

SC008575

Registered provider: The Together Trust

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is run by a charitable organisation and provides care for up to five young people who may have physical disabilities and/or learning disabilities and/or sensory impairment. The home provides short-term breaks together with long-term placements for a small number of children.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since 2016.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 October 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 4 December 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
04/12/2019	Full	Good
08/01/2019	Full	Good
29/11/2017	Full	Good
27/02/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children are cared for by a warm, enthusiastic and committed staff team. When several staff were unable to work due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a few staff moved into the home for a week to look after the children. This ensured consistency in the quality of care.

Children's individual needs are well understood. Staff spend quality time with children. They know how best to support each child's needs. The individual placement plans for children provide clear guidance for the team. Staff are empathic in their approach to care, which shows children that their feelings are understood. Children benefit from taking part in a wide range of enjoyable trips and activities.

Staff help children to communicate their wishes and views effectively. They have a sound knowledge of children's individual communication aids. Children are well supported to make choices in their day-to-day lives, including helping to contribute their views on developments to the home environment. Children enjoy spending time in the well-equipped sensory room. There are improved facilities in the garden area, including a new wheelchair accessible swing.

Children are helped to engage in their learning. There is good communication between the home and the individual child's school. Where children do not attend school, individual tuition is provided to support them to engage in education in the home. Staff work collaboratively with a range of specialist health services to support children's individual health needs.

Staff are helping to support the transition for one young person who is moving on to adult provision. The young person is being supported to develop their independence skills to enable a positive move. Staff contribute effectively to the transition planning with professionals. This has been delayed, in part due to the pandemic, which has understandably been difficult for the young person. Staff are strong advocates for them. The young person told the inspector that they appreciate the support from staff.

Parents spoken to feel very positive about how well their children are cared for. They told the inspector that communication with the staff team is good. Parents feel that consistent support from staff has helped their children to progress well during their stay at the home. This positive feedback was shared by social workers working with the children. They consistently commented on the staff team's sound understanding of each child's needs. The supportive relationships that staff develop with children and their families, together with the good-quality care provided, were also commented on.

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

Staff have a sound understanding of children's individual vulnerabilities and identified risks. The detailed risk management plans for each child provide staff with clear guidance and individual strategies to address identified risks. Staff review these plans regularly to reflect changes in the child's support needs. This helps to ensure that children's plans are appropriate to their age and reflect any new identified risks.

The pandemic raised significant potential risks for the home in terms of protecting children's health. The thorough assessment of the potential risks completed by the management team is reviewed in line with the changing government guidance. Decisions about children's stays at the home were made appropriately, in a timely way, based on this assessment. This helped to protect children's health as changes in the service offered were put in place to reduce the risk of infection.

Risk assessment within the home environment is equally detailed. Individual plans for children match, for example, the home's fire safety procedures. Staff are provided with guidance that helps to ensure children receive the appropriate level of individual support and supervision.

Children's medical needs are coordinated well between the team and the medical professionals. Staff are provided with specific training and guidance to enable them to meet each child's medical needs. This includes regular support provided by a specialist nurse. The recent independent audit, requested by the manager, provided additional assurance that effective procedures are in place for the administration of medication.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is child-centred and has a thorough understanding of the children's individual needs. They lead by example, focusing on ensuring that children have a positive and enjoyable experience while staying at the home. The registered manager is a sound advocate for children. They continue to develop the home's processes for seeking the views of children, parents and professionals to help develop the service.

Staff feel well supported by both the registered manager and the deputy manager. This has been a particular strength during the pandemic. Together, the management team has provided staff with effective support that reflects their individual needs. Staff all feel that they are very much part of the team. This is significant as there have been several changes to the team, with new staff joining since the last inspection.

Training and induction for new staff are comprehensive. The registered manager is focused on enabling staff to develop their skills, knowledge and experience. Staff really appreciate how well supported they are to develop professionally. New staff are supported to complete the professional diploma relevant to their role. However,

there is a delay within the staff team in terms of completing the diploma. There are now clear plans in place for individual staff to achieve the qualification.

Staff are provided with regular supervision sessions. These help them to have space to reflect on their role and the care they provide to children. The registered manager has recently made changes to the recording of the individual sessions. However, the supervision for one staff member did not record their individual support needs. This meant that the support being provided to them was also not reflected in the recordings.

The registered manager has a good understanding of the strengths of the home and the staff team. They identify areas of development, including improvements to the home environment. These include the continued development of the garden area. The responsible individual supports these improvements and maintains oversight to ensure completion of these in the context of understandable delays due to the pandemic. This is key to the positive impact that this has on children's experiences through the wider access to the garden.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that all staff in a care role, including external agency or bank staff, have the qualification in regulation 32(4) within the relevant timescale listed in regulation 32(5). ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.12)
- The registered person should ensure that a record of supervision is kept for staff, including the manager. The record should provide evidence that supervision is being delivered in line with regulation 33(4)(b). ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.3)

In particular, ensure discussions in relation to support for individual staff, are recorded together with any agreed actions.

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: SC008575

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: The Together Trust

Registered provider address: The Together Trust Centre, Schools Hill, Cheadle
SK8 1JE

Responsible individual: Jill Sheldrake

Registered manager: Helen Marston

Inspector

Maria Lonergan, Social Care Inspector

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