

North East Lincolnshire Council

North East Lincolnshire Council Short Break Services (Home and Community Support)

Inspection report

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Ratings

Overall rating for this service

Good ●

Is the service safe?

Good ●

Is the service effective?

Good ●

Is the service caring?

Good ●

Is the service responsive?

Good ●

Is the service well-led?

Good 

Summary of findings

Overall summary

North East Lincolnshire Council Short Breaks Service (Home and Community Support) is a domiciliary care service registered to provide personal care to people in their own homes. They provide care to children and young people who may have a learning disability or autistic spectrum disorder, a physical disability or sensory impairment. The care service has been developed in line with the values that underpin the 'Registering the Right Support' and other best practice guidance. These values include choice, promotion of independence and inclusion. People with learning disabilities and autism using the service can live as ordinary a life as any citizen - Registering the Right Support CQC policy.

At the last inspection the service was rated Good.

At this inspection we found the service remained Good. This inspection report is written in a shorter format because the overall rating of the service has not changed since the last inspection.

There was a registered manager at the service.

Children and young people, known throughout the report as children were protected from the risk of abuse because staff understood the signs and symptoms of abuse and knew their responsibilities for recording and reporting issues. Risks were managed so that children avoided injury or harm. Staffing numbers were sufficient to meet children's needs, recruitment systems were followed to ensure staff were suitable to support children and the management of medicines and infection control and prevention were safe.

Staff employed were trained and qualified to carry out their roles, they were supervised and received an annual appraisal of their performance. Children were supported to have maximum choice and control of their lives and staff supported them in the least restrictive way possible; the policies and systems in the service supported this practice. Children received appropriate support with nutrition and hydration.

Children received compassionate care from kind staff that knew about their needs and preferences. They were supplied with the information they required, were involved in their support plans and asked for their consent before staff undertook any support tasks. Staff respected children's wellbeing, privacy, dignity and independence.

Parents told us that their children received responsive support from the service, where staff ensured children experienced every opportunity in life. Staff gave of their own time, had boundless patience and extended the service to support parents as well as children. Staff enabled children to have a very happy and fulfilled childhood and youth. Children were supported according to person-centred support plans, which reflected their needs and were regularly reviewed. An effective complaint system was used by parents and carers/guardians of children and complaints were investigated without bias. Children were encouraged to maintain relationships of their choosing with family and friends.

The service was well-led and children had the benefit of both a culture and management style that were positive. An effective system was in place for checking the quality of the service using audits, satisfaction surveys and meetings. Children and their parents made their views known through various methods. Their privacy and confidentiality of information were maintained, as records were held securely on the premises.

Further information is in the detailed findings below.

The five questions we ask about services and what we found

We always ask the following five questions of services.

Is the service safe?

Good ●

The service remains good.

Is the service effective?

Good ●

The service remains good.

Is the service caring?

Good ●

The service remains good.

Is the service responsive?

Good ●

The service remains good.

Is the service well-led?

Good ●

The service remains good.

North East Lincolnshire Council Short Break Services (Home and Community Support)

Detailed findings

Background to this inspection

We carried out this inspection under Section 60 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 as part of our regulatory functions. This inspection checked whether the provider is meeting the legal requirements and regulations associated with the Health and Social Care Act 2008, to look at the overall quality of the service, and to provide a rating for the service under the Care Act 2014. This was a comprehensive planned inspection.

We carried out this inspection on 20 September 2018 and it was announced. The provider was given 48 hours' notice because the location provides a domiciliary care service and we needed to be sure that someone would be in.

One adult social care inspector and one Expert-by-experience carried out the inspection. An expert-by-experience is a person who has personal experience of using or caring for someone who uses this type of care service. The expert on this inspection had experience of caring for children with learning disabilities and autistic spectrum disorder. They made telephone calls to parents of children that used the service on 19 September 2018 to ask their views of the support their children received.

We gathered information before the inspection from notifications that had been sent to the Care Quality Commission (CQC). Notifications are when providers send us information about certain changes, events or incidents that occur. We received feedback from local authorities that contracted services with the agency

and reviewed information from people who had contacted CQC to make their views known about the service they received. We used information the provider sent us in the Provider Information Return. This is information we require providers to send us at least once annually to give some key information about the service, what the service does well and improvements they plan to make.

We spoke with parents of 12 children that used the service and foster parents of two more children. We spoke with the registered manager and two staff that worked at North East Lincolnshire Council Short Breaks Service (Home and Community Support). We looked at care files belonging to two children that used the service and at recruitment files and training records for two staff. We viewed records and documentation relating to the running of the service, including those for quality assurance and monitoring and management of medicines.

Is the service safe?

Our findings

At the last comprehensive inspection, we found the service was safe and awarded a rating of Good. At this inspection, we found the service continued to be safe.

Parents of children that used the service consistently told us they were completely happy with every aspect of the service. They said, "I trust staff with my child. I wouldn't just let anyone take care of my child because they are so complex", "Staff are completely trustworthy", "I have peace of mind and am completely happy my child is safe" and "It was a bit tricky in the early days because of medicines being so complicated but now the service runs so well."

