

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC059853
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	Neil Haydock
Date of last inspection	14/03/2014

Inspection date	05/02/2015
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Previous inspection	satisfactory 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 very busy and highly flexible service that is loved by all the young people who have short breaks and is highly valued by their parents and carers. Young people are making excellent progress from their individual starting points. Ultimately it has avoided admissions into the care system, supported families to stay together and successfully maintained foster placements.

The young people benefit from highly personalised and exceptionally well planned care from a very experienced, committed and competent staff team. Excellent trusting relationships have been firmly established between the staff team and the young people. Strong friendships with peers have also been formed and maintained outside of their short breaks. Consequently, young people feel very safe and secure at this home.

Despite some significant disabilities, this home ensures that all the young people are enabled to express their wishes and feelings and all appropriate requests are positively responded to and inform continued service development.

The young people particularly enjoy the opportunity to try a wide range of new and stimulating activities both in the home and the community. This significantly boosts their self-esteem and confidence.

This service clearly demonstrates an excellent capacity to improve, making full use of the well- established and rigorous internal and external monitoring systems in place. Consequently, there are no requirements of recommendations arising from this inspection.

The managers are very clear about the many strengths of this service and a challenging development plan is in place to continuously improve. This has been fully explored and agreed with the whole staff team which increases motivation and ensures a shared sense of responsibility and accountability.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This local authority home provides a short-break service for up to six young people at any given time who have a permanent and substantial learning disability and who may also have additional needs arising from behavioural difficulties.

Currently there are 40 young people accessing this service and additional support is provided to their families.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/03/2014	Interim	satisfactory progress
30/07/2013	Full	good
21/03/2013	Interim	good progress
06/08/2012	Full	adequate

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **outstanding**

Young people love their short breaks at this home and enjoy excellent relationships with all the staff. They describe them as, 'Kind and funny' and, 'They give good hugs.'

They particularly look forward to the opportunity to relax and socialise with their peers and take part in a wide range of meaningful and challenging activities. A recent addition is archery. They thoroughly enjoyed camping in the summer holidays which was a new and exciting experience for the vast majority. Train rides and theatre trips are proving very popular. One young person loves visiting new cities with his key worker. Another young person has made excellent progress in tolerating being on the mini bus. This is enabling him to take part in an ever increasing range of activities in the community which he is really enjoying.

Comments from children and young people include, 'I like coming here and the food and the activities. I really enjoy going shopping and the café', 'The staff let you to do things that you want to do, and they have lots of entertainment for sunny days, and for rainy days', 'They take me out. I like to go out and the staff keep me company. I like baking', 'The musical show we went to watch was epic' , 'I am very happy because I had wanted to see this film and was not able to go and then we went to my favourite place for tea' and, 'I love it here. I wish I could stay longer or even live here.'

Young people are actively involved in regular charity events of their choosing. This increases their social responsibilities and develops empathy for others. This is exceptional progress given some of their clinical diagnoses.

Strong friendships have been firmly established and are now continuing outside of their short breaks together. For example, two young people now enjoy regular sleep-overs. One young person said, 'The staff are lovely and try to make sure I always come when my two friends are here.'

None of the young people go missing from the home, smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol or take illicit drugs. Self- injurious behaviours and inappropriate language has markedly reduced in frequency and severity. They all have excellent school attendance which is maintained during their short breaks. One young person said, 'I love my key worker. She helps me with my science when it's hard.' A night worker was described as, 'Nice and kind and helps me to get ready for school.'

Young people benefit from a spacious, clean and healthy environment where their physical, behavioural and emotional needs are extremely well met. They really enjoy homemade nutritious meals suited to their diverse dietary needs. They have also learned about, shopped for the ingredients, cooked and tasted foods from a variety of

different countries. One young person said, 'It was very nice. I have not tried it before but I liked it and will try it again.'

The daily life of the home provides age and ability appropriate opportunities for all the young people to continuously develop their independence skills. Many are making excellent progress with their social skills, personal care and independent travel. Firm favourites are learning to shop, cook, bake and garden. Moreover, some are now passing on their skills to their friends and showing remarkable patience. They are rightly very proud of their certificates they receive when they achieve each individual target set.

Comments for young people include, 'I enjoy going out to restaurants. It's really nice to do something grown up', 'I was the DJ at the garden party. I chose lots of good music and played them loudly', 'I made spaghetti Bolognese and lemonade from the lemons I helped to grow', 'I can now tie my own shoes', 'I paid for the shopping for our roast dinner and made sure I got the right change' and, 'I love making cakes and licking the bowl at the end.' One parent is thrilled by the progress her son has made in only three months and the fact that he is now mirroring at home what he has learned during his short breaks, namely: getting up himself; taking his bedding down to the washing machine; and, making his own breakfast.

A social worker said, 'It is lovely to see the young people get so much enjoyment from the gardening club and gaining a sense of pride and achievement for their efforts.'

