

SC043732

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. It is registered to provide care for up to 11 children with learning and physical disabilities. There were eight children living at the home at the time of the inspection.

The manager is registered with Ofsted and is suitably qualified and experienced. They were present throughout the inspection.

Inspection dates: 8 to 9 November 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **inadequate**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **inadequate**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **inadequate**

There are serious failures that mean children and young people are not protected and their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded.

Date of last inspection: 22 September 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
22/09/2021	Full	Good
27/08/2019	Full	Good
09/04/2018	Full	Good
06/09/2017	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

Children's progress and experiences are impacted on by an inadequate judgement in the help and protection of children. This is a limiting judgement that affects other areas of children's care. The concerns identified are not widespread but consist of several events that have the potential to cause harm. The vulnerability of the children increases these risks.

Children are happy in the home. They are supported by a team of staff who are nurturing and caring. Staff know the children well and are attuned and responsive to their needs. Professionals and families give positive feedback about the care being provided. Staff speak warmly and fondly about the children. They have worked hard to provide care to the children, sometimes in challenging circumstances.

All the children attend education that is specific to their needs. The children have access to a range of activities in the home and community. Staff are creative in finding activities that will benefit the children and provide positive experiences. They work with local community groups in obtaining additional resources to provide children with a stimulating environment. As a result, children have opportunities to engage in a range of activities that help to support sensory and social development.

Children are supported to stay in touch with people who are important to them, and the team works closely with families and people who are important to the child to maintain these relationships.

Children's health needs are well met, and staff work with a range of external professionals who provide advice, guidance and training to the team. On one occasion, external support services were not provided in a timely way. This impacted on the stability of a child's placement as their needs increased and additional support from external professionals took time to access. This child eventually moved to another home that was more suitable in meeting their complex needs.

Children's care plans are not always clear when detailing some constraints in the home, such as the locking of wardrobe doors and why this is necessary. Children have a say in the décor of the home and staff have used creative artwork produced by the children in some areas. Children's achievements and significant milestones, such as birthdays, are celebrated, and staff are proud of children's achievements and progress.

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

On one occasion, a bruise was observed on a child's neck following an incident of restraint. This was attributed to staff using massage on the child following the

incident. Staff had not been trained in applying deep-tissue massage and this was not part of an approved care plan. The covering manager had not fully explored the cause of the bruise or consulted with all relevant safeguarding leads. The explanation given was not congruent with safe practice. A lack of professional curiosity has led to an unsatisfactory explanation being accepted. The home's manager had failed to identify these shortfalls during their own quality assurance and monitoring processes.

On another occasion, staff used an inappropriate and unsanctioned breakaway technique to manage a child's behaviour. On review of this incident, the manager failed to identify this as inappropriate, challenge its use, or consider what behaviour management techniques would be more appropriate. This failure to challenge practice could place children at risk of harm. Additionally, this incident could have been avoided entirely with improved behaviour management techniques employed at an earlier stage.

Immediately preceding this incident, the child had been 'guided' to a bedroom for swearing at staff. This is not part of an agreed behaviour management plan. The way that some low-level compliance issues are managed lead to an escalation in behaviour and, sometimes, higher-end restraints as a consequence. There is a lack of meaningful debriefing with staff to reflect on practice and discuss what they might do differently the next time.

There were two incidents where one child was hurt by another child. On both occasions, children were under staff supervision. On one occasion, a child went into another child's bedroom and scratched and pinched them while they were in bed. Staff were unable to intervene swiftly enough to prevent this, and the child stated that they felt frightened because of this. A supervisory discussion was undertaken with staff to try and prevent this happening again, but not all staff actions were considered during this discussion. This means that not all factors were considered in determining whether the supervision of children is safe and effective.

Conversely, there has been an incident where staff did not use a physical restraint when it would have been the right time to do so. This was when a child was behaving in an unsafe way near a road. The way that this incident was managed, and the staff's decision-making regarding the use of behaviour management strategies, were not discussed as part of the staff debrief.

Concerns have been raised by external professionals, including concerns raised by a school, and a social worker. Where concerns have met the safeguarding thresholds, these have been shared and investigated by the external safeguarding officer and no further action was deemed necessary. On occasion, there have been differing opinions regarding the care of children and practice in the home.

Risk assessments do not always contain sufficient detail regarding known and specific risks. They do not consistently reflect behaviour support plans and there is

conflicting information between some plans. For example, in one child's risk assessment it says to remove their wheelchair if they are displaying challenging behaviour, whereas the behaviour support plan says that the child can use their wheelchair as a place of safety to help them to regulate their emotions. This could lead to confusion and inconsistency of practice for staff.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

A lack of management oversight and professional curiosity around some incidents has led to shortfalls in the safeguarding of children. Some staff practice has not been challenged or questioned, and this could allow unsafe behaviour management strategies to increase. Children's behaviour support plans have not been reviewed or updated to reflect the strategies being used by staff. This prevents staff from following clear and agreed plans.

The manager is passionate, child focused and has high aspirations for children. Managers and staff are strong advocates for children and work well with other professionals to try and achieve positive outcomes for children. The team is well supported by a stable management team and a manager peer group.

Staff have access to a range of training courses, although not all staff have completed training relevant to the specific needs of the children. This would support staff in their development of understanding children, and their knowledge and skills. Sometimes, agency workers are used to cover shifts, but their qualifications are not checked. This prevents the manager from knowing whether agency staff are sufficiently qualified to manage the complex needs of the children. However, it is positive that any new agency staff working at the home receive an induction, and they shadow shifts before being allowed to work with the children. This provides the manager with assurance about their skills.

Staff have regular supervision and debriefs, and they feel well supported by the management team. Some debriefs do not support staff in reflecting on their practice and learning from incidents. The team has experienced staff shortages, but staff have worked hard to cover any shortfalls and provide consistent care to the 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; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other; are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies; that the effectiveness of the home's child protection policies is monitored regularly. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(iv)(vii)(e)) In particular, this relates to reviewing incidents, risk assessments and behaviour support plans. It also relates to creating a culture of support and challenge, where behaviour management strategies and incidents can be unpacked and the learning used to promote continuous improvement.	16 December 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	16 December 2022

promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home’s statement of purpose; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home; demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received; and use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(c)(f)(g)(ii)(h)) In particular, this relates to management oversight of the home and incidents, qualifications of agency staff, and learning from incidents and concerns.	
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* These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

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: SC043732

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Lincolnshire County Council, County Offices,
Newland, Lincoln LN1 1YL

Responsible individual: Janice Spencer

Registered manager: Gemma Hart

Inspectors

Sarah Orriss, Social Care Inspector
Joanne Vyas, Social Care Inspector

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