

1247885

Registered provider: Carlisle Mencap Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is registered by a charitable organisation to provide care and accommodation under short-break arrangements for up to five children and young people.

The home provides children and young people with a child-centred approach. The forefront of all practice is conducted in a safe, caring, relaxed and homely environment.

The registered manager has a social work degree and many years' experience in children's social care.

Inspection dates: 29 to 30 October 2018

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: 7 March 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
07/03/2018	Interim	Improved effectiveness
19/04/2017	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children and young people are making excellent progress in all aspects of their lives. Each child or young person has a dedicated key worker to support them and their family. During the short-break stays in the home, the parents and carers hold the central role in relation to many aspects of the care of their child or young person.

The management team researches documents in relation to the children and young people's difficulties and diagnoses and shares their findings with the staff. Consequently, staff have the confidence and knowledge to provide specialist care that is consistent with the care provided at home and school.

Children and young people experience warmth and sensitivity from experienced staff, who understand their complex needs. With understanding and insight, staff help the children and young people to manage their emotions and enjoy their time spent in the home. In this nurturing, welcoming home, children and young people benefit from relationships with their peers and they respond to high-quality care from the staff.

A major strength of the home is in the skills the staff deploy to support the children and young people's families and how well they work with external professionals. Because of this, the children and young people enjoy the best possible experiences during their time spent in the home. Feedback about the services provided and the care that the children and young people experience is overwhelmingly positive. For example, parents commented:

- 'Nice and friendly atmosphere and my child loves going there and always looks forward to going again.'
- 'It's a very bright and colourful friendly place. Staff are very nice and friendly and always answer any questions we have.'
- 'They provide a safe and very caring environment for the children in their care; outstanding services all round.'
- 'My apprehension disappeared when I visited and met the staff and chatted to other parents and carers. It is evident that the children really do enjoy coming to this home.'
- 'This home, well it has been a blessing to us.'

And, professionals said:

- 'The staff have always been very approachable, friendly and professional with myself, my colleagues and other professionals, providing a very welcoming atmosphere when visiting the home. All staff are always going over and above to make children and families feel welcome, relaxed and manage any hurdles with such enthusiasm and this really makes a difference.'

- 'Staff are always keen to find out what challenges parents or carers have at home, using these to support their targets for the children.'
- 'From my point of view, I would say that the staff are always very knowledgeable during the children and young people's reviews. They always attend in terms of supporting the transition from children's respite to an adult setting. The information they provide is often crucial for informing assessments and care plans during the transition stage.'
- 'Children with difficulties are not always able to mix socially with their peers out of school. Attending this home provides this opportunity. They can make and importantly maintain friendships. To this end, the staff always strive to identify peers with whom individuals can develop and sustain positive relationships.'

Over the holiday period, staff worked tirelessly to host a summer full of exciting activities and experiences. As a result, children and young people had fun socialising, playing with friends and enjoying trips out, all of which is captured in photographs displayed in the home and on the home's secure social media site. Children and young people have access to sensory equipment, information technology, books and games to enjoy in the home. The home is well presented, furnished and decorated to a high standard.

The children and young people's short-break care plans are very well written by the staff. Separately, but running alongside the staff's care plans, are 'all about me' plans, and these include the children and young people's comments. The plans are focused on the individual needs of each child or young person, including their education, health, care, behaviour and communication needs. Routines, as well as the likes and dislikes of each child or young person, are well understood by the staff. The children and young people's preferences are recorded.

Children and young people are helped to make choices about all aspects of their lives. Their views are important to the staff, who ensure that they are involved in the running of the home. For example, children and young people personalise their bedrooms with items brought from home, contribute their thoughts on the decoration of the communal areas and put forward their ideas for leisure-time activities.

The management team ensures that there is careful and considered planning and preparation before children and young people come to stay at the home. Transitions into and out of the home are thoroughly planned and involve the children and young people and their families during every stage of the process. This ensures that agreements are in place which meet the children and young people's current and future arrangements.

