

1243962

Registered provider: North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare NHS Trust

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home provides short-break provision for children with severe learning disabilities and associated complex needs. The service provides overnight short-break care for up to six children at a time.

The home is operated by a combined healthcare NHS trust. The manager registered with Ofsted in November 2017 and has a level 5 diploma in leadership and management for residential childcare.

Inspection dates: 31 January and 1 February 2023

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: 29 November 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
29/11/2021	Full	Good
04/03/2020	Interim	Improved effectiveness
24/06/2019	Full	Good
28/02/2019	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children receive nurturing care from qualified nurses and experienced healthcare support workers. The service currently supports 39 children with complex health needs. During the inspection, five children were enjoying their short break.

Since the last inspection, eight children no longer use the service. Staff help children to prepare for moves and buy them gifts when they leave. Seven children who previously did not access short-break stays now benefit from regular visits. Children are referred to the service through a multi-disciplinary forum. The registered manager works well with children, their parents and professionals. Children and their family contribute to planning their initial visits. This helps to prepare children for changes to their routines and reduces anxieties for children and their family.

Through discussion with parents, staff develop a good understanding of children's routines at home and try to replicate these when children are on their short-break stays. This supports children to understand what is expected of them and helps them to settle quickly.

Staff help children to prepare for school and welcome them home on their return. They have regular contact with children's teachers to understand children's targets, progress and needs. This means that staff can encourage children to make progress with their learning and independence skills. For example, one child's target is to feed herself from a loaded spoon. This was promoted during her evening meal and the child was praised by staff when she achieved this.

The registered manager ensures that children's health needs are understood by the staff caring for children. Prior to one child's stay, staff were being supported by a community care nursing specialist to understand changes to medical equipment that is now been used to manage the child's medical condition. In addition to this, all staff had received training on the medical condition and the new equipment.

Children have positive relationships with staff and managers, who know them well. Staff are skilled in communicating with children using a variety of different communication methods, including Makaton and picture exchange communication system.

During short break stays, children enjoy playing with toys and outdoor equipment that is suitable and accessible for children with complex health needs. Although the frequency of community activities has increased since the last inspection, staff are keen to do even more, which they are planning.

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

The registered manager and staff understand the importance of safeguarding children and are professionally curious when they notice changes in a child's presentation. They share information with relevant people and sensitively seek to understand children's experiences to reassure themselves that children are not being harmed. This practice helps to keep children with limited communication safe.

It is rare for staff to use physical intervention. For one child, there is an agreed plan for staff to physically intervene to help to ensure that the child takes their medication. Since the last inspection, the child is taking their medication more readily and without staff needing to physically intervene. This progress has reduced the child's distress while ensuring that their health condition is well managed.

One nurse has started working in the home. A human resource team undertake recruitment checks. Additionally, the registered manager audits recruitment records and identifies any gaps before the person works in the home. This practice reduces the risk of children being cared for by unsuitable individuals.

The home is designed and furnished to meet the needs of children who have short breaks. Specialist lifting equipment and specialist beds are used if children's assessed needs require this. All specialist equipment is serviced regularly to reduce the risk of accidental injury.

Health and safety is taken seriously. Regular audits are completed on the environment and systems are in place to prevent infection. Staff wear face masks when children are visiting to reduce the risk of spreading viruses, such as COVID-19. Systems are in place to reduce the risk of fire, and children have a personal emergency evacuation plan in place in the event that this is needed.

There have been no occasions of children going missing from home, being bullied or exploited.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager has a good understanding of the home's strengths and areas that she wants to progress. For example, discussions have been held regarding creating memory books for children to take with them when they no longer need short breaks. This will promote children's identity and provide them with opportunities to reflect on their positive experiences.

Staff understand and are invested in the manager's vision and ethos for the short-break service to be child focused. This contributes to children benefiting from care that respects their dignity and enables them to have positive experiences.

Children receive care from an experienced and consistent staff team. Some staff hold a degree in nursing. Most staff are qualified in health and social care or are completing this qualification. The registered manager ensures that all staff have up-to-date training in subjects that are specific to their job roles and the individual needs of children.

Staff enjoy caring for children who are on short breaks. The registered manager ensures that staff receive regular supervision and annual appraisals. This contributes to staff feeling well supported. Team meetings are occasionally held and provide a safe space for sharing ideas to develop the quality of care provided and group reflection.

The registered manager and staff build positive working relationships with parents and professionals, who speak highly of the care and support that children receive. This reassures parents. One parent recognised that it provided their child with opportunities to stay overnight with friends, and enhances family life.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should keep and encourage children to keep appropriate memorabilia of the time spent living at the home and help them to record significant life events. In particular, ensure that discussions and plans to develop memory books for children are followed up and implemented. (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: 1243962

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: North Staffordshire Combined Health Care and NHS Trust, Lawton House, Bellringer Road, Stoke on Trent ST4 8HH

Responsible individual: Sharon Parke

Registered manager: Tracey Flanagan

Inspector

Helen Malanaphy, Social Care Inspector

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