Comments from parents include, 'My son loves coming here. It's like a family. He is loved and well cared for. They know him really well and what he likes to do. The service is a lifeline enabling me to spend time with my other four children' and, 'It is a lifeline for our family and my daughter is enjoying having some independence.'

Quality of care

outstanding

Parents, social workers and independent reviewing officers are all highly satisfied with the quality of care provided at this home. Comments include, 'All the young people are valued, included and treated royally. I can't praise the manager and his team enough', 'This is a wonderful service enabling young people the opportunity for social integration with their peers and supported access to community activities and involvement', 'This is a very flexible service who work well with the young people and their families which makes the difference in them continuing to live at home', 'This is an outstanding service. The keyworker is always available to attend reviews, the information presented is current and relevant and they have a sound knowledge of the young people and their needs' and, 'The staff demonstrate enormous understanding of the wishes of the young people and have worked and supported families extensively. All the young people obviously enjoy staying and spending time in this warm environment.'

Young people's wishes and feelings are central to the running of this home. They are actively empowered to exercise genuine choices about exactly how they prefer to be looked after during their short breaks. For example, 'I like to go to my room for a bit and watch a DVD before going to sleep. I like the light staying on.' Since the last inspection the home have developed their consultation documentation to better evidence this established good practice. In November, the home held a Halloween party at the young people's request. They loved dressing up, dancing and playing games. They also raised £100 for a children's hospital which was the young people's chosen charity.

Young people know how to complain and two have exercised that right. The records demonstrate that they were listened to and their concerns positively responded to in a timely manner. This reinforces to them that their views genuinely matter, which increases their self-esteem.

Staff have high expectations for all the young people and will actively advocate on their behalf to ensure they reach their full potential. All their many achievements are celebrated and rewarded which increases their feelings of self-worth. In November the home held a social evening and invited parents to publically award all the young people on their personal achievements.

This home excels at providing a wide range of fun and challenging activities. Individual interests and talents are encouraged and supported which serves to further increase their confidence and competences. Examples include, computers, drumming, singing, dancing, art and fishing. One young person has a talent in sewing and embroidery and so the home have bought a sewing machine which has enabled her to make her own clothes. She is also a talented writer and loves to record her own key worker sessions. Another young person said, 'My keyworker is nice and she makes me laugh. We do fun things together like my hobby roller skating and football. I always have a good time.'

The staff are actively encouraged to frequently start new projects with the young people. This serves to sustain high motivation and morale and the young people are demonstrably stimulated by the staff's enthusiasm. For example, they have recently developed a world war memorial poppy garden. One young person is particularly enjoying researching world religions. She wrote, 'I looked up different religions on the internet and found out more about seven. There were a lot more religions that I thought. It was very interesting.'

The gardening club continues to develop. One young person said, 'I am part of the gardening club and I got a certificate for all my work. The tomatoes we grew tasted very good.' Another said, 'I built a wild life pond, bird and bat boxes' and, 'I chose the plants at the garden centre, have grown fruit and vegetables and made and sold hanging baskets for charity.' Some young people have been supported to hold car boot sales to raise money for a summer house for the garden. This will enable young

people who do not want to take part in the gardening project to sit and enjoy watching their peers.

Young people are treated and respected as individuals in their own right and benefit from highly personalised care. Short break plans are reviewed every six months by a multi- agency team to ensure that all their unique and highly complex needs and personal preferences are met within the wider service. This also means that specialist services are provided in a timely manner. Parent's views are fundamental to care planning and they feel listened to and valued. They are also invited to a wide range of family events held at the home, which are always thoroughly enjoyed and often raise money for charities. The summer garden party and the Christmas party are annual events that everyone looks forward to. One young person said, 'Me and my family had a great time at the barbeque.'

Although the primary responsibility for children's health and education remains with their parents, staff provide outstanding support as needed, including transport to school and medical appointments. They maintain close liaison with the schools the young people attend, psychology services, speech and language, occupational and physiotherapists. This ensures that young people's educational, emotional and behavioural needs are well met during their short breaks and they benefit from consistent care. Individual health needs are fully assessed prior to commencing placement by a paediatric nurse, which in turn informs their placement plan. An independent visitor to the home monitoring the quality of care provided in this home, recently highlighted the particularly good practice of managing a child's diabetes. Staff also supported a family during their child's extended hospital stay. Robust procedures are in place to ensure the safe receipt, storage, administration, recording and return of medicines.

This home is tastefully decorated and furnished throughout and the young people love showing visitors round. This demonstrates their strong sense of pride in their environment especially as they were actively involved in choosing the themes and colours and in the recent re-decoration.

One young person particularly likes the nature themed bedroom and has produced artwork for the walls. Others have been involved in producing silhouettes of themselves in the corridors. The home has recently purchased a large climbing frame, slide and swing at the request of the young people and have developed the garden to incorporate a wildlife area. The young people have enjoyed planting specific bulbs and are fascinated by the butterflies and other insects they attract. One visitor wrote, 'The home is always clean and tidy and now it is looking much more homely and welcoming. The newly decorated lounge looks great.' A young person said, 'The new wallpaper is very bright and makes the room look fun.'

