

SC059853

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This is a local authority children's home that is registered to provide short breaks for up to six children or young people who may have physical disabilities and/or learning difficulties. There has been a temporary addition to the registration to provide care and accommodation for children or young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

There is a registered manager in post.

The inspector was unable to speak to children and young people as part of this inspection because currently no children or young people are living in the home. All inspection activity took place off site.

Visit dates: 22 to 23 September 2020

Previous inspection date: 18 June 2019

Previous inspection judgement: requires improvement to be good

Information about this visit

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), Ofsted suspended all routine inspections in March 2020. As part of a phased return to routine inspection, we are undertaking assurance visits to children's social care services that are inspected under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF).

At these visits, inspectors evaluate the extent to which:

- children are well cared for
- children are safe
- leaders and managers are exercising strong leadership.

This visit was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000, following the published guidance for assurance visits.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills is leading Ofsted's work into how England's social care system has delivered child-centred

practice and care within the context of the restrictions placed on society during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Findings from the visit

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit.

The care of children

Due to COVID-19, the short-breaks service has been temporarily suspended. The temporary change to the registration allowed three young people to move in for a short period of time. All of the young people have since moved out. Staff have also continued to provide support to young people through outreach work.

Young people who moved in during this period were able to build relationships with their families. One young person moved back home after a clear transition plan was put in place.

Staff have supported families throughout this difficult time. One parent said, 'Staff are brilliant. I wouldn't consider [Name of young person] going anywhere else. The communication is brilliant, even during lockdown.'

Young people have enjoyed going out on activities. Memories have been captured, using photographs. One young person has been to local cricket clubs and a stadium.

Plans are in place to work with other services. One young person's mental health improved after being supported to work with a counsellor. Virtual sessions were facilitated to ensure that he was still able to receive support.

Young people's wishes and feelings are taken into account. A social worker said, 'Staff go the extra mile and always have a smile on their face.'

Young people's health needs are met. Rapid information cards are now used to ensure that staff can easily access important information.

The safety of children

Staff work hard to keep the young people safe. Clear plans are in place to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Many staff have given up aspects of their personal lives, to ensure that young people are safe from infection.

One young person moved in to the home for a short time, because she was previously at risk of child sexual exploitation. Although she only lived in the home for 11 days, the number of times she went missing from the home reduced, and during the last six days she was not reported missing at all. Staff worked closely with other agencies to meet her short-term needs and build a relationship with her.

Staff have used sanctions that are fair and proportionate. Allowing one young person time to reflect on his actions was successful in changing his behaviour.

Physical intervention is rarely required. When low level intervention has been used, it has been appropriate. Debriefs carried out with young people have included time for reflection. The previous requirement has been met.

Young people have been safer at home as a result of the support given by staff. This support has strengthened relationships between young people and their families.

Leaders and managers

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since 2007. Staff feel supported, and they value opportunities that they have received to develop their practice. Regular supervision and annual appraisals have taken place. The manager has led a child-focused culture. As a result, the team has worked hard to be flexible during this period.

Managers have worked together during the COVID-19 period to equip staff with the skills and knowledge needed. When formal training has been unavailable due to COVID-19, managers with experience have delivered informal training to staff.

The manager has worked hard to maintain communication with the families of young people during this period. One parent said, 'He always tries to sort things for us.' He advocates for the young people to ensure that their needs are met.

Recruitment is ongoing in preparation for when the short-breaks service resumes. The home is appropriately staffed to meet the needs of the current outreach work. Staff who are required to shield or self-isolate are supported with welfare calls.

The manager has reviewed the quality of care but has not set an action plan for the future. Records have been signed, but some signatures have not been dated.

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

Recommendations

- The review should enable the registered person to identify areas of strength and possible weakness in the home's care, which will be captured in the written report. The report should clearly identify any actions required for the next 6 months of delivery within the home, and how those actions will be addressed. The whole review process and the resulting report should be used as a tool for continuous improvement in the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.4)
- Regulations 35–39 detail the records that must be kept in children's homes. All children's case records (regulation 36) must be kept up to date and stored

securely whilst they remain in the home. Case records must be kept up to date and signed and dated by the author of each entry. Children's case records must be kept for 75 years from the date of birth of the child, or, if the child dies before the age of 18, for 15 years from the date of his or her death. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC059853

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: Neil Haydock

Inspectors

Sylvia Eboigbe, Social Care Inspector

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