

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC059842
Inspector	Lynn O'Driscoll
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council
Registered person address	Town Hall Victoria Square, PO Box 29 BOLTON BL1 1RU
Responsible individual	John Vincent Daly
Registered manager	Julie Elizabeth Whitehead
Date of last inspection	18/03/2014

Inspection date	07/01/2015
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	outstanding
Outcomes for children and young people	outstanding
Quality of care	outstanding
Keeping children and young people safe	outstanding
Leadership and management	outstanding

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	outstanding
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This is a highly flexible, needs led short break service where the children and young people 'love' going to. They enjoy excellent relationships with the staff and their peers and feel very safe, secure and happy. They thoroughly enjoy taking part in lots of new and meaningful activities which demonstrably improves their competences and confidence. Their views are always central to the continual development of the services provided, so they feel valued, which in turn significantly increases their self-esteem. Parents describe this service as a, 'godsend' and 'lifeline' which has helped keep families together.

This home is exceptionally well managed and the safeguarding arrangements and quality of the care provided by a particularly stable, experienced and child-focussed team is outstanding. The diverse and highly complex individual needs of children and young people with a wide range of disabilities, ages, backgrounds, cultures and faiths are extremely well met.

Rigorous and effective internal and external monitoring systems are firmly established. Consequently, there are no regulatory shortfalls or recommendations arising from this inspection.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This is a council owned and run children's home. It is registered to provide a short break service for up to five children and young people at any given time who have a permanent and substantial disability. They may also have additional health care needs arising from sensory and physical impairments and/or a range of challenging behaviours.

These short breaks often form part of a broader package of support to families, which is reviewed every six months to ensure it remains suitable.

There are currently 16 males and 15 females aged between 8 and 17 years accessing this service from a range of backgrounds and cultures.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/03/2014	Interim	good progress
15/01/2014	Full	outstanding
19/03/2013	Interim	good progress
25/07/2012	Full	outstanding

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **outstanding**

Children and young people 'love' having short breaks at this home. One parent said, 'My daughter has no speech but you can tell with her eyes and big beaming smile and belly laughs that she loves coming here'.

Children and young people particularly enjoy the opportunity to access a wide variety of stimulating activities not previously experienced. Examples include a range of adapted water sports and abseiling. A number of children and young people particularly enjoy going to the theatre. One young person has recently been to the zoo. This is a major achievement given his specific diagnoses and anxieties. Another young person said, 'I am very active and at this home there is space to climb, run, jump and skip.'

Over the summer holidays all 31 children and young people who access this service went on a trip of their choice. They were also actively involved in organising the annual summer fun day which is an extremely popular family event. This year they introduced a 'fun photo booth' which provided lots of laughter. Moreover, they take part in regular charitable events.

Individual interests and talents are actively encouraged and supported by the staff. This significantly increases children and young people's confidence and competences. One parent said, 'My child loves computers, books and trains. Staff make his hobbies happen for him.' Comments from children and young people include, 'I am very happy here and have made lots of friends. Everyone says that my confidence has grown. Staff say I cheer everyone up with my beautiful smile. I love cooking and I am a great help in the kitchen, working in the garden and having relaxing bubble baths. I now have my own cookery slot in the newsletter', 'I like coming here. I enjoy sitting in the garden and drawing which I am good at. The food is good and the staff are friendly and kind' and, 'I love spending time in the garden looking after the plants, playing on the swing and bouncing on the trampoline, going on the computer, arts and crafts and chatting to staff.'

A number of children and young people really enjoy the opportunity to garden and grow a variety of fruit and vegetables. One young person was thrilled to be able to select and buy plants for the sensory garden.

Many got involved in producing an outdoor mural with a local artist depicting their positive experiences at this home. Others simply enjoy some independence away from their parents where they can be teenagers, relaxing with their friends.

Individual, challenging yet realistic objectives are set for each child and young person with their key workers and their progress is reviewed every month. Many relate to constantly developing independence skills. Outstanding outcomes already achieved

include, significantly improved communication, mobility, eating and toileting routines and writing skills. One young person can now tolerate having his teeth cleaned. This is outstanding progress given his extreme aversions. None of the children and young people drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes, take illicit drugs or commit offences. Self confidence and self-esteem has demonstrably improved for many. This is being reflected in young people putting on shows for their peers and the staff.

