

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 is registered to provide care for up to five children. The home provides planned short-break care for children with severe learning disabilities who may also have additional healthcare needs arising from physical and sensory impairments.

The home was registered with Ofsted in 2004 and the manager registered in October 2022. The manager is also registered to manage a second short-break home provided by the local authority.

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 December 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 14 February 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/02/2024	Full	Good
23/03/2023	Full	Good
22/03/2022	Full	Outstanding
21/02/2020	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children enjoy spending time with each other at the home and enjoy a range of activities such as painting, visits to the cinema and holidays on a specially adapted narrowboat. They have access to various resources, including an outdoor sensory garden, an indoor sensory light room and other specialised equipment. One child said that they like to 'see my friends... go for a drive... eat fish and chips'.

Staff work well with children and have a clear understanding of their needs. One child loves to watch staff draw, and they use signs to direct staff. Some of these signs are unique to this child, and it is clear that staff are able to interpret their needs effectively.

One parent said that their child enjoys visiting the home. They say that the staff are like family to them. Another parent said that staff 'couldn't do enough for their child'. This included supporting the parent when they had health needs by providing them with additional respite.

One child moved into the home following a significant incident at home. This child was able to move into the home where all their needs were met by staff who knew them well. The staff's knowledge of the child's needs was instrumental in ensuring that the child experienced as little disruption to their life as possible. The child has since moved to a long-term placement.

Children's introductions to the home are well planned and move at the pace suitable for the child and their family. Staff visit children in school and meet teaching staff in order to get to know the child and build up an understanding of their needs. This considered approach means that children only stay at the home when it is in their best interests to do so and when it is clear that staff can meet their needs.

Staff support children to share their views during statutory review meetings. One child has been supported to complete a storyboard of their experience at the home, which helped to ensure that the meeting focused on the child's experiences.

Children's views, wishes and feelings are considered using a variety of forums. This includes children helping to interview new staff and another child being a key person to discuss concerns with the manager. There is evidence that leaders and managers ensure that children have all the specially adapted resources they need.

The home is specially adapted to meet the needs of disabled children. It has suitable tracking systems, a new adapted bath and adapted beds. This means children receive care in an environment similar to their own home. However, not all risks in the home are identified, such as cleaning products kept in reach of children and damaged items in the garden. The home also uses video and monitoring devices and locks on the front door

and side gate. This means that children's access is restricted and their right to privacy could be compromised.

The staff are caring and passionate about their role and the care they provide to children. Some staff have been working in the home since it opened in 2004. Therefore, the children have built significant relationships with staff over the many years they have used the service. However, some of the language used in documents could be more child focused and strength based.

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

Staff do not use physical restraint unless it is as a last resort to keep children safe. This is the ethos of the home, and leaders and managers ensure that all de-escalation or distraction methods are explored before any physical restraint is considered.

Children build trusting relationships with staff. Positive interactions were observed between children and staff, demonstrating that children feel safe and settled while staying at the home. One child was observed to hug staff and was visibly excited to see their key worker.

Children's care plans are completed in line with key documents such as education, health and care plans and placing authority care plans. These are all up to date and available for staff to consult. However, some of the paperwork specific to the home, such as recruitment files, staff supervision and missing-from-home protocols are not routinely reviewed, signed or dated.

Risk assessments do not consider all known risks. Before staying at the home, one child was initially assessed as high risk for using the kitchen, but this does not feature in the child's risk assessment. Staff were not all aware of this risk. When children have self-injurious behaviour, this risk and any control measures are not suitably considered. The fire risk assessment has not been updated to include changes to the rooms in the building. However, staff have a good understanding of the evacuation process, and this is tested regularly.

Staff are recruited safely, and safer recruiting processes are followed. However, there are gaps in some of the recruitment documents, which prevent accountability should concerns be raised in the future. Staff induction is not always completed with new staff. This means their progress and development are not always suitably recorded.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

Staff know the children well and work hard to create a warm and homely environment for them to stay in. The leaders and managers work hard to create a space for children to socialise and develop interpersonal skills.

The manager completes a six-monthly quality of care review. This includes the wishes and feelings of children and key stakeholders. However, the report does not always fully evaluate the impact of care on children or consider feedback from parents and professionals working with the children. This is a missed opportunity for the manager to evaluate the care provided to children effectively.

Staff supervision sessions are regular and are an integral part of the support system for staff development. These sessions provide staff with time to reflect on their practice, discuss challenges and receive constructive feedback. However, supervision records are not routinely signed and dated.

Leaders and managers do not consistently report safeguarding concerns to Ofsted without delay. This meant that, on one occasion, the regulator's oversight of an incident was limited. However, the incident was managed effectively.

Staff do not always seek medical advice or attention following injuries to children or in the case of medication errors. On one occasion, a child hurt their head, but staff did not seek medical advice.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards'. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child; and enable each child to participate in the daily life of the home. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(i)(ii)) In particular, this relates to the registered person ensuring that the home is well maintained to a high standard and any damage or maintenance issues are identified and rectified in a timely manner and access is not restricted with padlocks. This also relates to ensuring that hazardous items are stored away safely out of the reach of children and any potentially dangerous items, such as in the shed, are suitable secured. This also relates to ensuring that children's rights to privacy are not compromised by over surveillance such as video cameras and audio monitors in bedrooms.	6 January 2025
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.	6 January 2025

In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies; that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(v)(vi)(vii)(b)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that all risks, when identified, are clearly recorded in the child's risk assessment and care plan and that any risks identified have control measures in place to reduce them. This includes updating the fire risk assessments to changing needs in the home.	
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which— include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child; are kept up to date; and are signed and dated by the author of each entry. Case records must be kept— if the child dies before attaining the age of 18, for 15 years from the date of the child's death; in cases not falling within sub-paragraph (a), for 75 years from the child's date of birth; securely in the children's home during the period when the	6 January 2025

child to whom the case records relate is accommodated there; and

in a secure place after the child has ceased to be accommodated in the home.

(Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(b)(c)(d))

In particular, the registered person must ensure that all children's records are up to date, signed by the author and reviewed regularly to evidence progress and compliance.

This also relates to ensuring that supervision, missing-from-home protocols, induction records and staff files are signed and dated when information is added or updated.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that Ofsted is notified if there is an incident relating to the protection, safeguarding or welfare of a child living in the home which the registered person considers to be serious. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 63, paragraph 14.10)
- The registered person must ensure that staff take responsibility for children's health and well-being and should be skilled in obtaining treatment for a child in an emergency. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.20)
- The registered person should ensure that the quality of care review report includes clear evaluation of the impact of the quality of care and that feedback should be sought from families and professionals in order to further evaluate the care provided. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 5.2)
- The registered person should ensure that the terminology staff use, is caring and compassionate. Phrases that contribute to further discrimination should be challenged and an evaluation of 'language that cares' should be considered. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 21, paragraph 4.3)

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: Paul Rankin

Registered manager: Neil Haydock

Inspector

James Meeks, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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