

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	10/11/2015
Unique reference number	SC043255
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	Cynthia Mountcastle
Inspector	Tracy Murty

Inspection date	10/11/2015
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 exceeds 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	Outstanding

SC043255

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is outstanding because:

- Young people benefit from excellent care and support from the highly dedicated and competent staff team during their time living in this home. Matching of new admissions ensures that young people form very positive relationships with each other and the staff team. Young people clearly feel able to discuss any issues or concerns they may have with staff and managers and have a strong and powerful voice in how the home is run.
- Staff receive high quality supervision and training, which enables them to provide exceptionally high quality care to young people. They report having total confidence in the managers. Bespoke training enables them to perform their roles with young people to a very high level at all times. Feedback from involved agencies is consistently positive about the close partnership working and excellent communication by staff.
- Young people all have education or training provisions in place. From their starting points, they have made exceptional progress in relation to their attendance, attainment and behaviours. Some young people have previously had poor attendance or engagement in education. Through the commitment and dedication of the staff team, young people now see the value of education and take great pride in their educational achievements.
- Young people receive prompt and highly personalised health care to meet their complex and changing needs. There is very close and positive partnership working by the staff team with a wide range of agencies and professionals. One looked after children's nurse commented: 'The staff are all great, I come to the home every month to meet with them and young people and can see that they really care about them and make sure their health needs are known and met at all times'.
- A wide range of fun and stimulating social activities and events enable young people to form positive peer relationships in the local and wider community. Staff provide young people with opportunities they may not previously have had, which increases their confidence and sense of self-worth.
- Preparation for moving on to independence is excellent. Detailed independence work with young people focuses on their strengths and needs. It is undertaken in a very well planned and timely manner. Staff know and understand the individual needs of each young person and adapt their work to meet those needs. This ensures that young people receive very well planned and sensitive support.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is registered to provide care and accommodation to up to six children and young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. It is owned and run by the local authority.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
19/01/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
24/06/2014	Full	Good
21/02/2014	Interim	Satisfactory Progress
06/06/2013	Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	outstanding
Young people form very positive and meaningful relationships with staff and managers during their time living in this home. They feel able to express their wishes, feelings and views with their key workers and learn to manage any concerning or risky behaviours. Staff show a dedication and genuine interest in the young people and encourage them to learn and grow in confidence. Staff demonstrate a commendable understanding and awareness of the individual and complex needs of each young person living in this home. They use imaginative practices to elicit the wishes, views and feelings of young people at all times. This has included implementing visual means to elicit feedback from young people, taking into consideration their literacy needs. This reflects a staff team who continually strive to adapt their working practices in order to ensure that young people's voices are heard and responded to. Young people feel able to express their concerns with confidence. Managers have an 'open door' policy, with young people being able to come and raise any issues they may have. There have been no formal complaints since the last inspection and for some considerable time. Low level issues receive prompt attention from managers. Young people report total confidence in how any issues they may raise have been dealt with. From their starting points, young people have made excellent progress in relation to their educational attendance and achievement. For those at risk of exclusion, staff work incredibly hard with education providers to re-engage young people. This has enabled some young people to form peer relationships in school, to achieve to a level not previously possible, and to feel a sense of personal pride. The deputy manager has devised excellent systems for recording the attendance of each young person. This reflects the hard work undertaken by staff to promote the value of education on a daily basis and in ensuring that young people attend and engage. Clear and consistent boundaries and expectations from all staff members promote the huge value of education to young people. Staff routinely support young people to learn and increase their skills outside formal education. They support young people to complete homework and engage fully in meetings and reviews. A key strength of the home is how well it supports young people to engage in a wide range of fun and stimulating activities. Examples of this include participation in the Duke of Edinburgh Award, fundraising events, and securing voluntary work	

with local charity shops. Young people also benefit from regular day trips and holidays at the seaside in holiday accommodation owned by the local authority. They clearly look forward to these trips and take great pride in being able to have such opportunities. Staff also very imaginatively source bespoke activities for some young people. This has included therapeutic horse riding. This demonstrates the real and commendable commitment of staff and managers in meeting the social needs of young people. Consequently, young people grow in confidence and develop an improved sense of belonging and value. Staff also fully support and enable young people to follow their religious beliefs and support them to attend local places of worship, if this is their wish.

