

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 provides care for up to six children who may have emotional and social difficulties.

The inspector spoke with three of the children during the inspection.

The manager registered with Ofsted on 1 April 2017.

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 March 2023

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: 14 December 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/12/2021	Full	Outstanding
22/10/2019	Full	Outstanding
18/09/2018	Full	Outstanding
07/02/2018	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

There is significant evidence of change and improvement in the progress and experiences of the children living in the home. This is because of the excellent quality of care that is provided to them by the staff. The commitment and tenacity of the staff enhances the children's life chances.

Children enjoy trusted and secure relationships with the staff who know them well. For those children who have recently moved into the home, staff work hard to get to know them and their likes and dislikes. As such, those relationships are appropriately developing.

The registered manager takes pride in the home, which is decorated and furnished to a high standard. Children's bedrooms are furnished and decorated to their specific likes. Before children move into the home, staff spend time with them exploring their wishes for how they would like their bedroom decorated. Their bedroom is then decorated ready for the children moving in. The child's key worker then spends time with the child personalising their bedroom further when they move into the home. This supports the children to settle into the home quickly.

The children engage in a wide range of home-based and community activities. They also can travel farther afield and abroad with staff. These activities are then captured in memory books, which creatively document each child's journey since moving into the home.

When children move into the home, this is managed sensitively and with care. This includes the staff visiting the children in their previous home, meeting up within the local community, discussions with important professionals, and visits to the home to meet staff and the other children. Children are also able to stay overnight prior to moving in. When children do move in, they receive a welcome pack with all essential items. This approach allows children to settle in quickly into the home.

For children who move into the home and where English is not their first language, staff are proactive in ensuring that their language and cultural needs are met. Staff use translators and all have translation applications on their phones. For one child who was feeling culturally and socially isolated, staff showed dogged determination to identify a community for this child. This included making links with a diverse range of appropriate people who spoke the same uncommon language of the child. The child now has a wide support network who they have regular contact with.

When children are ready, they are supported to move on from the home. Staff work with the children to complete an independent living skills programme and actively support introductions to their new home. Staff ensure that, before leaving, children celebrate their time that they lived in the home. Children who have moved on remain in contact with the staff and regularly return to the home to visit. One child

said they continue to visit the home on a weekly basis and stay for tea, and described the staff as being her 'family.'

All children are in education and have excellent attendance. Some children, prior to moving into the home, had been out of education for a significant period of time. For these children in particular, this is outstanding progress. In part, this is due to the determination and drive of staff to ensure that education placements, that meet the children's needs, are in place prior to the children moving into the home. Staff communicate with schools daily by way of a handover. One education professional described this as being extremely helpful. It allows the school to understand in advance any issues, which they can then respond to accordingly to best support children. Working in such an effective way supports children with continued education progression.

Staff support the children to spend time with the people who are important to them. For one child, this included locating a parent who was living in another country. The two of them had not seen each other for some time. The staff then facilitated a video call between the child and their parent. This above-and-beyond practice maintained the important relationship between parent and child. It also enabled the parent to be reassured of where their child was living, as well as being able to meet the staff caring for their child.

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

Children say they feel safe living in the home. One child scored living in the home as 10 out of 10, and another child scored it eight out of 10. Staff understand safeguarding procedures and follow them when incidents occur.

When children go missing from the home, staff immediately follow the children's individual missing-from-home assessments. Staff are proactive in trying to find the child. Staff continually try to contact them, searching the local area and contacting family and known associates. When children return, they are welcomed back into the home and return home interviews are always offered.

When bullying incidents take place in the home, staff take decisive action to manage the immediate incident. Work is undertaken with the child to reflect on their behaviour, including discussing the impact that their behaviour has on the other child. Staff seek the support and guidance from external professionals where appropriate, and are creative in engaging the children in anti-bullying work to raise awareness among the children.

Children's records, including risk assessments and 'individual crisis support plans', are thorough. They identify all known risks. They are comprehensive, with clear and easy-to-understand strategies in place for staff to follow to mitigate the identified risks.

Prior to children moving into the home, the registered manager completes an individualised risk assessment for each child. This identifies the potential impact of known risks on the children already living in the home, as well as on the child

coming to live in the home. There is a thorough evaluation from the manager which evidences the rationale for decision-making. However, one example was identified where a known risk was not considered within the risk assessment. While this shortfall had no bearing on any children, it means that not all known risks were considered as part of the matching process.

The location risk assessment does not evidence what feedback has been received from relevant professionals about the local area. While there has been no identified impact of this shortfall, it means that the staff do not have recorded, up-to-date information about the local area and consideration of how this may affect the children living in the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The home is managed by a permanent, suitably experienced and qualified registered manager. He is supported by an experienced deputy manager. The home is fully staffed by suitably vetted and qualified staff who are committed to their roles.

The registered manager and deputy are both passionate about their roles. The registered manager has the highest expectations of both himself and his staff. He is ambitious for the children in his care and is influential in changing their lives.

The registered manager and deputy lead by example. They are reflective and willing to take on board challenge to continually improve and to achieve the highest care possible for children. The registered manager continues to be ambitious about making further improvements in the home.

The registered manager is held in high regard in the organisation and is asked to undertake additional tasks outside of the home. The registered manager supports the other homes' managers and is keen to share practice to drive up performance across the wider service.

Feedback from staff and professionals has been overwhelmingly positive during the inspection. Staff feel supported by the managers and feel valued. The registered manager involves the staff in all decisions about the home, and staff feel that their opinions are welcomed and valued by the registered manager.

Staff have all completed the provider's mandatory training, as well as training that is specific to the individual needs of the children. Staff also receive regular supervision. However, the quality of the recording of supervision varies depending on the supervisor. The records also do not consistently evidence reflective discussions in supervision sessions. This means that staff are not consistently provided with the opportunity to reflect on their experiences of caring for the children and make changes to their practice.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that they only accept placements for children where they are satisfied that the home can respond effectively to the child's assessed needs and risks, and where they have fully considered the impact that the placement will have on the existing group of children. This relates to impact risk assessments. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 56, paragraph 11.4)
- The registered person should ensure that there are systems in place so that all the staff, including the manager, receive supervision so that they can reflect on their practice and 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 provider should ensure that the appropriateness and suitability of the location and premises of the home are reviewed at least once a year. When conducting the review, the registered person should consult and take into account the views of each relevant person. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 64, paragraph 15.1)

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: City Hall Floor 2, Plater Way, Sunderland SR1 3AA

Responsible individual: Majella McCarthy

Registered manager: Michael More

Inspector

Paula Shepherd, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at reports.ofsted.gov.uk/.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: eepurl.com/iTrDn.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023