

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 and is registered to provide care for up to 11 children with physical and/or learning disabilities.

The manager is registered with Ofsted and is suitably qualified and experienced.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

We last visited this setting on 8 and 9 December 2020, to carry out an assurance visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 22 to 23 September 2021

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: 27 August 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
27/08/2019	Full	Good
09/04/2018	Full	Good
06/09/2017	Full	Good
07/02/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children receive positive and nurturing care from a team of staff who know and understand them well. The staff team has gone above and beyond at times during the COVID-19 pandemic and coronavirus outbreaks in the home. Staff have undertaken additional shifts to minimise the need for agency cover and to provide the children with consistent care. Staff show care and dedication to the children, even during more challenging periods in the home.

Children are making good progress overall, particularly with communication, and they are developing independence skills. Staff are skilled in communicating with the children and adapting their practice to meet children's needs. Children have access to a range of activities in the home and community, and most of the children have had a summer holiday this year at the seaside. Staff planned these breaks away from the home with great care.

All the children have individualised, bespoke care plans. These are regularly reviewed and updated. One child, who came to live at the home in an emergency, was not recorded on the online system. This meant that detailed records were not kept for this child about their time at the home or the circumstances of them moving out of the home after a short period of time.

Staff work with a variety of external professionals to ensure that the children's health and care needs are monitored and regularly reviewed. There have been improvements in the administration of medication, with a more robust system now in place. All the children attend education settings that are specific to their needs.

Children are supported to stay in touch with people who are important to them. Staff have been creative in finding ways for children to communicate, such as using video calls and producing monthly newsletters. The newsletters are shared with families and professionals, and they provide a regular update on the children's activities in the home.

Transition planning for children moving out of the home is not always effective or timely. This has led to some children remaining at the home post-18, until a suitable adult placement has been identified. As a suitable placement has not yet been identified for one child, they will have a period of respite care until a permanent home can be secured for them. This does not support smooth transitions from the home to new placements, and can cause the children some anxiety. The transition file is not regularly updated and does not always contain current information about a child's capabilities and needs.

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

Overall, incidents in the home have been managed well. There has been a robust response to allegations of harm and relevant professionals have been consulted. However, not all allegations have been reported to Ofsted, and this has prevented oversight from the regulatory body. New forms have been put in place for staff to use following allegations. These forms detail the action to be taken and the reporting procedures.

Physical intervention is used appropriately in the home, and is only used as a last resort. Staff use a variety of de-escalation techniques to try and manage incidents prior to using restraint. Overall, restraints are well documented and have clear management oversight. New debrief forms have been created to capture children's views following incidents. One child, who was placed at the home in an emergency, did not have incidents and restraints appropriately recorded. The incidents were written as staff accounts, and lacked evaluation and management oversight. Debriefs with staff and the child were not undertaken following incidents. This prevented staff from reflecting on their practice, and prevented a child from giving their views.

Children's risk assessments are confusing, as there are several different versions contained in different documents. Not all risk factors are clearly recorded or identified. Risk management strategies, such as maintaining specific staffing levels, are not consistently recorded across all plans. The staff's knowledge and understanding of the children's risks are not replicated in the children's written plans.

Members of the management team have undertaken safer recruitment training to improve their knowledge and understanding. A shortfall was identified in safe recruitment practice, but the deputy manager was proactive in ensuring that this was rectified once it had been highlighted.

The physical environment is kept clean, and is warm and homely. A staff member has painted bright murals on several walls, and children have helped with the artwork. Children have been consulted about the redecoration of their bedrooms and the home. All the bedrooms are personalised, in line with children's individual interests. Some areas in the home present as minimal, in line with children's sensory needs, but are clean and comfortable. Some further maintenance is planned in the home to improve some areas where damage has been caused.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager is a strong leader and is a visible presence in the home for children and the staff team. The manager is assisted by two deputy managers, who provide good management support in the home. Managers act as role models for wholly child-centred practice. The management team has implemented a series of positive changes in the home, which are designed to improve the quality of care children

receive and support further development. The manager utilises audits and monitoring tools to implement change and improvement in the home.

Staff in the home say that they are well supported by the manager, who is described as approachable and knowledgeable. Staff have confidence in the manager and are committed to delivering the manager's vision for the development and progression of the home. Staff have been given opportunities for professional development, and have been assigned responsibility for specific tasks, all of which assist in developing their skills.

The manager has high expectations of the team, and has carried out a skills audit to identify areas of strength and weakness. Not all staff have regular supervision, and this limits opportunities for reflection and development of working practices.

Staff have undertaken a range of training courses and are currently having regular in-house workshops around theory-based practice, to further develop their knowledge. External professionals have also delivered training to the team around the specific healthcare needs of children, to develop the skills needed to support them. There have been some challenges for staff who are undertaking the required level 3 qualification, due to the impact of COVID-19 on colleges and availability of tutors. A plan is in place to support staff to complete this qualification following the easing of restrictions.

The manager works well in a variety of multi-agency teams and is a strong advocate for the children. Positive feedback was provided by professionals on the care children receive and the progress children make in the home.

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. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)) In particular, this relates to children's risk assessments, and ensuring that they contain all known and relevant risk factors and are regularly updated to identify risk management measures.	1 December 2021
The registered person must ensure that all employees— undertake appropriate continuing professional development; receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience; and have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (4)(b)) This relates to staff receiving regular formal supervision.	1 January 2022
The registered person must ensure that— within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes—	1 December 2021

the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(vii)(b)(i)(ii)(c))	
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which— include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child; and are kept up to date. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b))	1 December 2021

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that recruitment processes safeguard children and minimise potential risks to them. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)
- The registered person should ensure that Ofsted is notified of any incident relating to the protection, safeguarding and welfare of a child living in the home, including any allegation of harm made against staff. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 63, paragraph 14.10)

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: Lincolnshire County Council

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

Responsible individual: Janice Spencer

Registered manager: Gemma Hart

Inspector

Sarah Orriss, Social Care Inspector

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