

1254837

Registered provider: Together for Children Sunderland Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and managed under trust arrangements. The home provides care for up to six children who may have emotional and/or social difficulties.

During the inspection, the inspector spoke with three children who live in the home.

The manager registered with Ofsted in May 2019.

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 January 2023

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

Date of last inspection: 8 June 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
08/06/2021	Full	Good
14/01/2020	Interim	Improved effectiveness
07/05/2019	Full	Good
04/12/2018	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children are making good progress and enjoy trusted and secure relationships with the staff, who know them well. The staff have a good understanding of the children's needs and are committed to them. For children who have recently moved into the home, there is evidence that they are also beginning to build relationships with the staff.

Before children move into the home, they have the opportunity to visit, stay for tea and meet the staff and other children who live in the home. When they move in, staff spend time with the children and help them to purchase items to personalise their bedrooms. This supports the children in settling into the home.

The home is warm and welcoming and is decorated and furnished to a good standard. The home has been redecorated since the last inspection, and a new carpet has been fitted throughout. There are now photos of the children enjoying activities and time with the staff on display throughout the home. The care that the staff put into the home helps the children to feel valued and develop a sense of belonging.

Staff support the cultural and identity needs of children who speak English as an additional language. Essential documents are also translated for them, and staff use an interpreter or a translation application to communicate. This supports the children's cultural and individual needs.

Not all children are in education, employment or training. For one child, the education information in the home's care plan is incorrect. There are also no daily education plans in place for the children who are not engaging in education. The virtual school has identified that the home is working on independent living skills with one child who is currently not attending school. However, there was no evidence of this taking place. This means that the children are not fully supported to reach their academic potential.

Staff ensure that they seek the views of the children, and they use various forums to achieve this. While it is clear that staff are seeking children's views at the young people's meetings, there is no evidence of what staff have done to respond to the children's requests. This means that children do not develop an understanding that their views are important and will be listened to.

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

Staff work hard to keep children safe and manage the complex risks that they are faced with. Staff understand safeguarding procedures and consistently follow them. Discussions take place with the children following every significant incident, which helps the children to raise their knowledge and awareness of the risks that they may face.

Children's risk assessments are clear and easy to follow. They are dynamic and updated when incidents occur. Risk assessments are supported by detailed individual crisis support plans that help staff to support the children in times of crisis, recognise their triggers and support their recovery.

Staff recognise contextualised risk and the risk of criminal exploitation. This resulted in one child being moved on from the home for their own safety and the safety of the other children. One professional said, 'Staff went above and beyond to support this child. The transition to another home was required to keep him and the other children in the home safe.'

There has been a significant increase in the number of missing-from-home episodes recently. Staff follow the home's missing-from-home procedure when children go missing. Staff are proactive in looking for children when they go missing and ensure that return home interviews are offered when the children return. While generally, staff do welcome the children back into the home when they return, one instance was identified where a child was refused food. This does not give children the message that staff are glad that they have safely returned.

The recording of consequences is not completed as required. One record shows that a debrief with the member of staff was not undertaken. Other records were not completed by the manager in the required timescale, and the actions taken by the staff to avoid giving the measure were not recorded. A number of the consequences were not restorative in nature. This means that it is not clear whether the consequences that are used are fair and proportionate.

Very few physical interventions take place in the home. When they do, they are necessary, and the recording of these meets the regulations. However, there is no evidence that the children are offered the opportunity to access an advocate to support them during their debrief. This limits their opportunity to talk to an independent person about the physical intervention

Before children move into the home, the manager and deputy complete a risk assessment. They consider the risks for each child, but they do not consistently evaluate the impact of these risks on either the child coming into the home or on the children who already live in the home. Therefore, it is not clear how the decision for children moving into the home has been reached.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is managed by a permanent, suitably experienced and qualified registered manager. The home is properly staffed by suitably vetted and qualified staff. There is an induction period in place for new members of staff.

The registered manager, who is supported by an experienced deputy manager, is very passionate about his role. He has a clear vision for the home and has a good

understanding of the areas for development, both for the staff and for what he wants to achieve in the home.

The training matrix is kept up to date and includes all mandatory and desired training for the staff group. There is a designated training coordinator in post, who ensures that the staff's training needs are met. When issues arise in the home, the training coordinator sources additional training for the staff team and then ensures that work is undertaken with the children to increase their knowledge and understanding of these issues.

Supervision takes place on a regular basis, and staff say they find this beneficial. However, the quality of the recording of these sessions continues to vary. One record did not include any evidence of a discussion taking place about the children living in the home, and some records do not include any evidence of reflective supervision taking place. This means that the staff do not have the opportunity to reflect on their experiences of caring for the children and make changes to their practice.

Shortfalls with regards to record-keeping are identified. For example, the language used in some records is neither helpful nor child-friendly. In addition, some records include information that is out of date or contradictory. This means that the children's records are not helpful for them to read and understand their experiences and progress. Some of the records are not credible, and others do not accurately reflect the children's current needs.

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

Statutory requirements

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 education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— support each child's learning and development, including helping the child to develop independent study skills and, where appropriate, helping the child to complete independent study; understand the barriers to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child to overcome any such barriers; help each child to understand the importance and value of education, learning, training and employment; and promote opportunities for each child to learn informally. (Regulation 8 (1) (2)(a)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v))	25 March 2023
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 staff— 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)(a)(i)) This specifically relates to impact risk assessments.	25 April 2023

The registered person must prepare and implement a policy (“the behaviour management policy”) which sets out— how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the children’s home; and the measures of control, discipline and restraint which may be used in relation to children in the home. The registered person must ensure that— within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes— details of the child’s behaviour leading to the use of the measure; the date, time and location of the use of the measure; details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure; within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so (“the authorised person”)— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (1)(a)(b) (3)(a)(ii)(iii)(v)(b)(i)(ii)(c)) This specifically relates to consequence records.	25 March 2023
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Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the staff meet the children’s basic day-to-day needs and physical necessities. Staff should seek to meet the child’s basic needs in the way that a good parent would, recognising that many children in residential care have experienced environments where these needs have not been consistently met. This is an important aspect of demonstrating that the staff care

for the child and value them as an individual. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.7)

- The registered person should ensure that the children are consulted regularly on their views about the home's care, to inform and support continued improvement in the quality of care provided. Children should be able to see the results of their views being listened to and acted on. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.11)
- The registered person should ensure that any child who has been restrained should be offered the opportunity to access an advocacy support to help them express their feelings about their experiences of the restraint. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 50, paragraph 9.60)
- The registered person should ensure that there are systems in place so that all staff, including the manager, receive supervision of their practice from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional, which allows them not only to reflect on their practice and development, but also to focus on the needs of the children assigned to their care. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2)
- The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Records should be kept up to date, and 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)

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: 1254837

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Together for Children Sunderland Limited

Registered provider address: Stanfield Business Centre, Addison Street,
Sunderland SR2 8SZ

Responsible individual: Majella McCarthy

Registered manager: Barry Hall

Inspector

Paula Shepherd, Social Care Inspector

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