

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC059842
Inspector	Lynn O'Driscoll
Type of inspection	Interim
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	07/01/2015

Inspection date	30/03/2015
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Previous inspection	outstanding
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection

This home was judged outstanding at the last full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judge that it has **improved effectiveness**.

This home excels at providing an extremely flexible, needs-led, short break service which has successfully kept many families together and maintained foster placements. There have been no safeguarding concerns, notifications, restraints or incidents of young people going missing since the last inspection.

This service continues to be exceptionally well managed. The two seniors have also recently completed a level five management qualification, thus strengthening the deputising arrangements in place. The safeguarding arrangements and quality of the care provided by a particularly stable, qualified, experienced and child-focussed team is outstanding. The diverse and highly complex individual needs of young people with a wide range of disabilities, ages, backgrounds, cultures and faiths are extremely well met.

Staff have high aspirations for all the young people and work closely with families and schools to ensure they reach their full potentials. For example, one parent would love, eventually, to be able to take her child abroad. In response, the staff are currently taking him to the airport so he can begin to adjust to these unfamiliar surroundings. Individual objectives during their short breaks are set and monitored by key workers. This ensures that all the young people continue to make excellent progress from their individual starting points. As an example, one young person at the last full inspection had achieved making his own breakfast and supper. In the last three months he can now wash his own hair. On the last three visits another young person has successfully stripped her bed on the day of discharge and taken her bedding to the laundry room without being prompted. Other significant progress includes: improved reading, communication and writing skills; successfully learning to be patient and tolerant of other young people; demonstrating kindness to others; and, travelling to school independently. One young person said, 'I did really well with my objective of making my bed and tidying my room and was thrilled to bits

with my certificate that I earned for doing so well. I am now learning to get dressed myself and I am doing fine with this. Staff say I have a fantastic personality and am growing into a wonderful young lady.'

This staff team are very happy in their respective roles and are highly motivated to improve young people's life chances. Without exception, they all confirm excellent support from their colleagues, regular, good quality supervision and lots of training. In particular, night and day staff appreciate the opportunity every year to undertake all their mandatory training together during one week in March. This covers, team teach, emergency first aid, moving and handling, fire safety awareness, administration of medications, safeguarding, epilepsy and gastrostomy training and autism awareness.

The team also benefit from having the expertise of a paediatric nurse who works for the wider services to children with disabilities and provides specific training. This means the staff team are now competent to give epipen injections. She said, 'This staff team are very keen and particularly receptive to learning.'

They also invite to their annual training, other representatives from the wider service who work with the same young people and their families. This enables them to explore in detail individual needs and try out the equipment or recommend more effective equipment. This ensures safe and consistent practice. Comments from staff include, 'This is a fantastic opportunity for the whole team to come together and improve practice and address training and development needs' and, 'It's a great opportunity to be together to address whole service issues.' One outcome of this year's annual training was a strengthening of fire safety arrangements. This included: arranging a visit from the fire service; arranging an external review of the home's fire risk assessment; and arranging more advanced fire safety training for all the staff.

These external and specialist fire safety assessors were very impressed with the arrangements in place. A risk assessment on the home's location has also been updated with current crime rates. These are lower than neighbouring areas.

This home provides a good standard of accommodation. All the required health and safety certificates are in place to demonstrate a safe and well maintained building. Visitors to the home frequently highlight, 'The warm, welcoming, friendly and homely atmosphere' created. A social worker confirmed, 'At my last visit I received a warm welcome as always and was invited to tea which was all homemade.' A deputy head teacher wrote, 'The quality of the facilities are outstanding. I see now why my students love coming so much.'

There are robust and well established internal and independent monitoring systems in place. This effectively ensured that there were no regulatory shortfalls or recommendations made at the last full inspection on 7 January 2015. Moreover, there has also been a number of positive developments since the last inspection,

despite this being a relatively short period of time. This is indicative of an outstanding service.

This local authority have a reciprocal arrangement with a neighbouring council in respect to providing independent monthly monitoring of the home and they meet regularly to review and improve practice. For example, it has recently been agreed that the same individual will visit for at least six months. This enables the young people to get to know them better and therefore feel comfortable expressing their opinions. They have also designed and trialled a new monitoring template in line with the new Regulations and quality standards. At least three young people's files are scrutinised by the manager every month and another as part of the independent monthly monitoring process. This effectively ensures that they are always maintained to an excellent standard.

