and enjoyable stay and provide photo albums showing what they have done. The home and grounds are well maintained and equipped to meet the complex needs of the children accessing the service.

Children have all of their complex health needs met during their stays. The home is well equipped with the necessary aides and adaptations for each child. Parents

report high levels of satisfaction at the lay-out and feel of the home, including the sensory play room. Children's bedrooms are highly personalised for their stay, with photographs and personal items.

Requirements from the previous inspection have been fully addressed by the Registered Manager. A number of requirements and recommendations have been raised as a result of this inspection. Recording of suspicions of harm is not robust and does not reflect strong management oversight or actions taken by staff. Some records are not kept up to date and do not reflect all current plans for some children.

The use of restraint is minimal and generally well recorded, but does not reflect when medical attention has been offered or given to children.

The home employs the services of an independent advocacy service. An advocate visits the home every month to consult with children and young people, where appropriate. Parents have not formally been notified of this service or their views sought on it.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home provides short breaks for young people with learning difficulties and/or physical disabilities. Up to five young people can be accommodated at any one time.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
17/02/2014	Interim	good progress
30/07/2013	Full	outstanding
18/12/2012	Interim	good progress
08/06/2012	Full	outstanding

What does the children's home need to do to improve further?

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
11 (2001)	promote and make proper provision for the safeguarding and welfare of children accommodated in the children's home. This is with specific reference to ensuring that any potential suspicions of harm are clearly recorded by staff, with clear procedures in place and management oversight (Regulation 11(1)(a))	04/07/2014
34 (2001)	ensure that the Registered Manager monitors any safeguarding concerns or incidents in respect of a child accommodated at the children's home and measures taken by the persons working at the home to respond effectively to ensure that the	04/07/2014

	safeguarding and welfare of children (Regulation 34, Schedule 6 (1))	
28 (2001)	ensure that children's case records are kept up to date. To also ensure that records include a copy of any plan for the care of the child prepared by the placing authority. (Regulation 28(1)(a)(b))	04/07/2014

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that the views of the child's family are sought regularly on the child's care. This is with specific reference to discussing with parent's the involvement of the independent advocacy service (NMS 1.4)
- ensure that where there has been a physical restraint, children are always given the opportunity to be examined by a registered nurse or medical practitioner. (NMS 3.16)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Children enjoy their time visiting this home and present as confident and secure. They enjoy spending time with other children and have a wide range of fun activities to take part in. Parents also report high levels of satisfaction. One parent stated; 'our son has really developed in confidence since coming to this home. We have seen a real positive change in him over time.'

Other parents also report similar levels of satisfaction of how the short break service has contributed to an increase in confidence for their children. One parent stated; 'they know my son's needs every bit as much as I do; it's a real home from home.'

Children continue to attend their educational placements, with the staff team ensuring that transport arrangements are in place for each child. Children have access to a range of opportunities and take part in a wide range of activities. They go out with staff to local parks, swimming, shopping, to the seaside and also make use of the well equipped garden and outdoor play facilities at the home. Participation of children is good, with staff ensuring that they are able to express their individual needs and likes and to make choices wherever possible. An independent advocate visits the home every month and offers support to children and young people in expressing their wishes and feelings.

Children have targets set for them with staff and achieve these. Targets have recently included teaching children the importance of cleaning their teeth. Staff ensure that during each visit, children know what their targets are and celebrate their achievements. Targets also include assisting older children to learn and develop basic independence skills, such as putting on their own clothes with support and guidance.

Children are encouraged by staff to make choices in relation to the care they receive when on their short break. This includes them being able to choose what food they like to eat and in having their bedrooms personalised to reflect their likes. One social worker praised the staff for their attention to detail; stating that they know the children so well and ensure that they have their own personal belongings and photo's in their rooms for each stay.

Children have their health needs met well during their stays. Records reflect their individual needs and how these will be met by the staff team. Staff work closely with parents and carers to ensure that clear and accurate information is maintained in relation to medication, any mobility needs and communication issues.

