

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	09/08/2016
Unique reference number	SC008575
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	The Together Trust
Registered provider address	The Together Trust Centre, Schools Hill, Cheadle, Cheshire SK8 1JE

Responsible individual	Jill Sheldrake
Registered manager	Post vacant
Inspector	Janine Shortman-Thomas

Inspection date	10/08/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Good
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC008575

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is outstanding because:

- Staff consider children's and young people's stays thoughtfully. Whenever possible, staff ensure that children and young people are given a choice, prior to their visit, of the room they wish to stay in and the activities they wish to be involved in.
- Children and young people's experiences and opportunities are enhanced as they are encouraged and supported to engage in a number of meaningful and purposeful social activities in and around the local community.
- Staff respect children and young people's dignity and provide a high level of individual care and support, as identified within their individual person-centred plans. This individualised care and support ensures that children and young people's needs are consistently met and that they enjoy their stays.
- Staff work well to prepare children and young people for significant transitions that occur within their lives. Children, young people and their families have been included and supported sensitively with their transition into and out of the home, and their move into this new home following a change to the premises where this service is offered.
- Parents are extremely complimentary about the care and support that their children receive from the committed and dedicated staff. One parent said, 'I cannot put into words how much the support helps us as a family. It makes you feel at ease, knowing that she is safe and well cared for. It has made a big difference to the family.'
- Effective internal and external monitoring systems in the home ensure that the manager and the leadership team have a good understanding of the home's strengths and areas for continued development. These systems support the manager in driving improvements forward within the home.
- Four areas for continued development have been identified. These relate to staff training and supervision, communication with parents and professionals, and escalating deficits with placing local authorities when shortfalls are evident within children and young people's care planning practice.

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

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further, the service should take account of the following recommendations:

- The registered person must ensure that when a placing authority does not provide the services needed to meet a child's needs during their time in the home or in preparation for leaving the home, that the registered person must challenge them to meet the child's needs. Staff should act as champions for their children and young people, expecting nothing less than a good parent would. The registered person should consider the use of an independent advocate if the child or young person's needs are not being met. ('Guide to children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 12, paragraph 2.8)
- The registered person must seek to develop the home's effective working relationships with each child's placing authority and with other relevant persons, such as parents, schools and colleges to ensure that all children and young people's needs are met. This is with particular reference to ensuring that parents and staff are aware of details, such as the dates and times of their children and young people's stays at the home, and ensuring that all significant information, such as the times when children and young people have been given their medication within the home, is shared with all the agencies clearly and promptly on the child or young person's discharge from the home. ('Guide to children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 52, paragraph 10.3)
- The registered person must support and ensure that the staff gain skills and experience that enable them to actively support each child to achieve their potential. In particular, ensure that the staff further develop their skills in understanding and supporting children and young people with autism, and in communicating with children and young people who have communication difficulties or who are non-verbal, and enable the staff to refresh their skills and knowledge in gastrostomy care. ('Guide to children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 52, paragraph 10.5)
- Ensure that supervision and performance management of staff safeguard children and minimise potential risks to them. In particular, ensure that staff are provided with regular, practice-related, one-to-one supervision in line with the home's workforce development plan. ('Guide to children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is a short break centre run by a charitable organisation. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to five children and young people with physical disabilities, learning disabilities and sensory impairment.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
20/01/2016	Full	Good
20/05/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
05/02/2015	Full	Good
31/07/2014	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The staff provide a high level of individual care and support to each child and young person. The staff team understands implicitly each young person's individual characteristics and mannerisms, and responds to these needs with affection and warmth. As such, children and young people have developed trusting and positive relationships with the stable and committed staff team. Consequently, children and young people look forward to and enjoy their breaks at this home. One parent said, 'The staff are very knowledge about her needs. They spend time with her so that they know her well and she loves coming. She marks her stays down on the calendar and then counts down to her next stay.' Staff sensitively consider children's and young people's needs and vulnerabilities, and plan thoughtfully for their stays. The staff team is aware of each child and young person's individual mobility needs and it carefully allocates rooms appropriately. Pre-visit telephone calls with parents and carers, and consultation with children and young people during their stays, ensure that children and young people are allocated the rooms of their choice, and are provided with the foods and activities they would like to have and take part in during their stays. That said, miscommunication between staff and parents has resulted in one young person missing their stay, and another young person missing out on an exciting outdoor activity. The manager ensures that children and young people's transitions into and out of the home are carefully considered and well thought out. The manager and staff work alongside and communicate well with children and young people, and prepare them well for any significant changes to their lives. Staff have developed positive working relationships with schools, colleges and a range of adult services to aid them in their work. This cohesive approach promotes continuity of care for children and young people while preparing them well for any significant transitions within their lives. This ensures that children and young people join and leave the home successfully. The manager and leaders take children's and young people's comments and complaints against the home and staff seriously. The manager ensures that thorough investigations are completed and that children and young people are kept up to date with the outcomes of their investigation. Children and young people enjoy a range of interesting and exciting experiences	

