

Children's homes inspection – Interim

Inspection date	27/02/2017
Unique reference number	SC008575
Type of inspection	Interim
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	Helen Marston
Inspector	Janine Shortman-Thomas

Inspection date	27/02/2017
Previous inspection judgement	Good
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection This home was judged good at the full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judges that it has sustained effectiveness. The manager ensures that due thought, consideration and planning is undertaken to ensure that children and young people enjoy their short-term breaks at this home. Detailed assessments and transition planning ensures that children and young people who are new to receiving short-term breaks in the home feel informed and prepared for their stay. Children, young people and their families are supported to gain some insight into the management of the home, the staff, and the other young people living there before they begin their stays. This is achieved as the managers and staff share pertinent information with them. Children and young people also benefit from introductory visits to the home, and have enjoyed joining in activities with other children and young people in the home prior to their admission. This enables children and young people to build positive, nurturing relationships at the point of their arrival. A particular strength of this home is the staff's ability to develop and sustain positive working relationships with children, young people and their family members. Staff work hard to ensure that they are kept up to date with any changes to children and young people's care plans and progress they have made between their short-term breaks. Staff undertake regular pre-visit calls to family members to ascertain any changes in children and young people's daily care needs or medication regimes, and to establish what activities and foods children and young people would like during their stays. This enables the manager and staff to adequately plan for children and young people's short-term stays, and ensures that they have all the up-to-date information they require. As such, children and young people receive a high level of care and support from the manager and staff team during their stay, to meet their known and emerging needs. Children and young people are supported to enjoy their short-term break in a comfortable and homely environment that blends into the neighbourhood. The home is clean, and is decorated and furnished to a high standard. Children and young people's needs are carefully considered before their stay and well matched to other children and young people using the service at that time. In addition, the manager and staff carefully plan which bedrooms children and young people will utilise during their short-term break. Children and young people are encouraged and supported to personalise their room to reflect their individual needs and taste.	

This ensures that children and young people are provided with a level of familiarity which enables them to feel safe and relaxed during their stay.

Positive and effective communication links between staff and the children and young people's family members ensures that significant family members are kept informed of their children's progress, and developments that they have achieved during their stay. Parents who were spoken with during the course of the inspection confirmed that they were contacted when required and provided with sufficient information about the child's stay on their return. This supports family members to feel confident and relaxed in the knowledge that their children are being well cared for and kept safe during their short-term breaks.

Children and young people's social interactions have increased due to the opportunities afforded to them while at the home. They have benefited from greater access to a wider range of opportunities which support them to explore the world around them safely. Children and young people enjoy taking part in their chosen activities during their stays such as going to the local parks, cinema and libraries, while also enjoying trips out to the local attraction areas, and going out for meals. This enables them to become involved with, and feel part of, the local community, while developing their self-esteem and confidence. Furthermore, family members can enjoy their time together regenerating their batteries, safe in the knowledge that their children are safe and are being given the opportunities to enhance and develop their skills, abilities and experiences. This was validated by one parent who said, '[Name] gets the opportunity to spread her wings, meet new people and try new things. They go out for drives, go out into the garden, visit the local parks and go out for tea. While we get to spend time together, to regroup and have a rest.' They went on to add, 'We benefit from the respite we receive massively.'

The manager and staff ensure that children and young people's health needs are given the highest priority. Staff ensure that children and young people's medication regimes are closely followed. Following one of the recommendations made at the last inspection, enhanced recording systems now ensure that all information, including the time at which medication is administered by staff, is shared with all staff, parents and school. This ensures that children and young people's health and medication regimes are followed to meet their individual and complex health care needs.

Children and young people are happy, comfortable and relaxed in the home. Parents and social workers are complimentary about the service, and confirm that children and young people enjoy improved outcomes. For example, some young people have experienced improved sleep routines and better access to community activities, while others have benefited from improved family relationships.

As recommended in the last inspection, the manager now ensures that her staff are fully supported through regular and purposeful supervision. Furthermore, she has now provided further training opportunities for the staff. This ensures that the staff

are supported well and that they provide a high level of care to all children and young people. The staff have now enhanced their knowledge and skills in supporting children and young people with autism following on from an Autism Awareness course. The manager plans to strengthen these skills further, and more training in this regard is planned. Additionally, the manager has secured more bespoke training for staff, to meet the individual needs of the children and young people they support. Examples of bespoke training include Intensive Interaction, Visual Support and Sleep Clinic training. That said, despite the recommendation to increase and refresh the staff's knowledge and awareness of gastrostomy care, this training has yet to take place for those who require it. Consequently, this recommendation has been reissued.