Children are encouraged to participate in all aspects of their care. Staff support them to make choices and to express their likes and dislikes. As a result of suggestions they made to the independent advocate, improvements were recently made to the front

garden area of the home. A new sign for the home was also purchased and erected, based on the feedback to the advocate from some children.

Quality of care

good

The home is located in an area with easy access to a wide range of resources and facilities. It is purpose built and designed to meet the complex needs of the children who access the short break service. The home is very well maintained, both internally and externally. Children enjoy spending time in the large garden and outdoor spaces, which includes a new purpose built play area, vegetable plot and greenhouse.

Staff demonstrate a detailed knowledge and understanding of the children and young people who come for stays. Records reflect children's specific and diverse needs in relation to their disabilities, communication, health and behavioural needs. An example of this relates to the night-time care plans. These cover bedtimes, routines, equipment needed, bedding choices and all areas of each child's needs. Staff also put on display photos of young people at mealtimes, which show how they like to eat their meals and what equipment or aides they may need.

Staff ensure that children have the opportunity to participate in a wide range of fun and stimulating activities during their stays. Staff also take photographs and compile albums for children, in order that they and their families have lasting memories of their experiences.

Children come to short breaks from their educational provisions, being brought in by either a parent/carer or education transport. Staff ensure that children have an enjoyable stay and that they are prepared and ready for school, or a return to their family at the end of their stay. This ensures that their educational attendance is not disrupted in any way and provides continuity of care for them.

All staff have received training in administration of medication and first aid. Arrangements for dealing with medication are safe and secure. Records reflect good communication with relevant health professionals, ensuring that they remain up-to-date with any changes in diagnosis or medication. Children's files receive regular reviews and updates of health plans and medication administration records, but updates regarding social care needs of some children are not recorded as rigorously.

Children feel able to express their views and feelings to staff, as well as the independent advocate who visits the home each month to offer support to children. This has enabled some children to express their views on the services provided and led to improvements in such areas as the outside front garden area of the home. Not all parents are formally aware of this arrangement or of the involvement of the

advocacy service with their children.

Staff also use a recording system called 'My Voice' to ensure that every child's wishes, feelings and views are recorded for each stay. For those children who do not communicate verbally, staff ensure that facial expressions, gestures and signs are recorded. This provides both staff, parents and involved agencies with a clear oversight of what a child thinks and feels. Parents also receive feedback from their child's stay via a communications book.

Staff put in place very clear boundaries and have detailed risk assessments in place to support children and young people during their stays. A particular strength of the home is its attention to matching the needs of children prior to them coming for their short breaks stay. This ensures that children enjoy spending time with their peers and friends and are able to form and maintain meaningful relationships over time. One parent said of their child; ' my child always looks forward to having 'sleep overs' with her friends.'

Children present as happy and relaxed in the company of staff. Parents consistently report a strong sense that the staff care for the welfare of their children during their stays. One parent stated; 'I know that my child is safe, well looked after by staff who can deal with challenging behaviours. My child is developing bonds with familiar staff.'

Keeping children and young people safe adequate

Children present as feeling safe and secure during their stays. Parents consistently report feeling that staff keep their children protected from any actual or potential harm. Each child has a key worker who oversees all aspects of the child's care. An independent advocacy service is also commissioned by the local authority. This provides children and young people with an opportunity to share any issues they may have about their short break service.

There is very little use of physical restraint in this service. Records clearly reflect the reasons and need for its use. Staff have all received appropriate training and attend regular refresher training on the use of restraint. Staff have not consistently recorded that children and young people are offered, or provided with, medical assistance following a restraint. The Registered Manager monitors the use of restraints and follows this up with discussions with staff in team meetings, but has not ensured that the records include full details of actions taken. This has not placed any children or young people at risk of harm.

There have been no reported incidents of children going missing from the service since the last inspection. This reflects the very high staffing ratios in the home at all times and support provided to children. Risk assessments and plans reflect the responses and action staff should take, in the event of a child going missing. Joint

protocols are in place with local police and children's files clearly state risk factors and control measures in place.

