

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 a short-breaks service for children with learning disabilities and associated complex needs. The home provides overnight short-breaks care for up to six children.

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: 11 and 12 October 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: 31 January 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
31/01/2023	Full	Good
29/11/2021	Full	Good
04/03/2020	Interim	Improved effectiveness
24/06/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Staff provide children with individualised care that promotes their welfare and celebrates their differences. Children are supported to express themselves using their preferred method of communication. This ensures that staff understand children's wishes and feelings. Staff ensure that sensory equipment is accessible for children. As a result, children can self-soothe and regulate their emotions.

Children are supported to access the service on a regular basis. This means that children develop a sense of belonging and build trusting relationships with staff. On two occasions, the inspector observed one child return home from school and seek comfort from staff by snuggling up to them as they sat together on the sofa to relax. There has been one occasion where the manager assessed that they could no longer safely meet the needs of one child. The child was supported to move on from the service.

Staff have established good working relationships with children's teachers. On occasions, staff will visit children at school and their home. Staff talk to teachers and children's parents to understand children's routines and goals. This information is used to inform the children's care plans and helps staff to provide children with care they are familiar with.

Independence is promoted by staff. Staff encourage children who have limited speech to express their wishes by using individualised communication systems, including visual aids and the Picture Exchange Communication System. This helps children to make decisions. The inspector observed children using these systems to choose what they would like to eat and drink. Staff also used role play to encourage children to clean their face and hands after mealtimes. This practice respects children's dignity and promotes life skills.

Qualified nurses take a leading role in monitoring children's complex health needs. Children's weight and height are recorded on each visit. Medication is managed well most of the time. Since the last inspection, there have been two occasions when nurses have not administered medication in line with the prescriber's direction due to miscommunication. The manager investigated both incidents and identified learning that is now embedded in practice.

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

Managers and staff understand children's behaviours and risks well. Plans in place provide staff with effective ways of managing risk and behaviours. This reduces the frequency and severity of incidents that occur.

Staff notice changes in children's behaviours and presentation and are curious about what may be the cause. They share information with the manager so this can be

monitored and escalated if there are concerns about a child's safety. Staff demonstrate a good knowledge of safeguarding procedures and report concerns about people who are in a position of trust. Since the last inspection, there have been no allegations about staff who work in the service.

Supervision of children is good, there is a culture where restrictive physical intervention is only used as a last resort. There have been no occasions where restrictive physical intervention has been used.

Some children display self-injurious behaviours. Staff use positive touch, such as stroking the child's forearm or hand, coupled with verbal prompts, to prevent children from hurting themselves. Staff use activities and sensory toys to redirect behaviours. This means that children are less likely to hurt themselves.

The environment is adapted to meet the specific needs of the children who access the service. Specialist items, such as lifting equipment, beds and bathroom facilities, are in good working order and serviced on a regular basis. The manager has given thought to the decoration and furnishing of the service to ensure that the individual sensory needs of children can be met.

Two new healthcare support workers have been employed. The manager carries out recruitment checks and ensures that safer recruitment processes are followed. However, on occasions, employment history has not been fully explored.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager has a clear, child-centred vision for the service. This is understood by the staff, who provide care that is nurturing and takes account of each child's complex needs. Staff understand the positive impact children's stays have on both the child and their family members.

Children receive care from a qualified, experienced and consistent staff team. Staff are supported to keep their knowledge up to date and undertake training that supports them in their role to meet the individual needs of children who access the service.

Quarterly team meetings are held, and staff are supervised by managers in line with the trust's expectations. Staff's performance is appraised on an annual basis. These meetings provide staff with the opportunity to discuss children's experiences during their stays, reflect on practice and contribute to their personal development and the development of the service. Staff feel supported well by managers. They enjoy their role and are motivated to provide children with positive experiences.

The appointment of an activity worker is a positive addition to the staff team. Staff support children to participate in a wider variety of activities and children's artwork is displayed around the home. Children are now able to explore more activities in the community. This means that children are expanding their experiences and having fun.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that they make suitable arrangements to manage and administer any medication. These are fundamentally the same sorts of arrangements as a good parent would make but are subject to additional safeguards. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.15)
- The registered person should ensure that good employment practice is maintained. They must ensure that recruitment of staff safeguards children and minimises potential risks to them. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)

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 Healthcare NHS Trust, Lawton House, Bellringer Road, Stoke on Trent ST4 8HH

Responsible individual: Sharon Parke

Registered manager: Tracey Flanagan

Inspector

Helen Dunn, Social Care Inspector

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M1 2WD

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