The manager and staff have a good understanding of children and young people's communication methods and use these effectively to ensure that children and young people's wants and needs are established. The manager and staff work with children, young people and their families to elicit the wishes and views, both prior to and during the short-term breaks. The staff communicate with children and young people using both signs and symbols, and the spoken word. This ensures that, where possible, children and young people are supported to develop and review their care plans and risk assessments. This enables children and young people and their families to be involved in the decisions that affect their lives and the day-to-day running of the home.

Sanctions are not used in this home and staff act as a positive role model to support and promote positive behaviour. Staff are highly skilled in de-escalation techniques, which means that the need to use low-level physical intervention is extremely rare. On the one occasion this was necessary, the manager undertook a detailed evaluation of the incident and amended and improved care practice for this young person.

Effective leadership and management arrangements are sustained within this home. The manager has high expectations for all young people and expects staff to consistently deliver a good standard of care. The staff are dedicated and committed to providing a high standard of care for all children and young people. They speak fondly of all the young people and understand their needs and vulnerabilities well. Although the staff make adequate attempts to maintain children and young people's case records so that they provide an illustration of children and young people's experiences while at this home, staff do not systematically record all significant events and conversations which have taken place with the children and young people with regard to their care. Consequently, the management team and those scrutinising the care practice within the home cannot evaluate the effectiveness of the practice undertaken nor establish what further interventions are required.

The manager makes adequate attempts to ensure that all children and young people feel fully supported and listened to. Although there are systems in place to obtain children and young people's views, the manager has missed an opportunity

to ensure that children and young people understand how their wishes and views are listened to and acted on, and to ensure that children and young people are supported sufficiently to share their wishes, views and concerns about their care or other matters as soon as they arise. For example, one young person said during the inspection that they do not see the point in raising any issues or concerns with any of the staff as they do not do anything about it. They went on to share significant information with the inspector from an event that occurred two weeks previously. As this information had not been shared or recorded in detail by the staff member involved at the time, the manager was unable to address this sufficiently until the day of the inspection. These shortfalls in practice leave children and young people feeling unsupported and unvalued, and potentially compromise their safety and well-being.

Most children and young people are supported to access independent advocacy, which allows them an independent voice and an avenue to challenge placing local authorities or other agencies when their care planning falls short. That said, the manager has failed to address one of the recommendations raised at the last inspection, and two young people have yet to be offered these services. Consequently, young adults continue to access these children's services, with no firm ending dates in sight, as their placing local authorities have not faced any formal challenge.

Information about this children's home

This children's home is run by a charitable organisation.

It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to five children and young people who may have physical disabilities, learning disabilities and/or sensory impairment.

This home provides short-term breaks.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
09/08/2016	Full	Good
22/03/2016	Interim	Not judged
17/11/2015	Full	Good
27/01/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness

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 the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 12, paragraph 2.8)

This is with particular reference to ensuring that children and young people are supported and enabled to access independent advocacy to assist them with challenging their placing local authorities when their placing local authorities do not deliver their care in line with their care and transitional plans.

- Staff should have the skills and confidence to communicate easily and understand the importance of listening to, involving and responding to children they care for. Staff should understand that they have a responsibility to observe, notice and respond to children who are expressing their views. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.10)

This is with particular reference to ensuring that all staff know how to respond to and report any concerns that children and young people raise with them quickly, so that children and young people maintain a good level of safe care.

- Children must be consulted regularly on their views about the home and their care, and understand how these wishes and views are listened to and acted on. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.11)

This is with particular reference to ensuring that children and young people are supported to understand what action has been taken with regard to their wishes and views.

- Staff should encourage children to share any concerns about their care or other matter as soon as they arise. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 23, paragraph 4.13)
- 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. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 52, paragraph 10.5)

In particular, the registered person must ensure that the staff are provided with regular opportunities to refresh their skills and knowledge in gastrostomy care.

- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

This is with particular reference to ensuring that all staff record in detail any concerns that children and young people raise with them quickly and fully to enable the reader to understand and evaluate the course of action taken and identify what, if any, further action is required.

What the inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspection we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

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 focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

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 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

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