Young people develop the skills and confidence they will need, in preparation for their eventual move to independence. This is handled very sensitively by the staff team, fully taking into consideration the needs and abilities of each young person. Comprehensive independence planning packs have been devised with the support of the local children's participation team. Staff work at the pace of the young person, and in very imaginative ways, to increase their abilities and confidence over time. For some young people, this has included staff assisting them to learn how to use public transport unaided, how to take responsibility for their finances, how to wash their clothes and how to prepare basic meals. Such skills will assist young people to make a successful transition into adult life.

The holistic health needs of young people are exceptionally well met in this home. Staff ensure that full information is obtained at the point of admission to inform health plans. Young people receive extremely timely and appropriate care in relation to their physical and emotional health needs. There is very positive evidence of close working and regular consultations and meetings with mental health services. Managers have also sourced and provided additional training for staff on specific health related issues for some young people. This has enabled staff to provide excellent care to young people with very complex emotional needs.

Staff support young people to compile memory boxes during their time living in this home. Personal items, mementos and photos provide young people with lasting and positive memories of their time in care. They take great pride in these possessions and feel valued and respected by staff as a result of them. Managers and staff consider new referrals very carefully for planned admissions and ensure that they are able to meet the needs of new young people, alongside those existing young people resident in the home. Excellent pre-admission assessments by managers, including visiting young people and their families before their move, has led to very secure and stable placements.

Another key strength of the home is in how well staff and managers support contact for young people with family members. There is a commendable ethos of working with parents to support the care provided to their children. Staff regularly visit parents' homes, supervise and support contact and include them fully in meetings and decision-making, where appropriate. Young people benefit from

having meaningful and positive contact with family members and significant others. Staff also do some excellent work in assessing and preparing those young people who it has been agreed will return to live with family members. They work alongside the placing authority to ensure a smooth and positive transition. As one parent stated: 'The staff have been brilliant. They come to our home, they support the contact and we are now confident and looking forward to our child returning to live with us in the near future. This would not have been possible a few years ago and is down to the staff supporting us and our child so well.'

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
Robust risk assessments ensure that all young people receive highly effective care and protection in this home. Staff diligently consider the known and potential risks for young people and regularly review and update all plans and assessments. This provides young people with a safe and nurturing environment, in which they learn how to keep themselves safe. Incidents of young people going missing from care have significantly reduced since the last inspection. This is a reflection of how well staff and managers know and respond to potential triggers. It is also attributable to the high staffing ratios and focused work, which staff undertake with young people on a very regular basis to consider their needs and risks. A local police officer commented: 'Staff are very good at communicating with us. In relation to one young person, the improvements in relation to their outcomes have been significant. They have really improved in their behaviours outside of the home. The staff are a huge strength at this home, very friendly and always willing to engage with the police.' Monthly multi-agency meetings take place at the home to consider the ever changing needs of each young person. These meetings involve colleagues from the local authority, health, education and police. Professionals spoken with during this inspection praised the staff team for leading this initiative. One placing authority manager stated: 'Staff speak knowledgeably about the young people in placement within multi-agency meetings and advocate strongly for them.' Staff also work tirelessly to ensure that young people are not criminalised for concerning behaviours. They apply restorative approaches and sanctions wherever possible, which further reduces the risks of young people becoming involved in the criminal justice system. Due to young people being so actively involved in all aspects of the care and support they receive, they respond very positively to such approaches and actively work with staff to reduce any concerning behaviours over	

time. This has led to significantly improved outcomes for all young people living in this home.

The home applies a zero tolerance policy and practices in relation to any actual or potential incidents of bullying. Young people understand this and work with staff to eradicate any such behaviours. They discuss such concerns in the regular residents meetings and clearly understand that such behaviours will not be tolerated. This provides them with a sense of security and in feeling protected from harm at all times.

