

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	19/10/2015
Unique reference number	SC042994
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 Clarke
Inspector	Tracy Murty

Inspection date	19/10/2015
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 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	Good

SC042994

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is outstanding because:

- Children and young people benefit from exceptionally well assessed and planned short break stays in this home. Staff and managers support parents, young people and children to have extremely positive stays. They clearly know and understand their individual needs and ensure that care and services are tailored to meet those specific needs.
- Staff meet the complex health needs extremely well. They receive bespoke training in relation to health and medical needs throughout the year. This enables them to provide consistently high and competent care, with parents all reporting very high levels of satisfaction in the quality of care and support provided to their children.
- Children and young people engage in a wide range of fun and stimulating activities during their short break stays. Staff tailor activities to meet children's and young people's needs and likes. Children and young people also learn new skills during their stays, with staff setting clear and achievable targets for them. This has led to improvement in their independence skills and confidence. One parent commented: 'Our daughter is now able to go out into the community for a meal or drink, she couldn't do this before she came here. It has made a major difference to her and our lives.' Another parent said: 'The staff are always professional, approachable, child-centred with small reachable targets set. They involve the children in all activities and allow them to decide if they want to join in.'
- Staff ensure that children and young people are kept safe during their stays. There have been no reported incidents of children or young people going missing from the home, due to the stringent checks and security measures in place. Children and young people present as feeling safe during their stays and parents report no concerns in relation to their safety. One parent stated: 'My child has been coming to this home for nearly eight years and has never come to any harm.'
- Highly effective and proactive multi-agency working is another key strength of this home. Staff and managers work very closely with social workers, education providers and health professionals. This promotes the holistic needs of each child and young person. Regular meetings take place to discuss their specific needs and plans, with all involved agencies and professionals consistently praising the staff team for their commitment and dedication to children and young people.

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

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 (England) Regulations 2015 and the *Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards*. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ('the statement of purpose') which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1. This is in relation to any criteria used for the admission of children to the home, including any policies and procedures for emergency admissions. (Regulation 16 (1))	27/11/2015

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is registered to provide short breaks for up to six 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
28/01/2015	Interim	Improved Effectiveness
11/06/2014	Full	Adequate
17/02/2014	Interim	Good Progress
30/07/2013	Full	Outstanding

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Outstanding
Children and young people form very close and positive relationships with the staff team during their stays at this home. For many, this is the first time they have spent time away from their parents and carers. Excellent planning for new admissions enables children, young people and their families to feel secure and safe. This includes tea visits before overnight stays. Staff demonstrate exceptionally high levels of sensitivity and insight into the needs of both children, young people and their families. They form extremely close and positive relationships with families, with many referring to the staff as 'an extension of our own family'. Staff support children and young people to be actively involved in all aspects of the care and support they receive during their stays. They make decisions and choices about such things as what food they eat, what clothes they wear and how their bedrooms are personalised to reflect their likes. Consultation is actively promoted and staff use imaginative practices to elicit their wishes and feelings, including those with no or limited verbal communication. As one professional stated: 'The staff team know the children they are working with really well. This is evidenced by the opportunities offered for choices. For example, activity choices include known likes as well as new options.' Children and young people present as highly relaxed and comfortable with staff and managers. They feel supported to express their wishes, feelings and views in a range of ways. An independent advocate visits the home on a monthly basis, as well as monthly visits by an independent visitor. This enables them to have access to independent advocacy and support, with high levels of scrutiny to oversee their care and support. There have been no reported complaints from children or young people since the last inspection. Parents feel able to discuss any concerns or issues they may have with staff or managers, reporting high levels of satisfaction in how any issues are dealt with. The staff team prides themselves on listening to both children, young people and their families, in order to constantly improve the services they provide. A nurse specialist stated: 'The staff will always seek advice and guidance, as well as always taking on board any suggestions I make. They are totally committed to ensuring that the complex needs of each child are consistently met during their short break stays. I cannot praise them enough.' Staff support children and young people to attend their educational placements during their short break stays, and support transport arrangements. They work closely and positively with a range of education providers, attending meetings in	

schools and ensuring consistency of care across both services. An education provider praised the staff team and managers for their close working, stating: 'The staff keep in very close contact with us to ensure that we are all consistent in how we support children. They call us with any concerns or to share information on a daily basis. We have an excellent working relationship with this home.'

Children and young people take part in a wide range of fun and stimulating activities during their stays. Staff carefully plan for each child's or young person's stay, taking into account their known likes and dislikes. They support them to make choices about what activities they would like to take part in. Local community resources are fully utilised, with staff using public transport to support children and young people to access shops, swimming, bowling and other activities. This enables them to fully engage in the local community and to gain in confidence and independence skills. A recent garden project at the home has enabled children and young people to learn about growing vegetables and planting flowers. They took great pride in this and have a real sense of inclusion and engagement in the home and in learning new skills.

