

1254841

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. It is registered to care for up to six children who may have emotional and/or social difficulties.

The manager registered with Ofsted on 1 April 2017.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 December 2021

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

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: 22 October 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
22/10/2019	Full	Outstanding
18/09/2018	Full	Outstanding
07/02/2018	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
05/09/2017	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The home provides outstanding care to the children, who are making significant progress from their starting points. They enjoy trusting relationships with the staff that are characterised by good humour, fun and knowing that they are loved and cared about. Three of the four children spoken to score the home as being 10 out of 10. One child said: 'I wish I could live here for the rest of my life.'

Since the last inspection, the home has experienced a difficult time with staff turnover and staff sickness and the impact of COVID-19. However, despite these challenges, the children continue to make exceptional progress. This is attributed to the commitment and creativity of the manager and his staff in ensuring that the pandemic was a positive experience for the children. One child said: 'They kept me safe every day. We did new fun things; they made a games shack and a cinema room for us. There was always something to do every day.'

The home is decorated and furnished to a very good standard. There are photos of the children enjoying time with the staff displayed around the home. The children very much view this as their home. This is evident not only from the children feeling comfortable to leave their belongings around the home, but also their keenness to spend time downstairs with each other and with the staff, relaxing and having fun. This is a view shared by professionals spoken to during the inspection.

Staff ensure that the children's health needs are well met. Children attend routine health appointments as well as specialist and therapeutic services. For children with complex health needs, the staff support the children to attend their hospital appointments and support them with all aspects of their care. This supports the children to lead a healthy life.

Attendance in education, employment or training is variable. For those children who do attend, they have excellent attendance and are progressing very well. Some children who have previously experienced barriers to attendance and learning are now attending full time, which is considerable progress. The staff are proactive and creative in trying to engage all the children in their education programmes. The staff attend all the children's education meetings and advocate very well on behalf of the children. One professional said: 'Education is a focus for the staff, they do their best and really support any alternative education.' This means that the children are supported well to reach their full academic potential.

The staff seek the children's views on a regular basis during children's meetings and one-to-one sessions. This means that the children have a say in their care and their care planning.

Children are prepared well to move on to independence when it is right for them to do so. They are encouraged and supported well by the staff to explore all their housing options before moving on. Children remain in contact with the staff after

they have moved on, often returning to the home for tea. One professional said: 'You can clearly see that there is a lot of work done in the home with the children. They are as prepared as much as they can be to move on.' This provides the children with the opportunity to learn new skills and prepares them well for their future.

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

Children say that they feel safe living in the home. There is an excellent safeguarding culture in the home as the staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities. As such, the safeguarding procedures are consistently followed.

The staff have a good understanding of the impact of trauma on children's health and development and use this knowledge in consultation with other professionals to respond to children's needs effectively. Staff are vigilant and achieve a good balance between minimising risk and allowing children to take age-appropriate risks.

The staff provide the children with a clear message that their safety and well-being are a high priority. When children go missing from home, which has been a regular occurrence for one child, the staff are relentless in their efforts to secure the child's safe return. This includes persistently trying to contact the child by telephone and remaining in contact with the child's family members, as well as driving to all known locations where they might be to locate them. Once children are found, return home interviews are offered.

The manager and his staff consistently role model positive behaviour and there is a culture of mutual respect between the children and the staff. This enables the children to develop a strong sense of their self-worth and how they should expect to be treated as well as how to treat others. On the rare occasions that physical intervention is used, it has been appropriate and to ensure safety. Following all significant incidents, individual conversations are carried out with the child. This ensures that the child's views are heard and recorded and allows the child to discuss and reflect on their behaviour. This supports the children to learn from their behaviour and to take responsibility for the choices they make.

Reports, including children's risk assessments and individual crisis support plans, are clear and easy to understand. These reports provide the staff with a detailed plan of how they will support the child when risks occur.

Safer recruitment processes are followed when staff are appointed. This provides assurance that the staff are suitably vetted and qualified to provide safe care to the children.

Before children move into the home, an impact risk assessment is completed. While the potential risks and impact on those children already living in the home are considered, three out of the four documents viewed did not analyse the potential impact on the child moving into the home. While there has been no impact on the

children of this shortfall, this lack of analysis means that the children have been matched without consideration of how the behaviours of others may affect them.

The manager ensures that the staff have a structured training programme that is relevant to the individual needs of the children. Training records are up to date and are clear with regard to the type of training that the staff have completed and when training needs to be reviewed. However, a small number of the staff have not completed their mandatory refresher training for safeguarding children and physical intervention. While this has not had an adverse impact on the children, it is important that all the staff are supported to keep their skills and knowledge up to date.

There has been a significant increase in serious incidents involving one child who is no longer living in the home. A review of documents shows that there has been a significant delay in notifying the regulator of two of these incidents. While there has been no impact of this shortfall, this means that Ofsted is unable to scrutinise all the relevant information in a timely manner to ensure that the appropriate action has been taken to ensure that the children are kept safe.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The manager is suitably qualified and experienced. He is passionate about the children in his care 'having big dreams' and he is inspirational in his approach. Both he and the deputy manager have a strong presence in the home. They ensure that they spend time with the children; this includes doing sleep-ins. The manager has high expectations of himself and his staff. This ensures that the children are provided with the best possible care. One professional said:

'[The manager] and [the deputy manager] very much have the best interests of the children at the forefront. My experience of residential is that the manager and deputy set the tone. Their vision is that they want to provide excellent care.'

The manager is influential in changing the experiences of the children. His aspirational and creative style of management has resulted in the children making considerable progress. One parent, when describing the change in their child said: 'I don't have one fault to say at all. [Name] needed cuddles and to be shown love and that is what she gets from them. The staff really care.'

The manager is keen to continue to strive to further develop and improve the service. He is supported by a highly motivated and committed team of staff who share his vision for the home. As a result, the children benefit from consistent staffing arrangements, which provide them with stability and security.

The manager and the staff have excellent relationships with other professionals and family members, which supports open and frequent communication. One professional said: 'This is absolutely the best children's home I have ever worked with in terms of communication. They keep me in the loop all the time.'

The children's records are kept up to date and are of a high standard. The manager welcomes external scrutiny from the independent visitor. The recommendations are shared in the staff meetings in order to make further improvements and to raise the standard of care that the children receive. This demonstrates a culture of openness and willingness to listen and change.

The manager completes a review of the quality of care provided for the children. However, on two occasions, this report has not been sent to Ofsted within the required timescale. This hinders Ofsted's ability to monitor and review the progress that is being made to improve practice and outcomes for children.

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, the 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 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))	14 January 2022

Recommendations

- The registered provider should ensure that the staff undertake refresher training in safeguarding and physical intervention. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards,' page 43, paragraph 9.12)
- The registered provider should ensure that there is a system in place so that all serious events are notified, within 24 hours, to the appropriate people, including Ofsted. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards,' page 63, paragraph 14.13)
- The registered provider should ensure that a copy of the quality of care review report is sent to Ofsted and the placing local authority, of all children in the home who are looked-after children, within 28 days of the review being completed. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards,' page 65, paragraph 15.3)

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: 1254841

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: Martin Birch

Registered manager: Michael More

Inspector

Paula Shepherd, Social Care Inspector

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