

SC059842

Registered provider: Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority short-break service provides care for up to four children. The provider states in its statement of purpose that the overall aim of the children's home is to provide high-quality, planned short-break care for children with severe learning disabilities.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 March 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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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: 21 February 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/02/2020	Full	Outstanding
11/10/2018	Full	Outstanding
19/12/2017	Full	Outstanding
20/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children receive excellent individualised care at this short-break service. Placement plans are developed in partnership with the children's parents. This teamwork ensures that essential details about the child's personality, strengths and difficulties are clearly assessed prior to their stay. This level of detail enables the staff team to co-ordinate and match children's short breaks in accordance with their individual needs, interests and abilities, making their experiences more positive.

Children are excited and happy to arrive at the service. They are welcomed by enthusiastic and passionate staff who have built up fabulous relationships with them. On arrival, the children are provided with individualised sensory sacks. This allows the children to play and settle into their short break. Likewise, in preparation for their short-break stay, the staff team ensures that each bedroom is prepared with children's favourite bedding, toys and familiar items, making the bedrooms feel very comfortable.

Children who do not communicate verbally are assisted to express their needs using pictorial communication aids. This enables the children to make choices regarding their evening meal, snacks and activities. The pictorial aids also enable children to indicate how they are feeling. In partnership with parents, individual strategies are devised to ensure a consistent approach is maintained should a child feel anxious or unwell.

Equality and diversity are championed in this service. Children are encouraged and supported to have their say, and represent other children of the short-break service at the children's rights forum. Children's ideas and suggestions are valued, respected and acted on. For example, children's submissions have prompted further development of the sensory room, which now boasts a fabulous interactive sensory floor and additional lighting.

Children are supported by a staff team that promotes their abilities. This ensures that children are not prevented from taking part and trying out a range of exciting activities, for example ice skating, horse riding and trampolining. A staff member said: 'We want to create as many amazing memories as we can. If a child wants to try something, we will do everything in our power to make it happen safely.' Children also enjoy a range of indoor activities such as pamper nights, baking, arts and crafts and karaoke. A child said: 'I love coming here. It gives me a break from everything and I can just be me. I love the staff and how much they do for us to make each visit special.'

The management team and staff regularly consult with children, their parents and professionals about the care children receive in this service. The commitment to consultation strengthens relationships between services and this helps to enhance

the care provided to the children. A parent said: 'The staff are always there for me. If I am struggling, I can always call the service and the staff will give me strategies and help me through. I have never had this level of support before.'

Children's health is consistently monitored during their short-break stay. Staff work in partnership with healthcare specialists, and parents are provided with extensive details regarding their child's specific health diagnosis. Prescribed medication is routinely monitored, appropriately administered and stored securely. Records do not include non-prescription medication, such as paracetamol, and do not include a running total of the remaining medication. This will ensure improved accuracy of homely remedy audits.

The home continues to promote the respite service and regularly invites parents and carers to the home for coffee mornings. This provides opportunities for parents and carers to come together and share their experiences with the staff who, in turn, provide helpful guidance and strategies. A parent said: 'The service is like a home from home. The staff genuinely care and always make me welcome. I can't express how grateful I am for all their help.'

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

Individual risk management plans identify potential hazards, behaviours and specific triggers that may impact upon the child during their short-break stay. These personalised plans help to shape the care each child will receive, and the response required by staff should any risks arise. Risk assessments are regularly reviewed and updated in partnerships with parents to ensure that any new behaviours are quickly identified, and strategies are put in place to mitigate any potential risk.

The assessment of risk enables children to take part in a range of unique indoor and outdoor activities supported by knowledgeable and trained staff. A parent said: 'We couldn't do half the things they do at the service. The children are safe at all times and absolutely love it.' As a result, children take part in activities safely.

Children's care is meticulously planned to ensure all the right equipment is available to them, for example specialised beds, hoists and low-level worktops. Furthermore, the outside space is a safe area for children and includes a range of safe play equipment. Children also have access to a sensory garden. Children can access all areas of the home safely.

Staff are trained to identify and respond to safeguarding concerns. At the time of this inspection, there have been no incidents requiring a notification to Ofsted, a physical intervention or a report of a child being missing or absent from the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

At this inspection, the registered manager was not at work and the home was being managed by an acting manager.

The leadership and management of the home is good. Children are provided with a short-break service that is managed in their best interests. The service meets the aims and objectives of the statement of purpose, and children, social workers and families are clear about the service and support that it provides.

The team is provided with a consistent annual training package. Mandatory training is regularly refreshed, and additional training is given based on the theoretical framework of the person-centred approach. This provides the foundation for the positive and aspirational ethos of this service.

The team is provided with consistent support. One staff member said: 'We have all worked together for a very long time. We love what we do, and feel we are given the right support and guidance to do a great job.' The staff receive regular supervision including group and key-worker supervision.

The management team and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to delivering consistent, person-centred practice that is tailored to the individual and personal needs of children. The effectiveness of this approach is measurable in the fabulous opportunities and experiences children are provided with during their stay.

The home employs a strong and committed staff team. Staff are all qualified at level 3 of the children and young people's workforce diploma. The training at this level ensures that the staff are suitably qualified in the care and management of children.

Internal monitoring systems provide the home with a clear approach to the overall monitoring of care. Detailed information highlights areas for development, and the manager's action plan details the methods used to enhance the service. The home also benefits from regular external monitoring. The independent visitor's reports provide a positive insight into the experiences of children accessing this service.

Overall, children's records are maintained to a high standard. However, records that are to be archived should be audited to verify that they are up to date at the point of the child's discharge from the service.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that case records are kept up to date and are signed and dated by the author of each entry. They should ensure that records are completed prior to files being archived. ('Guide to the Children's Home Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)
- The registered person should ensure that records of homely medication being administered include a running log of the quantities of medication remaining. ('Guide to the Children's Home Regulations, including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.15)

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: SC059842

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council

Registered provider address: Town Hall, Victoria Square, PO Box 29, Bolton BL1 1RU

Responsible individual: Ian Walker

Registered manager: Julie Whitehead

Inspector

Maria McGranaghan, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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