Staff are particularly skilled in assisting children and young people to learn new skills which will assist them when they move on to adult services. This includes learning how to make their own simple snacks, tidying their bedrooms and helping staff with laundry tasks. Clear and achievable targets enable children and young people to develop their skills over time. Research informs such target setting, with staff utilising a variety of methods to best support them to meet set targets. Parents report very high levels of satisfaction at these approaches, reporting significant improvements in skills and confidence of their children over time. Such dedicated work by staff significantly improves children's and young people's life chances when they leave this service.

A particular strength of this home is in how well staff and managers support children's and young people's extremely complex health and medical needs. A nurse specialist commended them for this, stating that highly competent and well-trained staff are able to meet very complex health needs to a consistently high level. A 'team around the child' approach ensures that their holistic health needs are known and met at all times. Close working with such services as child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) leads to significant improvements in the management of challenging behaviours.

A CAMHS nurse praised the staff team for their work with one young person with significant challenging behaviours. They reported excellent and close communication, planning and work to support this young person. This has led to a significant reduction in concerning behaviours and in the young person being able to manage their own behaviours in a much more positive manner. This reflects the exceptional skills and commitment of the staff team in improving the experiences and outcomes for all children and young people. A parent commented: 'Recently, my child was unwell with significant medical problems and the staff still accepted

her back and met her needs.'

Behaviour support plans and detailed risk assessments reflect the complex needs of each child and young person accessing this service. Staff regularly review and update plans, in order to ensure that they continue to meet the complex needs. Children and young people receive highly personalised and child-focused care and support at all times. Staff demonstrate a commendable understanding of each child's and young person's needs in relation to their culture, ethnicity, disabilities and family histories. They plan exceptionally well for new admissions, taking into account all known information and chase placing authorities for any missing information in a very timely manner.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding
Children and young people receive care from a highly dedicated, committed and competent staff team. Their safety is viewed as paramount by staff and managers. Security measures both within the home and for outdoor activities afford children and young people extremely high levels of safety and security. As one parent commented: 'The building is secure and staff are well trained to manage any risky behaviours. I feel that my child is very safe and well looked after.' A range of risk assessments and behaviour management plans further ensure that all children and young people receive highly personalised care to consider and meet their needs. Staff regularly review risk assessments and behaviour management plans to reflect the changing needs. Children and young people clearly demonstrate positive and meaningful attachments to the staff in this home. They feel safe and extremely well protected from any actual or potential harm at all times. There have been no missing from care incidents, due to the high staffing ratios and measures in place to ensure the safety and security of the children and young people. Staff demonstrate high levels of competence and understanding in relation to safeguarding issues. They receive regular training in this area and follow all policies and procedures. This promotes a real sense of safety and security for children and young people during their short break stays. Staff follow protocols and each child and young person has clear risk assessments for all activities. Visitors to the home always have their identification checked by staff and are refused access to the home without it. This demonstrates the total commitment of all staff and managers in ensuring the welfare and safety of children and young people at all times.	

Staff have a detailed understanding of the complex and often challenging behavioural needs of children and young people coming for short break stays. They work closely with involved agencies to ensure that plans and risk assessments reflect those needs and how they will be met. Involved agencies consistently praise the staff and managers for their commitment and flexibility. One placing social worker praised the staff team for their work with children and young people with extremely challenging behaviour. They reported that staff, 'stick with children at all times', to help them overcome their difficulties. This increases children's and young people's confidence, enables them to learn to socialise and provides them with exceptionally positive experiences. Parents also report significant improvements in their children's behaviour as a result of the support staff provide to them.

The selection and recruitment of staff to this home is a robust process and prevents unsuitable people from being recruited. Managers and administrative support staff have excellent systems to oversee recruitment checks and ensure that update checks are carried out. There have been no allegations made in relation to staff working in this home. Staff spoken with during the inspection demonstrated a detailed knowledge and understanding of safeguarding and their responsibilities. This promotes a safe and highly effective working environment and promotes the safety and well-being of children and young people.

The home provides an outstanding service in relation to the protection and safety of children and young people. Pre-admission planning considers all known and potential risks, with detailed and child-specific plans and risk assessments then being put in place. High staffing levels afford children and young people additional security, both within the home and when out in the community engaging in activities. Managers consider research and share this with staff. This promotes a real learning culture within the home and enables staff to consider alternative means of working. Such innovative practices have led to improved experiences for children and young people coming to this home for a short break.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
The home is run by a highly efficient, effective and competent registered manager. She is supported by an equally efficient and effective deputy manager and staff team. The registered manager has been in post for several years and continually strives to improve the services and quality of care provided to all children and young people. She has the necessary skills and qualifications to perform the role. Very high staffing levels provide children and young people with the one-to-one	

attention and support they need at all times, including during the night. Staff receive a wide range of extremely relevant and valuable training. A particular strength of the home is its relationship with specialist nurse trainers, who provide bespoke health and medication-related training for the staff team. This responsive and excellent training enables staff to meet extremely complex health needs to an exceptionally high level. One nurse trainer commented: 'The staff here are excellent. They are trained to provide care for children with often, very complex health and medication needs. They do so with competence and great skill and are a pleasure to work alongside. They contact me for advice appropriately and I have an extremely positive relationship with the staff and managers.'

