

SC059203

Registered provider: Northumberland County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is run by a local authority and is registered for the short-break care and accommodation of up to six children or young people who have learning disabilities.

The manager has been registered since 2011.

Inspection dates: 7 to 8 March 2019

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

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: 12 March 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/03/2018	Full	Outstanding
24/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
18/11/2016	Full	Outstanding
24/03/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness

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

Recommendations

- Staff must help each child to prepare for any moves from the home, whether they are returning home, moving to another placement or adult care, or to live independently. This includes supporting the child to develop practical skills such as cooking, housework and personal self-care. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 17, paragraph 3.27) In particular, staff should ensure that targets/goals are set for children which are measurable, and progress is clearly recorded.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The children and young people receive outstanding care that meets their complex needs. This high quality of care is very nurturing and responsive to children's individual needs. The children and young people have an enjoyable experience and usually make exceptional progress.

The children and young people have excellent relationships with the staff and they have formed positive friendships with their peers. Many relationships have been maintained over a number of years and continue after the children and young people leave. Meaningful attachments have been made that enable children and young people to develop positive bonds, which develops their feelings of self-worth.

Parents and professionals speak highly of the service and describe how much their children and young people enjoy their short breaks. One parent said, 'He really enjoys going. The staff are very friendly and are always genuinely happy to see him, and make him feel welcome. Communication is excellent, and they do absolutely loads of activities together. If I ever need anything, they are always there. I have no complaints.'

Another parent commented on their child attending short breaks, '[Name] loves going there. She looks in the calendar to see when the next visit is. They do lots of wonderful excursions. She loves cooking and going shopping with her peers and staff.'

The planning of children and young people's short breaks is effective. This includes time spent with parents and carers and with the children and young people. Goals and targets are agreed and set, enabling children and young people to develop at a pace that is right for them. Staff provide appropriate prompts and encouragement. The staff know the children and young people very well and opportunities to practise skills are introduced during day-to-day activities and experiences. However, in some cases, the targets that have been achieved are not always clear. Therefore, this reduces the staff's ability to follow the progress made.

The staff team has very good proactive links to health and education professionals. A team leader or the manager attends the children and young people's school review meetings. Many of the children and young people attend the adjacent school. This ensures that sharing of information helps children and young people achieve positive outcomes.

The community nursing team trains the staff in specialist areas of support, for example tube feeding, with staff competence being assessed. This ensures the safe care and maintenance of good health of the children and young people attending their short break.

Children and young people's views and opinions are integral to the planning of their short breaks. One group of children and young people attending short breaks together decided that they would like to visit a football match. The manager and her staff researched with the children and young people and together they managed to accomplish this wish. The staff contacted a professional football club and made arrangements to ensure that each child and young person's needs were met. This enabled a positive experience to be had by all, thus promoting children and young people's self-esteem and confidence.

The staff complete with children and young people a personal diary that details their short-break experience. Children and young people share their experience with their families. This promotes a sense of belonging and self-worth.

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

Meticulous care takes place in planning for short breaks. Discussions with professionals, parents and families ensure that staff have well-developed, specialist knowledge to safeguard children and young people. The staff ratios are high, which ensures that children and young people are suitably supervised and safely observed, without the staff being intrusive or restricting the children and young people's liberty.

There have been no incidents of going missing and none of the children and young people are currently assessed as at risk of exploitation or radicalisation. The staff are highly vigilant and follow safeguarding protocols to protect children and young people from harm. The quality of recording relating to safeguarding incidents is very good.

The children and young people live in a safe home that meets their needs. The home has made improvements to the living environment, specifically bathing facilities. They are designed to meet the complex needs of the children and young people who come for their short breaks.

The location of the home is ideal for vulnerable children and young people. It is in the grounds of a school, away from busy roads and other potential environmental hazards. The children and young people have excellent relationships with local shopkeepers and residents.

Individualised short-break care plans are well written. They record risks and behaviours unique to children and young people with complex needs and disabilities. Risk assessments

highlight the management of health needs and steps to take to keep children safe.

Staff are trained well in safeguarding children and young people. Children and young people's medication is administered safely and monitored effectively, thoroughly and effectively. The staff have completed first aid training and have undertaken the necessary medication competencies. This ensures that the health needs of children and young people are safely met.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager is very experienced and suitably qualified. She is inspirational, dedicated and enthusiastic about her role. She is highly visible as she works alongside her staff. She models outstanding practice to a staff team that is highly efficient in its provision of exceptional care. She has a wealth of knowledge about the children and young people who access short breaks. This ensures that progress is continuous in the development of the service.

The manager recognises the importance of care planning and charting the progress of children and young people. For example, she has devised a transition plan for the local authority. This is now being used by both children and adult services. This ensures a standardised and accurate transition plan, enabling young adults to have the same level of care as in children's services.

The manager is supportive of her staff, children and young people and their parents and carers. A social worker commented, 'This is an outstanding service which I feel is truly child-centred and is managed to a very high standard. She is a very experienced manager who will also share information about the children and young people promptly, attend relevant meetings and have regular contact with both parents and professionals alike involved in the care of the children and young people who attend the service.'

The staff receive regular supervision, training and support. A recommendation made at the last inspection has been met and has enhanced the quality of the supervision by ensuring that safeguarding is a stand-alone agenda item. This strengthens the safeguarding culture of the home.

The manager is creative in meeting children and young people's complex needs to ensure that short-break stays are planned safely. For example, a parent has attended a staff meeting to provide a personal overview of his child's daily care needs. The staff team felt that this was a very positive way of providing the right environment for a child prior to attending their short break.

The manager is confident and is highly able to challenge others if this is required. Her relationships are built on trust and integrity and she researches a wide variety of conditions and disabilities to enable her staff to meet the needs of children and young people accessing short breaks effectively.

The manager ensures that the statement of purpose is adhered to in full.

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: SC059203

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Northumberland County Council

Registered provider address: County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 2EF

Responsible individual: Karen MacDonald

Registered manager: Susan Ghulam

Inspector

Michael Dack, social care inspector

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