Young people 'love' having short breaks at this home. They enjoy excellent relationships with the staff and their peers and feel very safe and secure. Many simply welcome the opportunity to, 'Chill' and spend quality time with young people of their own age. They also thoroughly enjoy taking part in a wide range of new and meaningful activities. Individual interests and talents are actively encouraged and supported. This demonstrably increases competencies and confidences. Comments from young people include, 'I like the opportunity to help cook the meals for my friends', 'I love football and I am now a goal keeper in a team', 'I like coming here and acting out shows and I give staff parts to play.' One young person drew a portrait of all the staff which is now framed and proudly displayed in the office. Other drawings have been made into table and drinks mats much to the delight of the young artist. Another young person enjoys learning to play a guitar.

Feedback from young people on the quality of care provided at this home is consistently extremely positive.

Recent comments include, 'I really look forward to coming here and when I get in the car my heart beats so fast because I am so excited', 'I really like coming here and I enjoy the meals', 'I love to join in playing music and dancing with my friends', 'I love coming here and I have a calendar at home counting down when I can come again' and, 'I have a fantastic time here and the two nights go really quick because I am enjoying myself so much. I have made lots of friends. I painted a plant pot for the family fun day and I was really pleased with it. I got a certificate from the mayor for being so helpful.'

This service excels at: ensuring compatibility of groupings; providing a safe and nurturing environment; and, providing the specific specialist equipment required to meet some highly complex needs. Consequently, new admissions settle quickly. Comments from young people include, 'As part of my second tea visit I was so excited to go to a big shopping centre because I have never been before' and, 'I have asked to come here more often because I get the chance to go out on trips and to catch up with friends.'

Young people's wishes and feelings are central to the day-to-day running of the home and in the continued development of the service as a whole. All reasonable requests are positively responded to if it is in their best interests. This reinforces the fact that their opinions genuinely matter, which demonstrably increases their self-esteem and confidence.

Short break plans detail exactly how young people wish to be cared for during their short breaks. For example, 'I feed myself but please cut my food into small pieces. I like to take my time when I am eating', 'I have eczema so please do not put bubbles in my bath. I am excellent at cleaning my teeth and can dress and undress without help but I may struggle with my buttons' and, 'I can tell you what I want so if you don't catch what I say the first time please ask me to repeat it. I really don't mind. I like to be read to as this helps me to sleep and to have a night light on.'

The spring newsletter was distributed to all families in February to which many young people contributed.

The manager continues to meet with the young people's representative to discuss any specific requests. In response, finance has now been agreed for wi-fi to be installed in the home which young people are very excited about.

One young person is currently producing a power point to present to the corporate parenting board about all the positive experiences young people enjoy during their short breaks.

Young people continue to be actively involved in the recruitment of staff. One young person has recently been on the interviewing panel for the first time and loved it. She said she was happy with their final decision because, 'We had banter.'

Another positive development since the last inspection is a one page child friendly document produced by a young person entitled, 'What was said at my review.' A recent entry includes, 'I have a wonderful time here and I really enjoy seeing everyone and catching up with all my friends. As soon as I get here I get into my outdoor clothes and into the garden on the swing or kicking a football around. I choose bedroom three because it is very spacious and has a lovely view from the window when all the beautiful flowers come out. I like planting and watering and doing art work.'

There is excellent information sharing and partnership working with a wide range of specialists to safeguard and promote young people's welfare. Parents views are always respected and valued and inform the highly personalised short break plans. Consequently, there has been no recent complaints about this home. In sharp contrast this service frequently receives compliments from parents and a wide range of stakeholders. However, the three monthly monitoring report produced by the manager does not evaluate the plethora of feedback received to demonstrate that any constructive criticism is used to constantly improve practice.

Parents frequently describe this service as a, 'Godsend' and a, 'Lifeline' which has helped to keep their families together. Many emphasise that this service is as important to them as it is to their child. Comments since the last inspection include, 'I cannot thank the staff enough for the fabulous support they give my son and the genuine care and love they show not just to him but to the whole family', 'We have received over a decade of top care for our son. All the staff are great and have helped all the family so much', 'My son loves coming here and talks about it constantly. I have nothing but praise for the staff and the standard of care he receives and I enjoy regular communication. They always go the extra mile' and, 'We need the breaks to relax. He gets three overnight stays a month, but the staff are very flexible if we need an extra night. This service is a life saver and the staff are fantastic. We know he is safe here and he loves coming.'

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.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
07/01/2015	Full	outstanding
18/03/2014	Interim	good progress
15/01/2014	Full	outstanding
19/03/2013	Interim	good progress

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

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that the three monthly Regulation 34 reports forwarded to Ofsted include an evaluation of consultations with young people, parents and social workers and any issues raised are immediately addressed. (NMS 21)

What inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspections we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

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.