Managers have excellent systems to monitor and track all aspects of the services and care provided. They consistently strive to find new ways to improve the care they provide. Recently, managers and staff have considered how they can more effectively consult with and seek the views of non-verbal children and young people. This reflects the entire staff team's commitment to eliciting their wishes and views. Managers routinely undertake detailed analysis of data collected from each child's and young person's stay. This is then used to produce very detailed management reports, as well as informing the very comprehensive development plan for the home.

Managers have a very clear sense as to how they intend to improve the services provided. They have used recent consultation with children and young people to further personalise the bedrooms, allowing them to select bedding and accessories with staff. A recent competition resulted in a new sign for the home being made, with all children and young people accessing the service being encouraged to put forward their designs. The child who won the competition, voted for by parents, received a smaller version of the new home sign. This reflects the commitment of managers and staff to actively and meaningfully engage children and young people in all aspects of the care they receive during their short breaks.

Managers have clear systems to ensure that staff undertake regular audits of case files. Plans and risk assessments are reviewed and updated to reflect their changing needs. Staff receive consistent praise from placing social workers in relation to their preparation for review meetings. They produce detailed and comprehensive reports, attending all relevant meetings and contributing fully to discussions about the children and young people. One placing social worker commented: 'The staff and managers are all fantastic, I cannot fault them at any level. They attend all meetings, their reports are always done well in advance so that I can read them, they provide outstanding care and support to the children.'

Managers and staff work very closely and proactively with a range of other agencies. All agencies involved with this home consistently praise them for their dedication, commitment and skill in their work with children and young people. An independent reviewing officer commented: 'The staff and managers are regularly praised by parents for their sterling support, to both children and their families.'

They take great pride in their work and in making the short break stay for each child as enjoyable as possible.'

Parents feel very confident in leaving their children at this home, secure in the knowledge that they will have a thoroughly enjoyable stay and having total confidence in the staff team. One set of parents stated: 'We weren't sure we would be happy for our child to start having short breaks. From the moment we left them for their first stay, they loved it and five years later, we cannot imagine life without them. We will be very sad when the short breaks have to end, as we are not convinced there will be such an excellent service available elsewhere.'

Staff ensure that children and young people have full access to and engagement with the local and wider community. They take them out to use local community leisure facilities and make excellent use of public transport. This provides children and young people with an opportunity to have new experiences and integrates them into the local community. Staff and managers also take part in a range of fundraising and charity events, involving children, young people and their families. This demonstrates their commitment to not only providing an excellent service, but in also giving something back. Photographs of such events throughout the home reflect such events and the fun and active participation of children, young people, their families and the local community. Staff take specific leads on such events, promoting their interests and encouraging them to develop skills.

There is a real and positive focus on encouraging children and young people to make progress in their lives and skills. Simple targets for each child and young person enable them to learn new skills, which can be transferred to their home lives. Parents feel very pleased with this, as it prepares their children well for their eventual move to adult services. Staff continually review and update set targets and celebrate the achievements. A recent project within the home related to healthy eating, with children and young people being encouraged to consider healthy food options and then make meals with staff. This reflects managers' and staff members' commitment to not only providing a fun short break stay, but in assisting children and young people to learn new skills and improve their emotional and physical health.

Staff receive regular and high quality supervision and appraisals. Excellent and clear recording and monitoring systems ensure that all staff receive the support and training they need to perform their roles to a consistently high standard. Team meetings take place twice per month, in order to enable as many staff as possible to attend. Meetings include discussion about practice developments locally and nationally, with a clear focus from managers on learning from research and nationally disseminated practice. This has led to imaginative practices being put in place, to further improve the experiences and outcomes for everyone accessing this service.

Staff report very high levels of satisfaction and happiness in their roles and working

lives in this home. One member of staff stated: 'I have worked here for 15 years now. I love coming into work and making a positive difference to the children's lives. I have seen them grow up and build in confidence and skills. I couldn't ask for a more supportive team and managers to work with.'

The statement of purpose for the home is clear, detailed and reflects the aims and objectives of the service. It is clearly understood by placing authorities, other agencies and parents. Work is currently being done by a member of staff to improve the children's guide. This will be in DVD form to enable parents, children and young people to have a much more interactive and fun guide to the services provided. This also reflects the imagination and commitment of staff and managers, to ensuring that information is provided in a meaningful and accessible manner.

One recommendation was made at the last inspection. The manager has ensured that records now clearly reflect the outcome of any actual or potential safeguarding issue on a child's file. Detailed chronologies of any safeguarding issues, with actions taken and management oversight and sign off demonstrate the excellent systems in place in this home.

The home now has an additional bed for emergency admissions. This provides a countywide resource for children, young people and their families, reducing the need to potentially cancel planned admissions to support a family in crisis. A policy is in place for the emergency bed. This does not currently specify the length of stay for children and young people using the emergency bed. Managers should consider the duration of an emergency admission and the potential impact on short break arrangements for children and young people admitted in an emergency. This should also be reflected in the statement of purpose for the home. There has been no adverse impact on children or young people due to this minor shortfall. The emergency bed has, in fact, proved to have reduced the potential for family breakdown.

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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