Keeping children and young people safe **outstanding**

All the young people feel very safe and secure during their short breaks. One young person said, 'The night staff are kind and they make me feel safe at night so I can sleep.'

None of the young people who access this service have ever gone missing during their short breaks. Groupings are very carefully considered to try to prevent any bullying. Staff take a particularly pro-active response to any potential incidents.

Young people also benefit from frequent opportunities to explore how to keep safe whilst enjoying independence in the community and online. One staff member said, 'I have done a course on internet safety and I share this learning with the young people.' A young person said, 'I watched a video about staying safe online and not being friends with strangers so I have deleted people I don't know.'

All the staff are regularly trained in safeguarding to ensure an appropriate response to any disclosures. This team is particularly good at supporting families in crisis. A social worker wrote, 'This team is committed to ensuring a consistent service to young people who have regular short breaks whilst responding to family emergencies.'

Good behaviour and effort is constantly positively reinforced which has the desired effect. Consequently, the imposition of sanctions and the use of restraint is rare. This is in spite of some extremely challenging behaviours. This is testament to: the excellent relationships established with the young people by the staff; their exceptional knowledge of their individual needs and preferences; and, their proven ability to successfully recognise individual triggers and diffuse situations. The staff also benefit from the expertise of the manager who is a qualified trainer in safe and effective behaviour management. He has recently strengthened post incidence learning to constantly improve practice and to try to prevent a re-occurrence. Extremely close scrutiny by the manager of the restraint and sanction records ensures safe, proportionate and effective practice.

This highly experienced staff team and excellent staffing ratios enables young people to take appropriate risks in the community to develop their independence, social interactions and confidence whilst still ensuring their safety. This is especially appreciated by some families who are isolated in their own home due to the complex needs of their child. This service provides much needed socialisation opportunities and stimulating activities which improves young people's confidence and general well-being.

All the required health and safety certificates are in place and internal checks undertaken at the required frequencies to ensure a very safe and well-maintained home. Personalised evacuation plans are known and frequently practiced to ensure the safe and efficient evacuation of all the young people in the event of a fire.

There are well established and highly effective recruitment and selection processes in

place. This ensures a safe and competent workforce to provide excellent care for particularly vulnerable young people.

Leadership and management

outstanding

This home is exceptionally well managed by a suitably qualified, highly experienced, child focussed, calm and measured individual who leads by example. This is reinforced by very supportive senior managers and strong deputising arrangements. Together they ensure that the home is always well staffed to meet the individual needs and personal preferences of all the young people.

The manager also provides very clear direction to a particularly stable staff team and actively motivates them to continuously improve upon the services provided. The challenging development plan in place has been agreed by the whole team so motivation and morale is high and there is a strong sense of shared responsibility and accountability. Comments from staff include, 'I have worked here for 10 years and I love it. The teamwork is very strong', 'I love working here. We get good training and the team work well together and are very supportive of each other' and, 'We are a dedicated team, who have the young people's best interests at heart and support their families. We facilitate any trips, outings that the young people want to do and adhere to parents requests regarding their child's care.'

Staff confirm monthly good quality supervision and regular team meetings with open and honest debates. Annual appraisals celebrate individual achievements and explore personal development needs. Staff also benefit from access to a particularly wide choice of training courses to meet the needs of the service and their own interests.

The three requirements made at the last interim inspection on 14 March 2014 have been fully addressed. Consequently: restraint records are very well maintained; management reviews on the quality of care provided in the home are informed and enriched by consultations with stakeholders; and, the use of the safe space for individual young people is risk assessed and parental consent obtained.

Three recommendations were also made. In response, staff are only supervised by trained individuals and the records clearly detail the time and duration of each session. Also, staff appraisals now include young people's views. These demonstrate the high regard young people have for the staff and the excellent relationships established. For example, 'I like the manager. He is funny and tells us interesting things', 'I love my keyworker. She always takes me out and is a really good gardener', 'She is always kind and helpful and makes everyone happy', 'He's cool and a good cook' and, 'You can hear her laugh at the other side of the world.'

The robust internal and external monitoring systems in place ensure that any

shortfalls are immediately addressed. Consequently, there are no requirements or recommendations arising from this inspection. The managers three monthly reports following a review of the quality of care provided in the home are comprehensive, evaluative and they really tell the story of young people's positive experiences during their short breaks and the exceptional progress they are making from their individual starting points.

The two notifications forwarded to Ofsted since the last inspection demonstrate that appropriate action was taken to ensure the young people's good health. Indeed, the actions of the staff resulted in the diagnosis of a previously undetected health condition.

Young people's files are maintained to an excellent standard. The 'time away from home' files, which they can take with them on discharge, are extremely personalised and are filled with photographs of all the numerous activities and trips they have enjoyed taking part in during their short breaks.

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.