

SC034900

Registered provider: Nottingham City Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is registered to provide short breaks for up to 11 children and young people at a time who have learning disabilities and/or physical disabilities. It is owned and run by a local authority.

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 October 2022

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

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

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: 1 March 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
01/03/2022	Full	Outstanding
05/02/2020	Full	Outstanding
12/12/2018	Full	Outstanding
21/11/2017	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children receive high-quality care from staff who know them incredibly well. Children's plans are intricately detailed, making it clear to staff what they need to do to keep children safe. Staff regularly record what they like about children and they can readily recall what children are good at. For example, one child's record states that they have a lovely smile and are good at taking selfies.

External professionals state that without this service, children would be at greater risk of isolation in the community.

Children are provided with opportunities to make friends and to be part of fun activities. For example, a group of children had a 'girls' night' in the lounge and other children went pumpkin picking. One child was given the opportunity to work alongside the cleaner and to create a video log of her cleaning duties. This was excellent care practice because the child aspires to work as a cleaner.

There are some children who prefer to be on their own rather than with other children. For these children, the manager ensures that they are still provided with fun activities. For example, after recognising that one child liked water play, staff booked out a swimming pool for the child to use on their own.

Managers recognise that all children need to feel comfortable in the home environment and therefore they take great care to find out about children's sensory needs before they visit. Staff consistently communicate with children's families and external professionals. When it was identified that one child struggled with high-pitched sounds, they were not cared for alongside a child who liked to squeal when feeling excited.

Parents are unanimously positive about the service. One parent described it as 'a lifesaver', and another said that their son loved coming to the home. Parents and carers regularly attend a carers' group, which is well attended. This group offers a networking opportunity for carers to exchange contact details and share experiences. One parent told the inspector, 'Since working with this group my son has done things that he was not able to do all his life, such as sitting at a table to eat a meal and being able to go to the park.'

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

Children's plans clearly identify what steps staff need to take to ensure that children's safety needs are consistently met. For example, some children are at increased risk of choking. Staff are aware of this and they adapt the child's environment to reduce the risk of this happening.

Staff ensure that children's bedrooms are decorated to meet each child's needs. For instance, for those children who will cope with the stimulation, staff will add pictures, soft furnishings, and toiletries to a child's bedroom to make them feel comfortable. However, when it is identified that a new child would not cope with this level of stimulation, staff remove these items before the child's arrival.

Managers feel that they are in a privileged position in being able to care for so many disabled children. This gives them increased knowledge to share with other professionals. Managers have undertaken research as to why children with disabilities are particularly vulnerable in society, and they are working alongside a local university to share their safeguarding expertise.

Although children are well safeguarded and protected overall, some shortfalls have been identified at this inspection. There have been a few medication errors which have resulted in children's medication not being administered or recorded appropriately. Furthermore, there have been several instances when night staff have 'nodded off' when they should have been awake. Lastly, when children have hurt staff, it is not clear from staff's recordings exactly how they have been injured.

Managers acknowledge that there have been some medication errors and they have tightened medication processes to ensure that practice improves. Managers recognise that it is unacceptable for night staff to fall asleep when caring for children. To address these issues, managers have implemented several protective measures. For example, night staff now check on each other throughout the night to ensure compliance.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

This home benefits from having a consistent, stable management team. Managers know each child and their family extremely well. Some children have been making use of the home for several years, and those children who are now adults are still welcomed to the home and will regularly visit staff. One of these adults has devised some interview questions for new staff, using a signs board.

Staff are positive about the support that they receive from managers. They are regularly supervised and receive good inductions. Staff have daily breakfast meetings, handover meetings and team meetings to share information. When children struggle to be cared for by certain staff, staff are reflective and take advice as to what they could do differently to make each child feel comfortable. One staff member said that this is the best place she has ever worked at.

Due to several of the children communicating non-verbally, staff recognise the importance of looking at each child's behaviour as a means of communication. Staff have undertaken Makaton training and they will actively use signs and symbols with children to improve their levels of communication and interaction. The staff are well trained and are excellent at problem-solving.

Managers recognise that the service is in high demand and although there is a waiting list for children wanting care, managers work hard to be flexible and support families as best they can. For example, care was adapted for one child so that their family could attend a funeral.

It is clear from this inspection that this home is ambitious for children. Children make significant progress and are provided with opportunities to achieve and have fun.

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

- The registered person should ensure that prescribed medicines are only administered to the individual for whom they are prescribed. Medicines must be administered in line with a medically approved protocol. Records must be kept of the administration of all medication, which includes occasions when prescribed medication is refused. Regulation 23 requires the registered person to ensure that they make suitable arrangements to manage, administer and dispose of any medication. These are fundamentally the same sorts of arrangements as a good parent would make but are subject to additional safeguards. Where the home has questions or concerns about a child's medication, they should approach an expert such as a general medical practitioner, community pharmacist or designated nurse for looked-after children. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.15)
- The registered person should ensure that all staff consistently follow the home's policies and procedures for the benefit of the children in the home's care. Everyone working at the home must understand their roles and responsibilities and what they are authorised to decide on their own initiative. There should be clear lines of accountability. Each home must have clear arrangements in place to maintain effective management when the manager is absent, off duty or on leave. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.20)

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: SC034900

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Nottingham City Council

Registered provider address: Nottingham City Council, Loxley House, Station Street, Nottingham NG2 3NG

Responsible individual: Kay Sutt

Registered managers: Joanne Wright
Ella Lawrence-Cowling

Inspectors

Andi Lilley-Tams, Social Care Inspector
Louise Copping, Social Care Inspector

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