

SC372511

Registered provider: Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority children's home provides a short-break service for up to five children. The service provides care for children who may have learning difficulties and/or physical disabilities and other complex healthcare needs.

The manager registered with Ofsted in September 2015.

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 December 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: 30 November 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
30/11/2021	Full	Outstanding
26/02/2020	Full	Outstanding
30/01/2019	Full	Outstanding
03/10/2017	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children receive excellent care when accessing the short-break service. They are offered a variety, and continually developing range, of opportunities and experiences that would not ordinarily be available to them. These experiences include access to hydro-pools, days out at theme and safari-parks, kayaking and game events provided by a local football team.

Parents expressed an extremely high level of trust in the staff to offer their children the best possible care. All parents spoken to expressed very high regard for the service. Some of the comments they made include:

- 'We do not know what we would do without them.'
- 'We trust them completely.'
- 'He loves going to the service. He can do things I could never offer.'

One social worker, commenting on the progress that staff achieved with a child to enable him to express his wishes and feelings, said, 'They gave him back his voice.'

There is a very strong family feel to the service. Some parents describe it as an extension of their own family and the children feel it is 'home from home'.

The service offers support beyond that of the child's short-break stay at the home. Parents feel very connected to the service. They consider that it is helping them with their own parenting and provides them with greater insight into children's behaviours and how to respond in ways that are helpful to the child. This support and advice has enabled families to avert crisis and for children to remain being cared for by their families.

Children's families and individual circumstances are treated with the utmost respect and sensitivity. As part of the commitment to children, parents say staff go above and beyond in the support they give them as a family. For example, the flexibility of staff and managers in responding to home circumstances has enabled children to access additional stays when the family and child have needed it most.

The short-break service offers both emotional and practical support to families. For example, the staff successfully worked round difficulties for one family who could not drive, which was proving an impediment to the child accessing their short break.

Parents and social workers recognise that the input of this service has a significant positive impact on children's goals and the progress they make.

Children's experiences are at the centre of the service's activities. There are exceptionally strong relationships between parents, staff and other professionals. The detailed observations, oversight and sharing of information ensures that children receive care that is joined up and highly responsive to their growing and changing needs.

Since the last inspection, one child was admitted for a prolonged period of time. In those months, the short-break service was temporarily suspended. The child received care from staff who demonstrated resilience and dedication to his well-being, despite the challenges that were faced. This unwavering commitment helped the child to move from being in emotional crisis to restarting school, accessing community activities and moving to a long-term placement.

Children are welcomed into the service and are enabled to develop a sense of belonging. Children new to the service are carefully matched with other children and benefit from detailed planning and introductory visits that move at the child's pace.

Children's health needs are exceptionally well understood. Staff are vigilant and responsive, and they have access to specialist training as required to meet the children's individual needs. There is ongoing liaison with all professionals to ensure that children are given the best care, so that the service continues to meet their needs.

Although not a responsibility of the short-break service, staff and managers take an active and regular interest in children's development at school. There are firm and established relationships that ensure professionals work as a team, that information and observations are shared and there is joint learning.

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

Highly effective risk and behaviour management plans clearly identify children's risks and vulnerabilities. They provide clear strategies for staff to follow to keep children safe.

Managers provide exceptionally high levels of support to children, parents and staff following significant incidents. They work in partnership with social workers, health colleagues and schools to swiftly implement any learning and further strengthen practice.

Any distress that a child might exhibit is approached by staff through a child-focused lens. Staff and managers seek to understand the child's experience and evaluate how practice might be modified to ensure that children are always supported well.

There is an extremely open approach to learning, that has included weekly meetings with other professionals to address incidents and reduce the need for staff to physically intervene. High levels of scrutiny have ensured that children and staff remain safe. As a result, incidents have reduced over time.

Children's behaviour is well managed by staff. Staff have access to specialist support as required to develop their understanding of children's behaviours and experiences. This is further supported through a wide variety of training, including on specific issues.

Since the last inspection, there have not been any complaints, allegations or incidents of children going missing from care.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager is tenacious and creative in his approach to managing the home. He has been able to secure charitable donations that have had a direct positive impact on children's experiences. The manager continuously maintains a high profile for the service, attracting wide community support. This ensures that events to showcase the service are used to best effect and the work of the service is celebrated.

The manager works relentlessly to expand the opportunities that benefit children and their families. For example, after continued perseverance, he secured regular sessions for the children at a hydro-pool and ensured that finance was available to sustain the sessions.

The manager is passionate, driven and aspirational. He is immersed in the service and knows all the children and families very well. This level of involvement enables him to understand children's home lives and adjust the support accordingly.

The manager continues to develop his strategic oversight of the service. Clear monitoring systems enable managers to recognise patterns and trends and to take appropriate action as required.

Staff are confident, committed and knowledgeable about the children. They feel extremely well supported and prepared for the challenges of caring for children with highly complex and differing needs. From this strong and secure management foundation, staff are enabled to continually strive for better outcomes for children.

Before the short-break service restarted, the manager ensured that very detailed advance planning took place. This enabled swift and extensive repair and redecoration of the building and minimal delay for families and children. The home has been restored to being welcoming and well-equipped.

During the period when the short-break service was suspended, the manager and senior managers were in regular liaison with Ofsted. However, the provider did not vary the home's conditions of registration or change the statement of purpose to match the care being provided at that time. This means that the home was not operating in accordance with its conditions and not providing care as outlined in the statement of purpose.

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

Statutory requirement

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

Requirement	Due date
The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ("the statement of purpose") which covers the matter listed in schedule 1. The registered person must— keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. Subject to paragraph (6), the registered person must ensure that the home is at all times conducted in a manner which is consistent with its statement of purpose. (Regulation 16 (1) (3)(a)(b) (5))	31 January 2023

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: SC372511

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

Registered provider address: Town Hall, King William Street, Blackburn BB1 7DY

Responsible individual: Clare Bibby

Registered manager: Jeremy Wood

Inspector

Pauline Yates, Social Care Inspector

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