

SC442777

Registered provider: Warrington Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority home provides short breaks for a maximum of three children with learning difficulties and physical disabilities.

The home has a new manager, who registered with Ofsted in January 2021. She is suitably qualified and experienced in working with children with disabilities and complex health needs as she was previously the deputy manager at the home for several years.

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

Inspection dates: 27 and 28 July 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 28 January 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/01/2020	Full	Outstanding
30/01/2019	Full	Outstanding
03/10/2017	Full	Outstanding
13/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The short-breaks service continues to provide exceptional care.

Children experience their short breaks in small compatible groups. The matching of children is a strength and is done in line with children's wishes and feelings. The children are actively encouraged to share their preferences of who they like to stay with, which means that they have opportunities to have a sleepover and make new friends.

Everything achieved in the home is focused around making it an inclusive experience for children. Activities are captured on canvas pictures, videos and in scrapbooks, which gives children a sense of increased self-worth and belonging. When the children leave the service, the memories of their journey are captured in photo books and presented to them as gifts.

Children are making exceptional progress using their preferred communication method. The use of a wide range of communication tools that are bespoke to the children's communication needs is a strength of the home. Meticulous observations of children's body language, facial expressions and vocalisations are undertaken to ensure that those who are non-verbal are well-engaged.

Children can choose the most appropriate format to enable them to make a complaint if they wish, for example by using large print and picture exchange symbols. This gives all children a voice to be heard so that they can share their feelings.

The home is maintained to an excellent standard. This is evident in the decor and very good-quality furniture, which creates a homely and relaxed environment. On the hallway wall, there is some artwork of a tree which has several branches. Each branch contains photos of children, past and present, alongside photos of the staff team. This provides children with an outstanding visual aid and gives them a sense of belonging.

Although children do not reside permanently at the home, staff promote good educational outcomes. Staff actively take part in all school annual reviews and are fully aware of the educational needs of each child. This provides children with a consistent approach.

Children receive positive outcomes across all aspects of their development. Bespoke sleep studies and observations have been facilitated recently to enhance children's health needs and gather information about how best to support them.

Children's emotional well-being is prioritised by the vast number of opportunities on offer to them, including sensory play, day trips, interactive games and baking. Consequently, children say that they like the activities and enjoy the time they spend at the home.

Children are actively encouraged to be part of a community. For example, they visit local food banks and there is a charity walk planned to take place over the summer. Pedometers have been bought for staff and children. Everyone will have the opportunity to take part. Children who use wheelchairs will be able to place the pedometers on their chairs. This demonstrates the team's determination for inclusivity.

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

Staff have a gentle and calm approach towards behaviour management when children become upset or frustrated. Staff use a variety of de-escalation techniques, such as going out for a drive, a local walk or spending time in quiet areas. This helps children to reduce their anxiety and divert their attention positively. As a result, there have been no incidents of physical intervention, and other incidents are very minimal.

Staff are appropriately trained in child protection. They clearly demonstrate their roles and responsibilities and know when and how to respond to any safeguarding concerns. Children's risks are well understood and documented. The use of research-informed practice to source Makaton safeguarding training and child-friendly resources has enabled staff to work with children on understanding their bodies. Age-appropriate tools and games make this educational but also enormous fun.

Children say that they feel safe in the home. They say that they are actively encouraged to feed back and discuss safety in meetings through a wide range of communication tools, including the picture exchange communication system, photos and drawings. Parents and social workers also agree.

Appropriate consideration is given to fire safety, and each child has a personal evacuation plan on file. These are child friendly with the use of colour coding and are regularly reviewed. The plan provides vital information to ensure that children are safe in the event of a fire. Regular drills and evacuations take place to ensure that all children are familiar with the procedures.

Managers and staff attend all child-in-need meetings, case conferences and reviews as a great emphasis is placed on multi-agency and partnership links. Consequently, plans are detailed and up to date with accurate information to best meet the children's needs. There are effective working relationships with speech and language therapists, complex needs nurses, social workers and schools. Multi-agency working is a key strength within the home.

There are effective and robust medication procedures in place to ensure that all children have the appropriate and correct medication that they need to maintain their emotional well-being.

Recruitment procedures and practices are safe and effective. Managers have recently completed safer recruitment training. All staff are checked and vetted prior to starting work. These checks ensure that only suitable adults are employed to work with children in the home. Good-quality induction programmes ensure that staff are fully equipped to care for children safely, in a manner that protects their rights and dignity.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The home has a new manager, who registered with Ofsted in January 2021. She is suitably qualified and experienced in working with children with disabilities and complex health needs as she was previously the deputy manager at the home for several years. She is supported by a deputy manager, who has also worked at the home for a considerable number of years. The combination of their skills and experience provides the home with strong leadership. They are passionate and extremely child centred.

Parents and staff say that the managers are approachable and that they have brought a new energy to the team.

A dedicated and stable staff team has been in place for many years. This ensures that all children's needs are fully understood. Children benefit from highly capable and nurturing staff who know them well.

The managers recognise the importance of continuing to drive improvements. They look to provide ongoing innovation and share good practice. The deputy manager has delivered training to wider parts of the borough, which has helped families to develop skills and understand new approaches to behaviour. Managers have continued to successfully monitor and report on the quality of care provided in the home.

The team has created lockdown videos to keep in touch with children who are shielding due to their health conditions throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. On their return to their short breaks, children and staff celebrate with 'lockdown hero awards' in recognition of their achievements for staying safe. This also helps to ease children's anxieties and rebuild their confidence.

Supervision is regular. Reflective practice and discussions support staff to grow and develop the quality of care that they provide. This means that managers lead with very high aspirations for all the children.

There is a new independent person, who has provided improvements in the quality-of-care reports. This enables the manager to make continuous developments to the service, which benefits the children.

The registered manager's auditing and oversight are exceptional. She ensures that parents and carers are very much involved in the development and review of children's care plans and risk assessments.

Children's case records are detailed, up to date and signed by all. The records are written in a person-centred way. Improvements have been made to the language used. For example, behaviour support plans are now called emotional well-being support plans. This further indicates the child-centred ethos and culture that are firmly embedded in the team.

Effective relationships with families are firmly in place. Comments and feedback are welcomed and very much encouraged. Parents say that they feel confident leaving their child in such capable hands.

The registered manager has recently developed some excellent networking opportunities through various forums, such as a registered managers' network. As a result, staff have received up-to-date training in research-informed practice, trauma-informed practice, and safeguarding, alongside all mandatory training.

The team also receives training that is tailored to the individual needs of the children and their complexities, such as epilepsy, asthma and the use of eye gaze equipment. This means that children receive the best quality of care and have all their health needs met by a highly skilled team.

One recommendation has been made to ensure that all parents who live apart receive copies of the progress reports and updates on their child's stays.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the home's records on each child represent a significant contribution to their life history. Children and parents should be supported to understand the nature of records kept by the home and how to access them. This particularly relates to parents who are separated both receiving any progress reports. (Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.5)

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: SC442777

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Warrington Borough Council, Children's Services,
New Town House, Buttermarket Street, Warrington WA1 2NH

Responsible individual: Sharon Cooper

Registered manager: Julia Edwards

Inspector

Judith Birchall, Social Care Inspector

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