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

Staff spoken with during this inspection demonstrated a thorough knowledge of safeguarding practice. They were confident that the procedures and strategies agreed safeguard the children and young people comprehensively. Parents and professionals consistently feel that their children and young people are safe in the home. One parent commented, 'He is in a safe and trusting environment,' and a placing social worker said,

'I would be confident and happy to place my child here.'

Staff have safeguarding training and the research they carry out is specifically related to children who have difficulties. This ensures that staff are attuned to recognise and respond to non-verbal indicators that there may be a concern. There are excellent arrangements in place to provide safe night care. These include the handover of essential information every evening and morning.

During each handover, all medication in the home is checked and signed for. This ensures that all medication is accountable, prescribed correctly and that the batch numbers match the records in the home. There is a clear understanding between the staff and parents and carers about bringing in and taking home the children and young people's medication.

By the nature of the children and young people's difficulties, risks are clearly recorded. Staff demonstrate an excellent understanding of the children and young people's specific needs and evolving vulnerabilities. Risks associated with children and young people are well known and understood by staff. Children and young people become increasingly safe because of the close supervision and the actions staff take to protect them.

Behaviour in the home is well managed. Physical interventions are rare, consequences are not used and none of the children and young people have been missing from the home. The staff apply de-escalation techniques to manage behaviours to ensure the safety of all children and young people.

There has not been any need for physical intervention with the children and young people since the last inspection. Two staff working in this home are trained to teach the staff in the home's preferred behaviour management model. This ensures that a consistent approach is taken by staff when managing the children and young people's behaviour.

The children and young people are protected by careful recruitment procedures. Regular monitoring of staff prevents unsuitable people from being employed in the home.

Thorough and regular health and safety checks ensure that the physical environment of the home is safe and secure. These arrangements protect the children and young people from harm or the risk of harm. Children and young people have personal evacuation and emergency plans. They take part in frequent fire drills to ensure their safety in the event of an emergency.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager and his assistant managers provide strong, supportive and inspirational leadership to the staff. The management team encourages a culture whereby everyone takes responsibility for developing the service. Creativity is encouraged, welcomed and valued. Consequently, children and young people benefit from highly motivated staff who use their personal and professional skills to provide high

standards of care.

For example, a member of staff, in consultation with the children and young people, has used her creative skills and artwork to make attractive murals and superhero door signs. Other staff fundraise and undertake charitable work, and donations from a local business have contributed to the facilities in the home that the children and young people enjoy.

This home has an experienced, confident and professional staff team. Staff, including night care staff, hold relevant childcare qualifications. The experienced staff who have spent numerous years working in the home are passing on their skills and knowledge to new staff who have recently joined the home.

Staff access a wide range of training. This includes mandatory training in safeguarding and behaviour management as well as more specialist training relating to autism spectrum disorder, attachment and loss. Staff have excellent knowledge of children and young people's individual diagnosis and difficulties. They deliver and support care in a safe and consistent manner.

The registered manager encourages continual staff progression, through team meetings, supervision and appraisals. He makes sure that he stays up to date with current legislation and guidance. This helps to ensure that his knowledge is current. This includes identifying relevant research documents and sharing them with staff. Consequently, staff have the confidence and knowledge to provide the specialist care that the children and young people need.

Staff are aware of the importance of information for the parents and carers about their children and young people's time spent in the home. They provide information from the beginning of each child or young person's journey. These brochures, memory books, diaries and journals are added to throughout the children and young people's day care and short breaks.

The management team ensures that the staff team develops positive, supportive relationships with parents, carers and professionals. Parents and carers feel confident about leaving their children and young people for short-break stays and they understand what the home provides.

Staff are accessible and keep parents, carers and professionals informed about their children and young people's time and/or stays at the home. This home provides a valuable service. The staff support families and the children and young people, and this allows much-needed and welcomed respite care to be provided. This keeps the children and young people and their families together.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children

and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and 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 whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: 1247885

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Carlisle Mencap Ltd

Registered provider address: Unit J3, Duchess Avenue, Kingmoor Park North, Carlisle
CA6 4SN

Responsible individual: Sheila Gregory

Registered manager: Craig Scott

Inspector

Mark Kersh, social care inspector

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