

2613157

Registered provider: Together For Children Sunderland

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

A local authority owns and manages this children's home. It provides care for up to three children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

The manager registered with Ofsted in October 2024. The home was registered with Ofsted in October 2020.

Three children were living at the home at the time of the inspection. One child was on holiday in Europe and the two other children declined to speak with the inspector.

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 October 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
---	-------------

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
---	------

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

Date of last inspection: 14 August 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/08/2024	Full	Good
11/10/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
07/03/2023	Full	Good
14/09/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children are making good progress in their own individual ways. Staff understand children's areas of strength and their areas of need. Staff have high aspirations for children while being sensitive to the expectations that they place on them. Small achievements are recognised and celebrated by the staff, raising children's self-esteem.

Children's views and feelings about the home are collected through a range of forums, including statutory review meetings and the home's children's meetings. Positive interactions between children and the staff were observed throughout the inspection.

Relationship building is prioritised, and staff adopt a child-centred approach. Structured support from staff helps children learn how to interact positively with their peers both inside and outside of the home. As children develop secure and trusting relationships with staff, they begin to share information about their past experiences. This helps children to begin to develop better emotional resilience.

Staff support children to maintain, and in some cases develop, their relationships with people who are important to them. Managers and staff advocate strongly on behalf of children to ensure that family time arrangements are achieved in a meaningful way that helps children feel secure and connected to those who are important to them.

Children take part in a broad range of activities that they help to plan and enjoy. Staff are creative in linking activities to national and international celebration days and cultural events. This helps children to learn about the world around them in a fun and engaging way.

The home is mostly warm and welcoming, and children personalise their bedrooms to create spaces that they can enjoy and relax in. However, some remedial works and general maintenance are needed in the home. This is not always carried out in a timely manner.

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

Children are supported to learn about personal safety and to better understand their individual vulnerabilities. Direct work with children is both planned and responsive in naturally occurring situations. Children, particularly those with learning needs, benefit from this 'real time' approach that helps them contextualise their understanding of personal safety. Staff use therapeutic approaches throughout their interactions with children.

Staff have a good knowledge of safeguarding practice, and they are attuned to children's needs. They are aware of subtle changes in children's presentation and become increasingly curious about what has motivated these changes. Their curiosity and

sensitive exploration lead to children disclosing incidents of harm, which have subsequently been addressed by the registered manager.

When risks to children increase, staff work collaboratively with other agencies and specialist support services to ensure that children receive the support that they need. On one occasion, increased risks to a child resulted in managers and staff no longer being able to keep the child safe. Staff worked dynamically during this period to safeguard the child. Leaders and managers balanced the safety of the child with the impact on other children living at the home. Their commitment to children experiencing significant difficulty demonstrates their dedicated approach to stability for children living at the home.

Children know how to raise a concern or a complaint but rarely do. They have access to an app where they can communicate their thoughts and feelings about their care. When children do raise concerns, the registered manager and wider care team address these effectively and support children to access independent advocates. They ensure that children understand the outcome of their concern or complaint. However, records do not sufficiently detail the actions taken or the outcome of complaints.

During times when children are upset, staff hold them to keep both children and them safe, when de-escalation is no longer effective. The workforce plan states that all staff must be trained in the home's model of restraint. However, leaders and managers do not ensure that sessional staff are trained before they begin to care for children. This places children at potential risk of injury.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is managed by an experienced and qualified registered manager and deputy manager. During this inspection period, the registered manager has relinquished her dual registration of a sister home. This has positively affected her oversight of the home and the care that children receive.

Regular monitoring of the home enables the registered manager and her deputy to review the effectiveness of children's care and staff responses to their needs, through scrutiny of records and direct observations. They provide formal feedback to staff and discuss shortfalls in practice and recording. Workshops are provided for staff when themes arise in their monitoring. This helps staff to better understand their role and managers' expectations.

Professionals spoke positively about the staff team and the registered manager, who they described as being 'effective'. One professional from the placing authority said, 'They are confident to challenge us on behalf of the children and rightly so they should.' Similarly, parents said that they feel their children are safe and their needs are met.

Staff feel supported by the registered manager and deputy. Regular supervision sessions and team meetings provide opportunities to reflect on their practice and children's

emerging needs. Additionally, monthly consultation with a psychologist provides a further opportunity for staff to develop their understanding and therapeutic approach to meeting children's needs.

Most staff are qualified for their roles or working towards the relevant qualification and have access to a broad range of training. They have recently been invited to explore professional development in an area that interests them. Specialist training is being implemented to enable staff to take a lead role in the home's running, for example additional training in sensory processing and sensory spaces. This new staff development plan will increase staff skills and knowledge in areas relevant to the children living at the home.

The registered manager has failed to reflect changes to the running of the service in the statement of purpose and share updates with Ofsted in a timely manner. The manager de-registered from her dual role at a sister service but did not update the statement of purpose at that time or share it with Ofsted.

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, The 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 leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 13(1) (2)(c)) In particular, the registered manager must ensure that all staff, including sessional workers, undertake training in restraint practice.	15 December 2025

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that accurate records are kept in the children's home. Specifically, all records of complaint must include a detailed description of the actions taken in response to, and the outcome of, any investigation. ('Guide to The Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)
- The registered person should ensure that the statement of purpose is kept under review and reflects the current intentions of the children's home. They must provide a copy of the statement of purpose to HMCI following any review or changes. ('Guide to The Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 14, paragraph 3.5)
- The registered person should ensure that the home is a nurturing and supportive environment that meets the needs of their children. The home will, in most cases, be a homely, domestic environment. When damage to the home occurs, prompt repair or remedial work should be carried out to ensure the home remains safe and welcoming. ('Guide to The Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

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: 2613157

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Together for Children Sunderland

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

Responsible individual: Sharon Willis

Registered manager: Megan Gilhooley

Inspector

Beth Forster, 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 looked after children, 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 www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://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 2025