Staff recruitment and selection is robust and clear. This prevents unsuitable people from working with vulnerable children and young people in this service. Security both within and outside of the home is also very robust and secure. All visitors are escorted into the home and checks undertaken of their identification and reason for visiting. The home has recently been fitted with electronic surveillance; this enables staff to monitor the movement of children from their bedrooms during the night. Parents have given consent to the use of such surveillance and feel it provides additional security for children and staff during the night. The Statement of Purpose for the home has been updated to reflect the use of electronic surveillance.

Staff have not correctly followed procedures on all occasions in relation to recording of any concerns they may have about some young people. Records do not clearly reflect all actions taken by staff to alert managers of possible welfare concerns for some young people. This has not had a negative impact on the welfare or safety of young people, but undermines the staff team's ability to consistently deal with any potential suspicions of harm. Management oversight of recording is not sufficiently robust.

Leadership and management

adequate

The Registered Manager has been in post for six years. She has the qualifications and experience necessary for the role.

There have been no reported complaints or concerns raised since the last inspection. The home has systems in place to record any compliments made about the care provided to children, which reflects a very positive view by parents and involved agencies of the home and services provided.

Two requirements were set at the last inspection. Both have been fully addressed and met by the Registered Manager. The Statement of Purpose has been updated to reflect the use of electronic surveillance and parents have signed their consent to its use.

The home has a detailed development plan in place. The Registered Manager regularly considers and reviews this document, to ensure that all actions set are completed. The Statement of Purpose is clear and sets out the aims and objectives of the service and is known and understood by both parents and the placing authority.

The Registered Manager ensures that all child in need and looked after reviews are well recorded and that staff prepare reports in advance of such meetings. One social worker praised the staff team, stating that they always produce reports for review meetings in a timely manner.

Children's files are well laid out and clearly reflect all aspects of the care provided by staff during each stay. Certain key information has not been placed on all children's file at the time of this inspection. This includes child protection plans, details of core groups and chronologies. This could reduce the ability of the staff team to work with some children in line with other local authority plans and documentation. Some files do not contain up to date information on children and do not contribute to a clear understanding of some children's lives.

Managers ensure that prior to admission of children for short breaks, detailed planning takes place. This includes regular meetings with parents and social workers to gather detailed information about the needs of the child. It also includes visits to the home for children and their parents. This enables a smooth transition to the short break service and allays any concerns or anxieties parents may have. Managers pay particular attention to the matching needs of children coming to the home, ensuring that wherever possible, their stays coincide with known friends. This attention to detail is commented on by both the placing authority and parents and is seen as a particular strength of the home.

The home is visited every month by an independent person. They consider all records relating to the care provided to children and produce very detailed reports to assist managers in their monitoring processes. The independent visitor spends time with the children and elicits their wishes and feelings where possible. Staff use a system called My Voice to record the views, feelings and presentation of each child during their stays. The independent visitor considers those records each month as part of their monitoring. Reports from these visits are returned to Ofsted in a timely manner each month for consideration.

The home is very well maintained, both internally and externally. The home employs a maintenance person to undertake minor repair works and to maintain the gardens. Larger maintenance tasks are completed via a central help desk system within the local authority. This enables staff to report any urgent works needed at any time and leads to the home being consistently well maintained and safe for children.

The home employs a high number of staff, to provide the care and support necessary for children with very complex needs. Induction processes are robust and staff receive lots of relevant training to ensure that they have the skills necessary to meet the needs of the children who come for short breaks. Staff also receive regular formal supervision. Team meetings take place on a regular basis and managers ensure that staff are briefed on any relevant changes to legislation or practice. Staff also consider the monthly monitoring reports produced by the Registered Manager and data. This enables them to consider and discuss any key areas and agree actions. One member of staff commented; 'our manager is a great listener and will talk through any views I have.'

Managers have very positive and meaningful relationships with other agencies. One

involved agency stated; 'all staff go the extra mile to help the children in any way possible.' Others refer to the commitment of staff to improving the quality of life for children. An independent reviewing officer stated that parents consistently give positive feedback in reviews about the staff and services provided for their children.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The 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 relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.