

1254837

Registered provider: Together for Children Sunderland Limited

Interim 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 young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. It is operated by a limited company. The manager has considerable experience and is qualified for the position held.

Inspection date: 31 October 2018

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Date of last inspection: 19 June 2018

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

This inspection

The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection

At an interim inspection in May 2018, Ofsted judged that the home had declined in effectiveness. Then at the full inspection in June 2018 the home was judged as requiring improvement to be good. Concerns and themes continue that have resulted in a further judgment of declined in effectiveness at this interim inspection.

The experiences of children and young people in this home since the last inspection have been mixed. The transitions to and from the home continue to be varied and often relate to crisis point situations. This does not enable children and young people to settle quickly into new routines. Pre-admission risk assessments are generic and do not adequately evaluate the risks to all children and young people. Subsequently there are three children and young people waiting to be moved to alternative placements, as the home is unable to provide the level of care they require.

Improvements in a range of areas can be seen for some of the children and young

people. However, this continues to be inconsistent among the group. It is not clear from the recordings and risk assessments how children and young people are proactively being helped and protected by the adults who care for them. Some strategies to help children and young people contained in records are ambiguous in parts while others do not adequately address the level of risk or vulnerability to the children and young people.

Education attendance consistently remains poor, and repeated recommendations are made to address the shortfalls in this area. When children and young people refuse to attend education, there is no proactive planning around an alternative educational provision. This would support reintegration back into education and offer routine to children and young people.

Missing from home episodes have significantly increased for some children and young people. The duration of their absences has also increased, which heightens their vulnerability further. When children and young people are away from the home, some strategies include having sight of the children and young people every four hours. Records demonstrate that these strategies are not followed by staff and in one instance, a vulnerable child was not seen for over nine hours.

As reported in previous inspections, staffing issues due to long-term absence continue. The manager herself has had a period of planned absence since the last inspection. Despite this, the children and young people's physical needs appear to be met to a good standard. The level of engagement between the children, young people and the staff team is superficial. This prevents children and young people engaging with any form of support in a meaningful way and consequently hinders progress. The positive relationship standard has been made as one of the three compliance notices at this inspection.

There are concerns around the self-harming behaviours of several children and young people. Similarly, there are concerns around young people's use of illegal substances. The staff team is struggling to engage them in accessing services. When children and young people refuse to engage with services, plans do not identify what the staff are doing to try to re-engage them to access support or to address the behaviours within the home.

Management oversight and monitoring continues to be lacking in effectiveness. This is evidenced by repeated shortfalls in the quality of care and safeguarding of children and young people. Concerns raised in previous inspections were known by the manager but have not been adequately addressed. This has resulted in further repeated breaches of regulations and three compliance notices being issued following this inspection.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
19/06/2018	Full	Requires improvement to be good
02/05/2018	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
15/01/2018	Full	Good
22/11/2017	Full	Inadequate

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 quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— understand and apply the home's statement of purpose; ensure that staff— understand and apply the home's statement of purpose; protect and promote each child's welfare; treat each child with dignity and respect; provide personalised care that meets each child's needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking account of the child's background; help each child to understand and manage the impact of any experience of abuse or neglect; (Regulation 6(1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(b)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v))	02/12/2018
The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so.	02/12/2018

In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff understand the barriers to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child to overcome any such barriers. (Regulation 8(2)(iii))	
The health and well-being standard is that— the health and well-being needs of children are met; children receive advice, services and support in relation to their health and well-being. (Regulation 10 (1)(a)(b))	02/12/2018
* The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— mutual respect and trust; and an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff meet each child's behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child's relevant plans; and understand how children's previous experiences and present emotions can be communicated through behaviour and have the competence and skills to interpret these and develop positive relationships with children. (Regulation 11(2)(a)(ix))	02/12/2018
* 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; help each child to understand how to keep safe; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other; (Regulation 12(1)(2)(b)) (a)(i)(vi))	02/12/2018
*The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that—	02/12/2018

helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home’s statement of purpose; ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; ensure that the home’s workforce provides continuity of care to each child; demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— research and developments in relation to the ways in which the needs of children are best met; and feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received. (Regulation 13(1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(b)(c)(d) and (e)(f)(h))	
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children’s home. (Regulation 14(1)(a))	02/12/2018

* These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendations

- Children must be consulted regularly on their views about the home’s care, to inform and support continued improvement in the quality of care provided. Due consideration should be given to the child’s cognitive ability in the development and implementation of any consultation processes. Children should be able to see the results of their views being listened to and acted upon. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 22, paragraph 4.11)
- 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)

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.

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

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: Suzanne Metcalfe

Inspectors

Jacqueline Tate, social care inspector
Susan Atkinson-Millmoor, social care inspector

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