Young people are making exceptional progress in developing their independence skills from their individual starting points. Many get the opportunity to cook and bake which they thoroughly enjoy. Parents say they cannot praise this service enough and the outstanding achievements their children have made as a direct result. Comments include, 'It's fantastic. The staff are amazing. It's home from home and it's the equivalent of having a sleep over at Grannies. My daughter has been coming for 2 years and we have seen her confidence blossom. We get a complete break and time with our other children knowing she is having the time of her life. The Christmas party was brilliant and the staff singing for us was a really special touch', 'My son has been coming here for 10 years and he really enjoys it. He likes the staff, playing in the garden and going out on trips. His speech is improving and he is developing important self-help skills especially around personal hygiene and food preparation', 'My son loves his short breaks and it is a lifeline for our family. The care is second to none. He has learned to strip his bed and take his bedding to the laundry' and, 'This is a first rate facility. Since starting at this home we have seen our child develop both socially and emotionally which is a huge step for her. As parents it is a lifeline and somewhere we feel totally at ease with leaving our daughter in the care of the amazing staff that work there'.

One young person proudly announced, 'I can now make my own breakfast and supper so I am now learning to wash my own hair at bath-time.'

Quality of care

outstanding

All the children and young people who access this short break service benefit from an outstanding quality of care and enjoy excellent relationships with the staff and their peers. They are provided with an extremely nurturing experience that is stimulating, rewarding, enjoyable and developmentally positive. The staff have an excellent knowledge of, and are extremely responsive to, individual and highly complex needs and personal preferences.

The staff use a wide variety of communication methods to ensure all the children and young people can express their wishes and feelings which are positively responded to. This makes them feel respected and valued and in turn markedly increases their self-esteem. One parent wrote, 'My daughter has no speech but the staff know if she's happy or upset with her eyes and smiles etc. They all communicate with her fantastically'. One young person said, 'My cerebral palsy has affected my speech but I am good at telling staff what I want and they are patient with me.' Staff are also

highly competent in sensitively helping children and young people to understand when their wishes cannot be met if they are not in their best interests and to learn the necessary and important social skill of sharing the communal equipment.

A number of young people are actively involved in the development of the service and were recently formally recognised at an awards ceremony. Examples include the recruitment and selection of social workers and the training of foster carers. Some young people thoroughly enjoy contributing to the home's newsletter. One young person has a quiz page, another has a joke corner and another writes a cookery page. One group have produced a child friendly complaints leaflet since the last inspection and others have revised the welcome booklet.

One young person particularly enjoys representing his peers at quarterly meetings with the manager. He said, 'I like these meetings. They make me feel valued.' Any issues raised by young people are efficiently addressed. For example, providing new paths leading to the greenhouse to ensure improved access for wheelchair users. He told the manager that 80 people attended the Christmas party including 'his mate' and they are all really enjoyed themselves. The staff practised a song as a surprise and he said, 'This shows how much they think of us. It was fabulous.'

This service offers a range of opportunities for the children and young people, their parents and stakeholders to regularly comment on the quality of care provided. The feedback received is consistently extremely positive. 100% of the social workers and independent reviewing officers who responded to the Ofsted survey 'strongly agreed' that the quality of care provided at this home is excellent. They also confirmed highly effective partnership working.

Social workers particularly highlight the 'excellent support' young people and their families receive during their transition into adult services. This enables them to settle quickly. Independent reviewing officers specifically highlight the 'excellent reports' provided by this home to inform reviews which evidence all the activities they take part in. This comment from a professional reflects many similar views, 'This is a very well run and organised short break care home, which is very friendly, welcoming, and a home from home. Staff are extremely helpful and accommodating, and always go the extra mile to make children and young people's stays stimulating, busy and happy. The staff are dedicated to ensuring the best possible outcomes for all the children and young people'.

The manager attends multi-agency resource meetings to ensure children and their families are provided with a bespoke package of care and support that best meets their unique needs and circumstances. Gradual and sensitive admission processes ensure children and young people settle quickly. One young person is rightly very proud of his responsibility for making new admissions feel welcome. Recent positive developments include, the extension of initial tea visits to enable the night staff to meet new children and young people and their families. They have also introduced regular coffee evenings to enable parents to chat with the night staff about their

child's night-time routines. These are very well attended and proving beneficial to both staff and parents.

