

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 may have learning disabilities.

Inspection dates: 14 to 17 February 2020

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: 7 March 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
07/03/2019	Full	Outstanding
12/03/2018	Full	Outstanding
24/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
18/11/2016	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children and young people receive high-quality, person-centred care. The staff work in partnership with parents, carers, health and educational professionals to ensure that children and young people receive highly individualised care. This dedicated and committed approach encourages sharing of information which is central to ensuring that each child and young person makes progress and has a positive experience during their short-break stays.

The manager attends children and young people's care team meetings throughout the week leading up to their short-break stays. Children and young people's diagnosis, changes in presentation and behaviour are shared with staff. This often leads to further research being undertaken to enable specialist care to be provided. Staff are knowledgeable and confident in their approach, knowing that practice is consistent with care provided at home and school.

The moment that children and young people arrive at the home, they enthusiastically gather with staff to plan and prepare their short-break stays. This involves every aspect of their care, from activities to shopping and menu planning. A range of communication aids support children and young people's understanding and decision-making. Children and young people's care planning is highly supported through the use of pictorial reports and guides. This enables children and young people to feel valued and respected, developing confidence and self-esteem throughout their stays.

A social worker said: 'It's like a young person's club, where they come and choose what they want to do, what to eat, promoting their independence skills and achieving as they go. It provides quality, it is not about just sitting down and watching television. It is totally focused on the children and young people and what they want. A lot of planning goes into it. The staff are very skilled, and stability is exceptional.'

Goals and targets are set and agreed with children and young people and their parents and carers. They are discussed in care team meetings and often form agreed goals with education. This consistent approach of working together benefits the progress children and young people make in all aspects of their independence. Children and young people's well-being is continually promoted.

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

Children and young people's complex needs are consistently met. Through careful and methodical care planning, each child and young person receives bespoke care that supports their safe care.

Staff are vigilant and observant in ensuring that children and young people are safeguarded from potential harm. They ensure that knowledge gained from a variety of sources informs well-written risk assessments and risk management plans.

Children and young people take part in a range of activities inside the home and in the community. They are supported to do so by appropriately skilled staff, ensuring that staffing levels are high and often flexible in numbers to manage changes in behaviour. This was evident during the inspection. A detailed handover took place facilitated by the manager, emphasising the need at all times to dynamically risk-assess behaviours and the environment. This avoids any complacency and minimises potential harm to children, young people and staff.

The home is located in the grounds of a school, which is ideal during the weekend, when short breaks take place. It is quiet and away from traffic, enabling children and young people to enjoy ample space and privacy in which to play safely. The children and young people are mostly known to the local community and as such have positive, friendly relationships with local shopkeepers and residents.

Many of the children and young people who come and enjoy short-break stays have complex health needs. The manager ensures that staff are competent and knowledgeable in meeting health needs associated with, for example, tube feeding and nut allergies. The on-site school nurse provides training to staff prior to children and young people arriving for their short breaks. This supports safe care and the maintenance of good health.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager has a wealth of experience and knowledge. She is a hands-on manager who demonstrates a commitment and enthusiasm to children and young people that is shared by her staff. She inspires a culture of high aspirations; it is about what children and young people can achieve rather than what they cannot. This ensures that children and young people spend time in a very positive environment in which they progress.

The manager has been central to the development and implementation of inclusive care plans, using pictorial formats, symbols and Braille. These are developed with direct input from children and young people, listening to their views and opinions. This helps children and young people to develop confidence and ownership in their care planning.

The manager is passionate about creating opportunities for children and young people. For example, she has worked with a local authority professional on career development for children and young people with additional needs. A visit to the service to meet with children and young people took place, arranged by the manager. This has led to positively identifying possible career pathways with adult services in future care planning.

Staff morale is high. They receive regular supervision, training and support. Feedback about the working environment and management is overwhelmingly positive. For example, staff commented:

- 'I've been here since it opened and always liked working here. We work well together; everything comes from the top. We are consistent, know our jobs and it is a pleasure to work here.'
- 'I've been here a long time. We are always striving to find new ways of working, always looking to develop the service.'
- 'Staff are committed to each other and have the same goal, striving to improve ourselves to meet the children and young people's needs.'
- 'It is our team, very inclusive. All staff are involved in decision-making in discussing solutions. She [Manager] listens to what we say.'

An external professional said: 'I absolutely love coming here. I have excellent relationships with all the staff. I really like that they are absolutely child-focused and that comes from the manager and staff absorb that.'

The manager has effective monitoring and audit processes in place. There is also a child-friendly audit tool in pictorial format to support children and young people's understanding of their files. This shows the desire to engage children and young people in all aspects of the development of the service.

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: 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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