

1254841

Registered provider: Together For Children Sunderland

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 social and emotional difficulties. Six children were living in the home. The inspector spoke with four of the children during the inspection.

The manager registered with Ofsted on 1 April 2017.

Inspection dates: 26 and 27 February 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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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: 19 March 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
19/03/2024	Full	Outstanding
14/03/2023	Full	Outstanding
14/12/2021	Full	Outstanding
22/10/2019	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The physical environment for children is safe and secure and offers a warm and homely atmosphere. All staff and managers are passionate about building a home for children that they can be proud to welcome their friends and loved ones back to.

Staff's focus is always to place children and their well-being at the heart of their practice. The quality of care they provide brings sustained positive improvement to children's lives. Children's achievements are celebrated with enthusiasm; staff buy a range of items that remind them of the children, which they then give to them as instant rewards to show their appreciation for good behaviour.

Staff provide a nurturing environment and strive to ensure that children feel loved and genuinely cared for. This has proved effective, as children begin to confide in trusted staff with sensitive issues and requests to keep them safe. Children develop an appropriate sense of permanence and belonging here and see it as their home.

Children are in good health and are being helped to improve their health further, with their needs (including oral, physical, mental and sexual health needs) being identified and addressed. Children trust adults and have started to bring their health needs to staff's attention. The manager's arrangements for managing medication and children's complex health needs are safe and effective.

Children all attend school or other educational provisions, where they are learning and making good progress. Staff are ambitious for children, supporting them to attend and do well in their education and talking to them about the importance of achieving a full education. There is effective liaison with schools, colleges and virtual school heads, and there are ongoing conversations to ensure that children's provisions continue to be as beneficial as possible.

Staff and managers work proactively to identify networks for children, integrating them into community groups with people who have similar interests and backgrounds. Staff and managers promote healthy dynamics between children and their family, friends and other people who are important to them, and strive to ensure that ongoing contact arrangements can go ahead. For one child, the staff worked with other agencies to locate a family member they did not know was living in the country and to safely reunite them. People who are important to the children said they always feel welcome in the home.

Children are treated with dignity and care is delivered while respecting any protected characteristics and diversity. Staff enable children to develop a positive sense of identity by identifying after-school activities, community-based activities, school trips, holidays and faith-based activities they may wish to participate in. This has increased children's

ability to form and sustain attachments and build emotional resilience, with the intention that this can continue when they leave care.

Children are supported to develop their independence according to their individual needs, while protecting themselves from being in unsafe situations or with unsafe people. Moves from the home are child-led, and children talk of the positive and sustained impact living in the home has had on their lives even after leaving the home's care.

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

Children say they feel safe living at the home. Children trust staff to protect them from risks such as child exploitation, self-harm and bullying, and disclose any incidents of potential harm to staff as they trust them to take concerns seriously and respond accordingly. This response includes regular and effective contact and planning with children's multi-agency teams.

Staff understand and contribute to individual up-to-date risk assessments that address any known vulnerabilities for each child and the actions to take to manage the risks effectively. Risk assessments are described as live documents and are reviewed regularly to ensure the management of risk is always up to date and effective. Staff carry out ongoing work with children to help them to protect themselves from risks. When children are accepted into the home, their risks are well understood in advance and prepared for before they move in.

Children who go missing from the home experience well-coordinated responses that reduce actual harm or risk of harm to them, with urgent and clear plans of action in place for staff to follow. Staff explore the reasons behind missing-from-home episodes to understand children's behaviours and to revise their ways of working if their approach is not effective. This has resulted in a significant reduction in instances of children going missing from the home.

Staff consistently promote children's positive behaviour through instant rewards and praise. Staff learn children's likes to ensure that when they are rewarded it is meaningful to them. When consequences are used to address unwanted behaviours, these are proportionate and restorative and are discussed weekly by the staff team to ensure that both the consequences in place and the duration of time they are in place for remain proportionate.

Staff only use restraint or restrictive practice when necessary to protect children, and there have been no incidents of physical intervention since the last inspection. All methods of de-escalation and education are used first to avoid physically holding children. Staff's use of restorative practice improves relationships, increases children's sense of personal responsibility and reduces conflict in the home.

Staff carry out searches of children's rooms or possessions sensitively, considering the impact of a search on the child and respecting their dignity. All searches are appropriately recorded, including the reasons for the search, the efforts made to seek the child's consent, and management oversight of the decision to carry out a search.

Careful recruitment and regular monitoring of staff aim to prevent unsuitable people from being recruited and from having the opportunity to harm children or to place them at risk. The relevant authorities and professional bodies are informed of any concerns about inappropriate candidates.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The home is managed by a permanent, suitably experienced and qualified registered manager. The management team members are ambitious and confident in their ability to change the lives of children in their care. Leaders and managers lead by example and work among the staff team to ensure consistency and high standards of care for children.

The experience of living in the home enhances children's life chances. There are examples of excellent practice that are worthy of wider dissemination, such as the home having become a local leader in seeking and building networks for children to ensure they build a sense of community and belonging in their locality, particularly in cases of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

Leaders and managers actively and regularly monitor the quality of care provided and welcome external scrutiny as an opportunity to check and improve practice if required. They identify strengths and areas for improvement and implement clear development plans that continually improve the experiences of children.

Leaders and managers make child-centred decisions about children coming to live at the home and ensure that staff have the skills to meet their needs as known at the time of admission. Robust assessments of children's needs and professional curiosity when dealing with the placing authority ensure they are clear on the needs of children who may move into the home. Managers are not afraid to refuse referrals if the child's needs may have an impact on children already living at the home.

Leaders and managers understand the plans for the children and drive and celebrate the achievement of important milestones, goals and permanence for their futures. Leaders and managers monitor the progress that individual children make and can demonstrate the positive impact that living at the home has had on individual children's progress and life chances. Feedback from other agencies and professionals was all extremely positive and demonstrated how leaders' and managers' passion drives positive progress and outcomes for children.

Staff receive effective support and challenge, such as in team meetings, which evidences a collective way of working and the importance of the voice of the staff team.

Managers aim to empower the staff team through a sense of shared ownership in relation to practice and quality assurance. Staff say they feel well supported and led by the management team and their high standards. Leaders and managers create a culture of high aspiration and positivity. They have high expectations of their staff to change and improve the lives of the children they are responsible for.

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

Registered provider address: City Hall, Plater Way, Sunderland, SR1 3AA

Responsible individual: Sharon Willis

Registered manager: Michael More

Inspector

Vikki Thwaites, Social Care Inspector

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