Staff are highly respectful of parental wishes about their child's care during their short breaks, so they are extremely happy with the services provided. Comments include, 'We communicate by phone a lot and when I go in staff always make time to speak to you and also ask questions either way. They are very approachable', 'My daughter is very demanding and requires a lot of attention and a lot of care. They carry this out amazingly and they give me a rest and quality time with my other daughter. They do a fabulous job and make it a home from home environment. I am so happy and so is my daughter', 'It is excellent service and a god-send. The building is spacious and ideal. The garden is fantastic. The staff are consistent and experienced. They are all wonderful people who work hard and show love and care. The parent liaison is excellent and the events such as the summer fair are a great chance to meet other parents' and, 'All the staff as individuals are fantastic but as a team they are awesome. They are very welcoming and always there to listen to us. They are like our extended family. I am totally happy with this home and the staff who ensure my son's wellbeing.'

Children and young people's individual health needs are fully assessed prior to commencing placement which informs their personalised support plans. Staff benefit from a particularly good working relationship with a wide range of health colleagues. This ensures the timely provision of specialist services and equipment and staff training to best meet some highly complex health needs. Examples include, the safe and effective use of the cough assist machine, medication, epilepsy, first aid, and tube feed training. Parents confirm robust medication processes. One parent said, 'My daughter is on a number of tablets and the staff are always very diligent with their procedures on admission. They are very thorough and always check the quantity, her dosages and any changes before I leave.'

Although the primary responsibility for education remains with parents or carers, the staff do actively promote learning during their short breaks and ensure their 100 per cent attendance and punctuality. They have also established excellent liaison with schools, educational psychologists, speech and language therapists and physiotherapists and contribute to education reviews. This enables all the children and young people to reach their individual potentials. One young person said, 'I was worried about going to my new school but it was made easier because I had already met some young people that go there during my short breaks.'

Different cultures and faiths are respected and actively promoted during their short stays. For example, one young person likes singing hymns with the staff and they join him in his prayer time before settling down to sleep. One parent wrote, 'My son is Catholic and a member of staff made it possible for him to go to Lourdes this Easter. He had a fantastic time'. He experienced travelling on a plane for the first time which he loved and paddling in the sea, which was his particular heart's desire.

This bungalow was purpose built to ensure it provided the space and specialist equipment required to meet the diverse needs of the children and young people. In fact, local specialist schools use their excellent facilities to develop their pupils independence skills in a living environment rather than a classroom. This home is always very well maintained and has recently been redecorated throughout. Young people chose the colour schemes. One bathroom has also been converted into a shower room since the last inspection at the request of young people. This home is well equipped with good quality indoor and outdoor materials for stimulating children's interests including noisy toys, light stimulation, sensory equipment and soft play. Independent visitors who report on the quality of care provided in this home are all impressed with the accommodation and facilities on offer. Comments include, 'The building is in an excellent condition. The furnishings and equipment are well maintained. It is homely and child centred', 'This home is immaculate and decorated to a high standard throughout. All the specialist equipment is in good working order' and, 'It is very welcoming and has a nice, modern feel. There is a lovely child friendly sensory garden well equipped with outdoor toys, a homely kitchen and bright and colourful bedrooms.'

Keeping children and young people safe outstanding

All the children and young people feel very safe and secure during their short breaks. The careful consideration of bookings ensures compatibility and safe and positive experiences for all the children and young people. Consequently, there are no incidents of bullying. One young person said, 'I feel safe here. The staff hold my hand until my seizures stop and they read me a story which helps me to go to sleep at night.' Comments from parents include, 'The care and support my son gets at this home is always first class and he always feels safe', 'As a family we really appreciate the rest and can confidently leave our daughter at this home knowing she is extremely well looked after' and, 'I can relax knowing the staff know how to keep my son safe.'

All the staff are specifically trained in safeguarding children with disabilities to ensure an appropriate response to any disclosures of abuse. This home also closes for a week once a year to enable all the team to complete their mandatory training together. This means they can explore individual needs in detail including safe and effective moving and handling and behaviour management.

Despite some significant challenging behaviours there have been no sanctions or restraints for over two years and no incidents of children or young people going missing. This staff team know all the children and young people so well that they can respond to any slight changes in mood and are highly skilled and successful at using de-escalation and diversion techniques.

The use of robust personalised risk assessments and pro-active safe care practices, ensure that all the children and young people are kept very safe within the home.