Staff ensure that young people are protected from harm in relation to the use of social media, mobile technology and the internet. If any concerns arise, staff work with young people in a very open and transparent manner to consider the risks and put plans in place to address them. Young people routinely read and consider all plans and risk assessments. They make comments on them and sign to agree to the content. This further assists them to accept actual or potential risks to themselves or others and to appreciate the clear boundaries staff put in place for their protection.

The selection and recruitment processes for new staff are robust and prevent unsuitable adults from having the opportunity to harm young people. Managers and administrative staff diligently ensure that all checks and references are taken up prior to new staff starting and have very detailed induction plans in place. This ensures that new staff feel supported and fully able to perform their roles with confidence and competence.

Managers consider any allegations made against staff promptly and in line with local safeguarding procedures. They ensure that such procedures are followed and that staff receive support during the investigative process. Managers work closely with the local authority designated officer, placing authority, and other agencies to ensure that any allegations receive prompt attention, protecting both young people and members of staff.

Regular checks undertaken by staff and managers lead to an environment which is safe and secure at all times for young people and those staff working in the home. One placing social worker stated that they have absolutely no concerns in relation to how well the staff ensure that young people are kept safe, both within the home and when out in the community.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding

The home is run by a highly effective, efficient and inspirational manager, who has been in post for a number of years. She has the skills, qualifications and experience necessary to perform the role. She is supported by an equally committed, skilled, and effective deputy manager. They work as a team to ensure that young people have very positive experiences and that they make significant progress in all aspects of their lives.

High staffing ratios provide young people with the support they need at all times. Staff receive very regular and high quality supervision. They attend a vast array of training opportunities, with one staff member stating: 'We get excellent training in this home, it really supports us to work imaginatively and effectively with the young people. I cannot fault the managers for their support of us as a staff team at any level. I love my job.'

Managers speak passionately about the young people in their care. It is clear that they value them as individuals, aspiring for them at all times. They also work exceptionally well with parents, including them in all aspects of their children's care and promoting their engagement wherever possible. As one parent stated: 'The manager knows and understands my child's specific needs and how to manage it better than in the previous placement. The staff are friendly and supportive. I can get on with them in difficult and hard times, can work with them and trust them.'

Managers and staff work extremely positively and proactively with a range of agencies and professionals to support the holistic needs of young people. They continually strive to improve the experiences and outcomes for all young people. Imaginative practices include sourcing bespoke training and therapeutic social activities for young people. A member of staff recently worked with young people to rehearse and then perform a play for staff in the home. Young people clearly enjoyed this. They feel proud of their achievements and grow in confidence. They look forward to putting on another play for the festive season.

Managers and staff encourage young people to fully access resources and to be involved in their local community. They form very positive relationships with neighbours and faith groups, enabling young people to have their cultural, religious and spiritual needs met.

A key strength of the managers is their commitment to learning and to using research based practice to support young people. Various models of care have been fully utilised in the home since the last inspection. Such clear and focused research based practices have led to significant and demonstrable progress being made by all young people.

The home's statement of purpose is detailed and clearly specifies the aims and objectives of the home. Work is currently being done with young people to devise a DVD of the children's guide. Work is also being done to consider how young people's meetings can be improved. This reflects the learning culture of the staff

team and their desire to ensure that young people receive information in a format which most appeals to them. Such imaginative and proactive practices reflects managers commitment to ensuring that all services provided are driven by young people and reflect their wishes, views, and feelings.

Case records clearly reflect the plans, assessments, and work done to support young people. They would provide invaluable information if a young person were to request access to them. Staff ensure that all records are maintained to a high standard, with regular reviews and amendments being made to all documents. Managers oversee all records, further demonstrating their commitment to ensuring that young people receive the care and support they need at all times. Managers also undertake extremely robust and detailed analysis of all aspects of the care provided and produce excellent monthly management reports. These inform the practice of all staff and have led to young people making significant progress in all aspects of their lives. No shortfalls were identified at the last inspection and none have been identified as a result of this inspection.

A placing social worker commented: 'My young person has come on significantly at this home. At their previous placement, they spent nearly all of their time in their bedroom. The young person now socialises with other young people in this home and their more concerning behaviours have improved.'

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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