One parent said, "My child is definitely safe with their team. I spent the first year with the team and we went out as a family unit so they had an opportunity to get to know [Name]. They now take my child out independently of me, which has been good for everyone concerned and it means I get to spend more time with my other children. Everything was based around [Name's] communication and I needed staff to get to know [Name] before they took responsibility."

Systems in place continued to ensure children's safety around child protection measures, risk management, staffing levels, recruitment of staff, management of medicines and infection control and prevention practices.

Staff demonstrated child protection knowledge and were responsible with handling protection situations. They understood and managed the risks around children's needs and followed risk assessments so that children remained safe. Accident and incident procedures formed the basis of robust systems to manage children's safety and protected them from harm. We saw that staffing levels were appropriately maintained, consistently assigned to children for continuity of care and deployed according to a matching process.

Staff recruitment files evidenced that robust procedures were followed to hire suitable staff for providing care and support to children that used the service. Security and suitability checks were carried out before staff worked for the service. The management of medicines was safe with children receiving most support from their parents, but staff sometimes held this responsibility and followed safe practice guidelines. Staff also followed safe infection control and prevention guidelines and their practice was to a high standard.

Is the service effective?

Our findings

At the last comprehensive inspection, we found the service was effective and awarded a rating of Good. At this inspection, we found the service continued to be effective.

Parents of children that used the service told us staff understood their children well and were skilled in supporting them. They explained that staff were excellent with time keeping, communications, consistency of staffing and the quality of the support provided. They said, "Staff are very knowledgeable and need to be, because my child has very complex needs", "My children always have the same staff to support them", "I am always contacted regarding any information I need to know", "They have a complete can-do approach, which works so well for me. If I have a date where they're offering me a service and I can't manage that, they will try and change it for me, which is great when you have such hectic lifestyle" and "Timekeeping is absolutely brilliant. If the staff are running late my child still gets their full allocated time."

Children's needs were assessed and staff received the training, support and development they required to carry out their roles in meeting these. Assessments included details on personal care that children required and their social, medication, medical and dietary needs. Parents were entirely responsible for their children's support needs, but when parents entrusted their children to staff then staff maintained effective service delivery.

Children were not considered under the Mental Capacity Act 2005, as their parents and appointed guardians were their legal representatives. Those over 16 years of age whose legal representatives were the local authority under the 'Looked After Children' legislation did have their mental capacity assessed to ensure their rights were protected. The registered manager and staff were knowledgeable about children's legislation and would invoke any processes they felt applicable to protect the rights of the children they supported.

Consent to care and support for children was provided by parents and those with legal responsibilities for them, but staff also sought consent from children as tasks needed to be done. For example, when helping them with mobility, health care, dietary intake, personal care, social activities and sometimes taking medicines. Children's needs were clearly documented and discussed with parents and so staff knew what support they required.

Is the service caring?

Our findings

At the last comprehensive inspection, we found the service was caring and awarded a rating of Good. At this inspection, we found the service continued to be caring.

Parents of children that used the service told us they were highly delighted with the care from staff. The overall feedback from everyone was incredibly positive. They spoke about amazing, caring, thoughtful, knowledgeable and supportive staff who also extended that care to family members. Parents told us that staff respected children as individuals and made every day so easy for them as they were organised, energised and full of practical advice. They said, "My child always looks forward to being with their carer", "Staff are comfortable around us and we have some great banter", "When my child goes out with staff they always come back happy", "I call the carer 'Mary Poppins', as she is practically perfect in every way and 'Swiss army knife' because no matter what you need she has it in her handbag" and "I have my own issues to contend with but the carer organises me as well. She takes care of me too."

Staff were mindful of children and parents' diverse needs and gave examples of how they had assisted people and parents to avoid or challenge discrimination from the service, other organisations and when out in the community. For example, the service held seasonal parties and religious events throughout the year but where these would exclude certain children, the focus of the events was changed to become more inclusive; instead of a celebration of Easter and Christmas staff held spring and winter wonderland parties, where those from all faiths could join in. The service had an adapted holiday chalet, a caravan and transport for children with physical disabilities who might otherwise not be able to take a holiday.

Staff had a 'can-do' attitude that they passed on to children as well, giving them every opportunity to experience life to the full. They demonstrated a respectful approach to upholding the privacy, dignity and independence of children that used the service.

Is the service responsive?

Our findings

At the last comprehensive inspection, we found the service was responsive and awarded a rating of Good. At this inspection, we found the service continued to be responsive.

Parents told us staff responded well to meeting their children's needs and had very good skills as well as understood their social and cultural needs, diverse values and beliefs. Parents told us their children's needs around personal and medical care were met by flexible staff. They said, "Staff are so flexible, and understand that sometimes I need to change my dates, because I have other children and appointments. [Name's] worker really moves things around to suit me, including when I take [Name] to hospital, they will come with me and sit with [Name] while I am there", "Staff have given my child an opportunity to improve their social skills and experience other stimulation by doing other things. Staff also help me out in the school holidays and if they didn't my child would just sit in their bedroom and not mix at all."

