

1254837

Registered provider: Together for Children Sunderland Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home provides care and accommodation for up to six children and young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. It is operated by a limited company. Since the last inspection, there is a new manager who was registered in April 2019.

Inspection dates: 7 to 8 May 2019

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 4 December 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
04/12/2018	Full	Requires improvement to be good
31/10/2018	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
19/06/2018	Full	Requires improvement to be good
02/05/2018	Interim	Declined in effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children and young people living in this home receive a good standard of care. Bespoke care plans and risk assessments identify the needs of children and young people. They detail how those needs will be met. Monthly summaries help keyworkers to track the progress of children and young people and plan keyworker sessions in advance. Subsequently, children and young people are making progress in most areas.

The manager and senior staff team have encouraged keyworkers to spend good-quality time with their key child and young person. This has included joining them on an activity of choice on a one-to-one basis that is in addition to the other activities that they access. This helps to strengthen the quality of relationships that the children and young people have with the adults who care for them.

The home is currently undergoing refurbishments that comprise a newly fitted kitchen, new sofas for the living room, decoration throughout the home, new flooring and internal doors. The attention given to detail is starting to improve the appearance of the home, creating a homelier environment. This helps children and young people to value their home. Furthermore, there has been a significant reduction in damage to the home.

The manager is developing different champion roles, including bullying champion, equality and diversity champion, and a participation and engagement coordinator. The principle of their roles will be to ensure that the children and young people are given a voice and contribute to decisions about the way in which they are cared for. Regular house meetings are taking place, and children and young people are contributing in a positive way, which is an improvement since the last inspection.

The views of children and young people are given significant recognition. The agenda for the staff team meetings considers in detail the children's and young people's comments that are recorded from house meetings or via other means such as the 'Mind of my own' (MOMO) tool or a secure post box. This helps children and young people to develop and sustain positive relationships with the adults who care for them as they know that their opinions are valued.

Education attendance and attainment for children and young people are mixed. The staff team has good links with the virtual head and attends relevant education meetings and appointments for the children and young people. For those children and young people who are refusing to attend their education placements, alternative educational activities are offered. This is well received by those children and young people. This provides opportunities to offer structure and education as part of daily routine and for them to spend good-quality time with the adults who care for them.

The staff team supports children and young people to have contact with family and friends where it is safe to do so. Regardless of geographical distance or location, the

staff team plans and arranges contacts to ensure that children and young people have a positive experience of having contact with family and friends and maintain those relationships. This means that children and young people maintain a sense of identity.

The manager has revisited the way in which the staff team prepares those young people who are ready to move onto semi-independent or independent living. He recognises that this is an area where the home can improve its practice. This would improve children's and young people's experiences as they transition to more independent living and into adulthood.

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

Risk assessments identify individual risks to children and young people and include clear strategies for managing risks effectively. In the main, risk assessments are followed and are effective at keeping children and young people safe. The inspector found one incident where a strategy in one young person's risk assessment had not been recorded or followed in a way that the risk assessment identifies. This means that children and young people are provided with conflicting messages about the steps taken to help protect them.

Missing from home episodes have reduced in frequency but extended in duration for some children and young people. When children and young people have been missing from the home, the appropriate protocols have been followed. Records indicate where return home interviews by an independent visitor have been offered and whether a child or young person has engaged in that process. Records do not indicate how children and young people have shared their views with an independent visitor. Therefore, there is no record of any learning from what the child or young person has shared in their meeting with an adult who is independent from the home.

There have been no incidents that have required the use of physical intervention to manage disruptive behaviour. Consequences to manage disruptive behaviours have been effective and are regularly reviewed by the manager.

The staff have received training relevant to the needs of the children and young people in their care. This includes training to help them to understand self-harmful behaviours, bullying and substance misuse. Children and young people benefit from the knowledge and skills of the staff team by receiving individualised care.

The staff team has demonstrated learning from training. In individual staff supervisions, safeguarding issues and reflective learning are discussed. Staff linking behaviours to theory enables children and young people to receive appropriate responses to their specific needs from the adults who care for them. Additionally, the staff team applies learning to devise behaviour management plans based on regular consultation and training with a clinical psychologist.

Bullying has been an issue of concern that has been effectively addressed since the

home's last inspection. The development of a bullying champion and proactive work completed with children and young people in keyworker sessions and house meetings have resulted in a reduction in bullying incidents. The home has recently been awarded a silver charter mark for bullying. It is aiming to progress to a platinum award. This enhances the experiences of children and young people, providing positive messages about unacceptable and negative behaviour.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Since the last inspection, a new manager has been appointed. He is familiar with the home's practice and inspection history. The manager was registered in April 2019. He is supported in his role by his manager and effective senior staff team.

The home's monitoring and quality assurance processes from the senior staff team have significantly improved. They are thorough and robust at identifying shortfalls in practice. Appropriate challenge of poor practice has helped drive improvements forward. This benefits children and young people by enabling them to receive safe care.

The home has capacity to admit more children and young people. The manager has considered referrals but not taken new admissions, based on impact risk assessments completed. The manager recognises the importance of well-planned and considered placements for not disrupting the placements of the current children and young people living in the home. Additionally, he recognises the importance of being able to meet the needs of all the children and young people in the home's care as set out in the home's statement of purpose.

The manager recognises the home's strengths as well as areas of development. He values feedback from the inspector and his independent visitor. He has improved the agenda for staff team meetings and has made it compulsory for all staff to attend. Independent visitor reports and recommendations are shared and discussed in team meetings. This helps the staff to contribute to improvements being made, and they feel valued as a result.

The staff team spoke extremely positively about the support and direction given by the manager and senior staff team. Staff spoken to commented on the home having a 'different culture' and 'things now getting done'. Further comments made by staff indicate that there has been a boost in team morale and that staff are starting to communicate better with each other.

Since the last inspection, the manager has focused on the staff team building and strengthening relationships with the children and young people. Staff see the benefits this is having for children and young people, as critical incidents have reduced. Furthermore, children and young people engage in activities offered, and their missing episodes have reduced.

A professional commented, 'These young people have competing and complex needs. In

the past, I don't think they were supported or equipped to manage such complexities. The staff seem more confident and organised. There is a real sense of control in the home and not as much 'flap'. They have taken stock and don't respond with knee-jerk reactions. Risk assessments are much more considered.'

There are improvements to the quality of recordings in documents. However, this has not been consistent across all staff members. A recommendation was made at the last inspection and will remain a recommendation following this inspection.

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, 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 protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure 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; assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child. (Regulation 12(1)(2)(b)(a)(i))	09/06/2019

Recommendations

- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)
- When a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority must provide an opportunity for the child to have an independent return home interview. Homes should take account of information provided by such interviews when assessing

risks and putting arrangements in place to protect each child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: 1254837

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Together for Children Sunderland Limited

Registered provider address: Civic Centre, Burdon Road, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear
SR2 7DN

Responsible individual: Martin Birch

Registered manager: Barry Hall

Inspector

Jacqueline Tate, social care inspector

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