

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 short breaks for up to six children with learning disabilities. Four children were using the service at the time of the inspection.

The manager is registered with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 June 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 31 October 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
31/10/2023	Full	Good
09/05/2022	Full	Good
17/03/2022	Interim	Improved effectiveness
07/12/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Since the last inspection, children have continued to enjoy their short-break stays at the home. They enjoy many positive experiences and develop hobbies and talents. A variety of external providers visit the home and complete exciting activities with the children. For example, children made 'fizzy bath bombs' with support from a well-known company. External social workers and families commented on the positive experiences that their children have. One parent said, 'It is always nice to see his book of activities that he has been enjoying whilst visiting.'

Children's wishes and feelings are listened to, and children are able to make choices and decisions about their stay at the home. Children who do not use formal or common language use a range of communication methods. Children are encouraged and supported to take part in the day-to-day running of the home and plan for future stays. As a result, children have a say and are fully involved in their care while at the home.

Children are supported to attend their schools. Well-established routines and structure ensure that children are well prepared for the school day. Effective and collaborative working with education provisions supports children to achieve their education targets. For example, one child who has had periods out of education is now attending full time again. Children have positive educational experiences because staff work creatively with schools, ensuring a consistent approach.

Children and families are well prepared when coming for their short break at the home. Staff spend time with the child and their family prior to their first visit, to have a comprehensive understanding of the child's needs, care and routines. Staff listen to the family's views and advice. These are written into the child's plans. If a parent is concerned about any element of their care, staff will listen and adapt to their advice and instruction. There is good communication between the home, family members, and professionals. This contributes to the stability of the children's stay.

Children's health needs are well considered and met by the team. Staff work closely and effectively with families and health services. Health plans provide highly individualised care and are adapted regularly to ensure that each child's health requirements are met. Staff make sure that each child experiences high standards of personalised care. This supports children's physical and emotional well-being.

The environment is homely and welcoming. Children are involved in the aesthetics of the garden areas. The gardens are vibrant in colours and textures, along with calming and quiet areas. They have been well thought out and developed for and by children. The staff have plans in place to modernise the interior and exterior of the home. This will enhance the children's stays.

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

Children enjoy the trusting relationships that they have built with the staff. Staff have a detailed understanding of the particular vulnerabilities of each child. There is a high level of empathy and understanding towards the children. Staff are quick to recognise any signs that children are becoming anxious or upset. Because they pick up on non-verbal cues so quickly, they often prevent children from becoming distressed. The attentiveness of staff ensures that children feel a real sense of security.

Staff are familiar with and confident in the use of safeguarding processes should they witness poor practice by another staff member. There has been one serious complaint that was raised promptly with the home. Managers liaised appropriately with the local authority designated officer, social worker, and police. The investigation had not yet concluded at the time of the inspection. No safeguarding concerns were seen or identified at the time of the visit. However, the management team is reviewing their process and practices to take any learning from the investigation outcome.

All staff have completed mandatory training in key areas, such as safeguarding and first aid. They also receive bespoke training, which is tailored to the needs of the children. Safeguarding matters are an agenda item in team meetings, but not always discussed. A safeguarding discussion is not in each staff member's one-to-one meeting with their manager. This does not always provide staff with the opportunities to reflect on and develop their own practice, or as a team around wider safeguarding issues or concerns. The team would benefit from further opportunities to have these discussions.

Each child has a 'now and next plan' to help to support them in times of distress. The impact of children's known behaviours is reduced because staff can pre-empt the behaviour through observations and knowing the children so well. Staff are able to distract and support children to avoid incidents. Staff resort to physical intervention only when necessary to keep the child and others safe. This reduces risks and improves children's safety.

Medication procedures are robust. Managers have consulted with the staff team in reviewing medication procedures. There are several safeguards in place to reduce the risk of errors, including visual and physical prompts. Staff work closely with parents to ensure that they have up-to-date information about the medication that children need. Staff spoke confidently about how different staff book in, stock take, and administer medication, to ensure staff remain alert and take responsibility for their part in the process. Staff are well supported to achieve competency in this. This ensures that medication is administered safely.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager is an assertive advocate for the children she cares for. She talks with compassion and understanding. The manager is very reflective of practice and recognises the strengths and areas for development for the home. She has a clear vision

for the home and remains focused on bringing about continued progress because she knows that this will benefit children.

Staff speak with pride about the home and enjoy their work. They express their pleasure in spending time with the children and enhancing their experiences. Staff demonstrate an openness and willingness to learn. Staff are well supported by the management team and each other. The manager and deputy manager are a visible presence and approachable. They work well together, and staff morale is positive. Because of this, the manager and team have ambitious, creative plans to improve the outcomes for children.

The manager ensures that the team are prepared and informed to respond effectively to the needs of the children. Handovers are carried out in detail every day and capture the needs of each child coming for a stay. Alongside regular team meetings, the staff have development days that are based on the specific needs and risks of children. The manager and staff also reflect on the positive outcomes for children, as well as any future learning. As a result, the manager promotes a learning culture.

Effective management systems are in place. Children's records are of a good standard and provide details of the nurturing care that the children receive. Regular audits take place to ensure that plans are dynamic in nature and change with the child. This supports the progression and achievement of children's goals for their future.

Partnership work with staff and external agencies is very positive. During this inspection, professionals commended the manager and staff on the good communication and excellent quality of care provided. Common threads in the feedback provided by stakeholders are the positive communication, the progress children make, and how happy they are during their short breaks, with children often requesting more stays.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the content and/or outcomes of supervision sessions and team meetings reflect discussion on safeguarding issues, which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs and risks of children assigned to their care. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.4)

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 address: Lincolnshire County Council, County Offices, Newland,
LINCOLN LN1 1YL

Responsible individual: Tara Jones

Registered manager: Victoria Cooke

Inspectors

Thirza Smith, Social Care Inspector

Helen Gronhaug, Social Care Inspector

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