Other parents said, "My child just enjoys going out for a hot chocolate with the staff. They find it difficult to socialise but the staff are helping them. And they now go to different places", "Staff are not just taking my child out. They do a lot of work with them, and teach them lots of different strategies", "Staff give my child grown-up choices and build on their independence skills, so they go to restaurants, where they can choose their own food. Due to my child's lack of communication they can find this quite frustrating. Staff give them opportunities to try things out." They said, "I've never thought how I'd complain as I've always been very happy with the service", "I'm very vocal and have no problems putting my point across, ask anyone at the service. So, I wouldn't have a problem making a complaint if I wasn't happy, but I have always been happy", "I've never needed to complain but would be happy to speak to anyone in the office."

Children's support plans were person-centred and contained detailed information that told staff on how best to meet children's needs. They contained personal risk assessment forms to show how risk to children was reduced, for example, with postural changes, mobility, moving and handling, nutrition, bathing and engaging in social activities and events. Support plans had details on children's communication needs. Where children experienced barriers to accessing services, staff made reasonable adjustments and action was taken to remove the barriers in relation to communication and access needs. Staff completed basic sign language courses in their own time and learned to use children's preferred communication methods; Makaton, sign language or picture exchange communication systems. Support plans and risk assessments were reviewed monthly or as children's needs changed.

Staff at the service encouraged some children to undertake AQA units to have their achievements recognised. AQA are a charity education awarding body. Children's activities were recorded on 'weekly logs sheets' that described the activity they had undertaken and how successful these had been. Staff had visited local businesses asking for raffle prizes for the spring and winter wonderland parties during their own unpaid time. This enabled children and parents to have fun anticipating winning a prize and money was raised for funding future events. One staff member enabled a young person to attend work experience by accessing the short breaks vehicle when their college transport was out of action. The person was reported to have had a fantastic time. A team of staff helped to de-clutter, clean and rearrange the home of a child

whose parents split leaving the single parent, who was also physically disabled, to care for the child. Staff made the home safe and practical for the single parent to safely care for the child.

A local business with play area held a one day a month session specifically for those children with disabilities, so they could experience the same opportunities as other children and not feel intimidated by large crowds. This was a facility lacking for children with disabilities in the local area.

Evidence in children's files of the activities they joined in with and the support they received also described their reactions to these. For example, children's weekly logs and personal care logs had comments such as '[Name] was very vocal, smiley and happy and had a really good night', 'Nice and relaxed, lots of smiles', '[Name] seemed very happy and settled throughout the activity', 'Was very positive and responded well to direction' and 'Very vocal due to excitement.' Many children were unable to verbalise their experiences and so staff often relied on observing children's behaviour and demeanour or their known gestures and sounds to demonstrate whether children were happy with their support.

The staff team were nominated in 2017 for the local authority's 'leading lights' award, and while unsuccessful, the nomination demonstrated their value within the service. Staff responsibilities included domiciliary support, evening sits, community work and supporting with independence skills, and required them to have specialist knowledge and training in many areas of learning and physical disability needs. Staff always sought to develop their skills and completed courses in 'basic sign language' or understanding the needs of children with complex health conditions.

There were robust systems in place for children and their parents to make complaints if they wished to. A complaint policy and procedure were clearly written and enabled parents to make their concerns known. Records showed that complaints and concerns were handled within timescales. Compliments were also recorded in the form of letters and cards.

Is the service well-led?

Our findings

At the last comprehensive inspection, we found the service was well-led and awarded a rating of Good. At this inspection, we found the service continued to be well-led.

Parents of children that used the service told us the service was very well-led. They said, "They do an amazing job at 'short breaks'. They text me information and I can contact them that way easily too", "The service is very well run. I cannot say enough about them", "I think the service is well run. I like the idea of the events that they put on such as summer and Christmas parties, which give people a chance to get together. You feel part of a bigger team. When you are at the events you always have full support from the staff" and "It's just a perfect service for me and my child."

There was a registered manager in post who knew their registration responsibilities. They sent notifications to the CQC and fulfilled their regulation requirements. They were inclusive, approachable and enabling in their management style. A registered manager is a person who has registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to manage the service. Like registered providers, they are 'registered persons'. Registered persons have legal responsibility for meeting the requirements in the Health and Social Care Act 2008 and associated Regulations about how the service is run.

The service continued to foster a person-centred culture with good leadership and management. It continued to use a robust quality assurance and monitoring system to ensure the delivery of the service was improved year on year. Quality audits were completed on a regular basis and satisfaction surveys were issued to people that used the service, relatives and health care professionals.

The service kept records regarding children that used the service, staff and the running of the business. These were in line with the requirements of regulation and we saw that they were appropriately maintained, up-to-date and securely held.

Good relationships with other agencies and organisations were fostered. A local children's soft play facility worked with staff and agreed to hold closed sessions for children with disabilities, so they could use the facility peacefully and alongside their peers. Relationships with such as the local fire department were established to hold jointly facilitated events and sessions where fun and learning were the aim. Joint working with healthcare professionals ensured children had support with health needs where necessary.