High staffing ratios also enables children and young people to take appropriate risks as part of their development into adulthood.

All the required health and safety certificates are in place and internal checks undertaken at the required frequencies to ensure the safety and suitability of the physical environment, to meet the diverse needs of the children and young people staying on any given night. Individualised fire evacuation procedures are regularly practiced. This ensures all the staff and children and young people know what to do in the event of a real fire.

The manager has strengthened her monitoring of the corporate recruitment and selection processes to ensure she always has a safe and competent staff team working at this home. Key information is held in the home and she now personally follows up references. The main recruitment files are still held centrally so the manager has scrutinised these to satisfy herself that they include all the legally required information.

Leadership and management

outstanding

This home has been exceptionally well managed by the same qualified, highly experienced and child-focussed individual since it opened nearly 11 years ago. She leads by example and is highly regarded by her staff team. She chooses to undertake care shifts at weekends to ensure she remains fully up-to-date with all the children and young people's individual needs. The two seniors who deputise in the absence of the manager have considerable relevant experience and have both recently successfully completed a recognised level 5 management qualification.

The staff confirm high satisfaction with the support, supervision and training provided to help them meet the needs of the service and their own personal development needs. Comments from staff include, 'I receive supervision once a month and my manager will often give me additional tasks that allow me to broaden my skills', 'My manager will always make time for me if I feel the need to discuss any issues. As she also works hands on with the young people she has a greater understanding around the young people' and, 'The manager is a huge strength for this service and her high standards rubs off on us all.'

This home is very well resourced. Children and young people benefit from a particularly stable and experienced staff team and high staffing ratios to ensure their unique and highly complex needs and personal preferences are exceptionally well met at all times. All the staff have completed the qualifications required for their respective roles and range from five to 33 years expertise in this specialist field. The majority have worked here since it opened. This is indicative of how happy they are working in this home. Comments from staff include, 'I am very happy in my role and feel valued as a staff member. We are all very proud to work here and look after such a delightful group of children and young people', 'I just love working here

because all the staff team genuinely have the interests of the children and young people at the heart of all they do. They are not here just to do a job', The children and young people are inspirational. We are always learning from them and we never cease to be amazed by their achievements. I feel privileged to work here' and, 'I really do enjoy my job and making the young persons stays both enjoyable and rewarding at the same time. They are our uppermost concern and we act on their behalf at all times'.

This service consistently demonstrates an outstanding ability to continuously improve. Consequently, it has maintained an outstanding judgement for five consecutive years by different Ofsted inspectors. The views and suggestions of stakeholders are frequently ascertained and positively acted upon as a fundamental part of the continuous improvements to the service provided. Recent developments include: providing meaningful feedback to children and young people about the key decisions made in reviews; and, sending bookings out electronically to those parents who prefer it. One member of staff said, 'We continually strive to improve and evolve with the young peoples thoughts and feelings central to all we do'.

The one recommendation made at the last interim inspection on 18 March 2014, was efficiently addressed. In response the handovers from the night to the day staff have been strengthened and are fully recorded to ensure any concerns raised by children and young people are followed through.

An up to date Statement of Purpose is in place which accurately describes the aims and services provided at this home. The children's guide is also available in a range of appropriate formats to meet the needs of all the children and young people accessing this service.

The firmly established and rigorous internal and independent monitoring systems in place ensure the smooth and extremely efficient operation of the home. Any shortfalls identified are efficiently addressed. Consequently, there are no breaches in regulation and no recommendations made as a result of this inspection.

These monitoring processes include stringent scrutiny of children's files so they are in excellent order. The support plans are extremely personalised and child centred documents and provide very clear direction as to how each child wishes to be cared for. For example, 'I need two staff to look after me and because I am registered blind they know to explain what is about to happen so I do not get anxious. I follow a halal diet and like very spicy food. I like to stick to the same routines and I feel more secure if my duvet is snuggled around me when I am put to bed', 'At the moment I only need milk via my gastrostomy at night so I can still enjoy having a meal with everyone else but I only want small amounts' and, 'I do not eat dairy and I don't like foods mixed up so staff use different plates.'

All these specific wishes are strictly adhered to by the staff with sensitivity and respect at all times. Consequently the children and young people feel extremely safe

and secure and very happy and relaxed during their short breaks and always really look forward to their next visit.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.