during their stays. Staff carefully and enthusiastically plan for their stays beforehand in consultation with them and their families. This ensures that children and young people are involved with their care planning as far as practicable, and that they are given the opportunities to engage positively with the activities of their choice within the local community. Children and young people benefit from a range of regular activities, which their parents and staff report that they enjoy. Some children and young people enjoyed a residential holiday where they were given the opportunity to canoe and take part in archery. Other children and young people enjoy visits to the local animal parks and trips out on a barge. These activities, alongside other trips to the cinema and for shopping, enables children and young people to develop positive relationships with each other and their local community, and to expand on their previous experiences. This in turn enables and supports children and young people to build happy, positive childhood memories of their time spent at the home.

Staff work hard to ensure that children and young people maintain their positive experiences within the home so that they can share these with their family members. The staff work meticulously to capture children and young people's experiences through photographs, and they have presented these in beautiful bound books. These memory books provide children and young people and their families with an overview of the varied and enjoyable experiences that they have had during their stay. This enables children and young people and their families to recapture those times and memories both now and in the future.

Careful consideration is given by the staff to ensure that the health needs of children and young people are effectively addressed. Verbal handovers with parents on their child's arrival ensure that staff are kept up to date with children and young people's changing health needs, such as medication regimes. Suitable systems for booking medication into and out of the home are in place to minimise the potential of errors within the home. Furthermore, the manager and staff work closely with families and health specialists to share information about children and young people's changing needs to ensure that their routine and complex medical health needs are suitably addressed. This ensures that the staff can continue to provide children and young people with the correct level of highly individualised care and support during their stays.

The managers and staff work well with education professionals to ensure that children and young people remain actively involved in education and make good progress in line with their individual goals and targets. While the staff team communicates regularly with schools, there are no clear, systematic processes in place to ensure that all schools and colleges are informed of the specific times when children and young people are administered medications, such as paracetamol. As such, the appropriate spacing of some medication doses is not maintained for all children and young people after they leave the home.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Parents confirm that their children are kept safe and feel safe because of the actions that the staff take. Managers are conscious of the particular vulnerabilities of children and young people with disabilities, and have created an open and transparent culture where staff can freely report concerns. Staff are clear about their safeguarding roles and responsibilities, and they have a thorough understanding of the whistleblowing policy and procedure because these are discussed regularly during staff team meetings. These discussions, alongside regular safeguarding training and updates, keeps staff abreast of any significant changes in safeguarding practice, and thereby promotes children and young people's welfare and safety. Staff provide a high level of care and supervision to all children and young people. The staff are highly committed and have an intrinsic understanding of each child's and young person's specific needs, behaviours and mannerisms. Children's and young people's care planning is meticulous and highly personalised. Their risks and vulnerabilities are continuously assessed and fully recorded in their risk management plans, and the staff fully understand and follow these. Information within these plans is routinely shared during daily handovers, supervisions and team meetings, which ensures that the staff team is fully equipped and supported to promote children and young people's needs safely. The manager and leadership team deal with significant events promptly and adequately. The manager ensures that children and young people's safety is given the highest priority while supporting staff sufficiently. The manager consults with all the required agencies within her investigations and ensures that the local authority designated officer is contacted when any allegations against staff are made. Any action plans from an investigation are quickly implemented to reduce the likelihood of further incidents. The staff support children and young people sensitively when their responses to their surroundings may pose a risk to themselves or others. Staff have a high awareness of the behaviours of children and young people. Good behaviour management processes are in place to promote positive behaviour from the children and young people. The home has not used any physical intervention since the last inspection and does not apply sanctions when young people behave inappropriately. Instead, the home focuses on recognising and rewarding positive behaviours. Regular health and safety checks of the premises are carried out by the manager	

and staff. These, alongside the annual gas, electrical and fire safety checks, and the annual reviews of the specialist equipment within the home and of the motor vehicles, help to promote the safety and well-being of children, young people and staff.

The registered manager ensures that new staff are carefully selected and vetted. They receive adequate training and a good induction to the home so that they are able to meet children and young people's needs. That said, new staff do not systematically receive supervision in line with the commitments identified within the home's workforce development plan.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
The home is managed by a suitably qualified and experienced manager. She has been registered with Ofsted since September 2013 to manage this service within another property owned by this organisation. The manager is within the final stages of her application with Ofsted to manage this home. The registered manager is sufficiently supported by a dedicated and motivated deputy manager and three senior care workers. The leadership team and staff are all committed to delivering good care practice tailored to meet the individual and complex needs of all children and young people. The effectiveness of this highly specialised care, support and dedication is evident in the improved experiences and opportunities that children and young people benefit from. A real strength of this home is the child-centred approach that the manager and staff command. The children and young people are the heart of the home, and the manager and staff do their utmost to ensure that they receive care and support as set out in the home's recently updated statement of purpose. There is a sufficient number of competent, experienced and qualified permanent staff. They deliver a good standard of personalised care to children and young people as identified within their individual placement plans. Most staff have the required qualifications, while suitable plans are in place to ensure that others achieve these within the required time frame. The manager has a sound understanding of the home's strengths and where there is still capacity to improve. The areas for development are identified and reviewed within the manager's effective internal monthly monitoring systems. This,	

alongside the additional rigour and challenge that the independent visitor offers during their monthly visits, enables the manager to continue to improve the services and experiences for all children and young people.

Good management oversight of any significant incidents ensures that any learning from these situations is reflected within children's and young people's care plans and risk assessments. Any issues or shortfalls identified with staff practice are addressed appropriately with the staff team through regular team meetings and supervision sessions.

Professionals and parents are complimentary about the service and levels of communication. The manager has developed good professional relationships with parents, carers and placing authorities, and communicates with them well. One parent said, 'They provide me with lots of information about what she has done and the staff let me know if she has a seizure.' A professional wrote, 'The young people all appear to enjoy their stay.' They went on to add, 'Staff are always as flexible as possible and provide good communication.'

The manager has suitably addressed both of the requirements that were raised at the last inspection. Medication processes have been reviewed to reduce the likelihood of further medication errors, and clear risk assessments and plans are in place to enable staff to care for and support children and young people safely.

Three of the five recommendations have been suitably addressed by the manager. The management team monitors the use of agency staff well and the use of these agency staff has reduced month on month since the last inspection. This ensures that children and young people are cared for by a consistent workforce.

Furthermore, shift leaders and staff working with particular children know and understand children and young people's plans, they plan for their stays effectively, and they work well with children and young people to achieve their identified goals and targets. In addition, the manager is confident that the layout of the new home and the supervision arrangements for children and young people sufficiently promote their safety and welfare. Further work is required by the management team to address the two further outstanding recommendations. These relate to staff supervision and staff training. This is to ensure that the staff team is supported sufficiently by the leaders and managers to continue to deliver a high standard of care. Furthermore, the management and leadership team needs to ensure that the staff team is sufficiently trained and has the required knowledge and skills to effectively support children and young people who have autism, who use non-verbal communication and who have a gastrostomy.

A young person of 21 years of age continues to access this service. While the manager has continued to support this young person and their family during this time, she has not demonstrated how she has escalated the shortfalls and delays in this young person's transition planning with the placing local authority. Nor has she

demonstrated how she has supported this young person to gain independent advocacy to challenge this care practice. Consequently, this young person continues to access services and support from this children's service because there are no clear plans or timescales in place to identify when they will be moving on into adult care.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people, and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of children looked after is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place. However, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or that result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference that adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, 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 who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service 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'.

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