

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC025712
Inspector	Stella Lovie
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	The Together Trust
Registered person address	The Together Trust Centre Schools Hill CHEADLE Cheshire SK8 1JE
Responsible individual	Jill Marie Bernadette Sheldrake
Registered manager	Diane Yates
Date of last inspection	11/03/2014

Inspection date	09/10/2014
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	outstanding
Outcomes for children and young people	outstanding
Quality of care	outstanding
Keeping children and young people safe	outstanding
Leadership and management	good

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	outstanding
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All external professional and family feedback is unequivocally positive about young people's wonderful progress since coming to live in the home, and the highly effective support from staff which has enabled this to be the case. As one independent reviewing officer stated: 'It's an absolutely fantastic home.' It is clear that the home provides an exceptional experience that significantly improves the quality of life both for young people and their families.

Staff work very effectively with parents to successfully promote the personal growth and development of young people. This is achieved through excellent relationships between staff and young people, in conjunction with careful and considered target setting and incentives.

Procedures are robust and effectively implemented so that young people are cared for in a safe environment by people assessed as suitable. Young people feel safe and cared for and are protected by proactive practice to safeguard them.

The manager provides very effective leadership to the staff team and demonstrates a strong commitment to driving forward improvements in the home. Robust internal and external arrangements for monitoring practice ensure that there is robust oversight of the care that is given to young people and the progress they make. Two

minor shortfalls are identified in relation to appraisal and practice of fire evacuation.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The children's home is run by a charity. It provides accommodation for up to two young people with emotional and behaviour difficulties and/or learning disabilities, on a medium or long-term basis.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/03/2014	Interim	good progress
12/12/2013	Full	good
04/02/2013	Interim	good progress
10/10/2012	Full	good

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

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that young people are familiar with the emergency escape plan and have practiced so they know what to do in an emergency, with specific regard to night time fire drill (NMS 10.9)
- ensure that all staff have their performance individually and formally appraised at least annually and this appraisal takes into account any views of children the service is providing for. (NMS 19.6)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **outstanding**

Young people make exceptional progress across all areas of their development. They present as happy and relaxed, and choose not to engage in any risk-taking behaviours. Young people clearly grow in confidence and are able to make clearer choices about their day-to-day lives and plans for the future. They feel listened to and involved in decision-making about them. Young people are also involved in shaping the design and delivery of services. This includes active involvement in the recruitment of staff. As one parent commented: 'Staff are doing a fantastic job with him and are bringing him on leaps and bounds. He loves it there.' Consequently, young people enjoy a strong sense of well-being and feel highly respected and valued.

Young people have excellent attendance at their educational provision and clearly value the learning and opportunities available to them. They make impressive progress from their starting points and have been successful in applying for work experience to support their future employment options. As one young person's end of year education report confirmed: 'The young person has been working incredibly well throughout this school year. He has shown excellent progression both socially and academically. He has been a pleasure to work with for the past two years. It has been a great success to see how he has matured and progressed with his work.'

Young people enjoy community based activities which enrich their understanding of the wider community and helps prepare them for adult life. Young people are very effectively prepared for a successful transition to adult life in line with their cognitive abilities. They are supported to develop necessary life skills such as personal care, choosing the clothes they want to wear and helping to tidy shared spaces and their bedrooms. They have developed specific skills around shopping and money management. These are examples of great strides that have been made with them.

Young people take full advantage of the range of activities on offer at the home such as golf, swimming, supervised wood chopping and growing vegetables. This not only maintains their good health but helps them to understand that they can entertain and enjoy themselves without always having to spend money. This is good preparation for adult life.

Quality of care **outstanding**

The whole staff team maintain young people at the centre of all they do. A strong sense of encouraging and supporting one another in this endeavour is very evident. As a result, young people enjoy high quality care in a home that closely replicates a

nurturing family environment.

Relationships between staff and the young people are extremely warm and caring. Young people feel that staff respect them and care about them. These supportive relationships help young people to grow, feel confident and gain trust. Staff regularly 'go the extra mile' to assist young people, pursuing other professionals to secure decisions and resources. As one external professional confirmed: 'The staff have brilliant relationships with the young person and his family. They all follow the same routine so that problems are stopped before they get started. There is really, really good consistency of care as a result. The home offers such a wide range of things for the young person to do. And even the neighbours get involved with him. It's a proper home. There is excellent retention of staff and this also helps with the consistency.'

Staff consult the young people and encourage them to have a meaningful say in how the home is run. Staff are adept at helping young people to feel good about themselves, accepting and valuing them for who they are. Equality and diversity issues are clearly identified in care planning, and positively addressed in daily living through both planned and informal work. This reinforces a positive sense of identity in individual young people and promotes tolerance within wider group settings.

Excellent daily communication is maintained between school and education staff, allowing for any concerns or achievements to be shared. This further promotes young people's well-being and attainments. Shared high aspirations and targets for young people ensure an holistic approach to developing social and life skills and educational ability. This is enthusiastically confirmed by one young person's school: 'The home is extremely supportive of the young person. They have really embraced him and have been able to shape him into the person he is now. He has absolutely flourished in their care. He has matured and has developed his moral compass. For example, he has been very nurturing towards a neighbour who has recently had a bereavement.' Consequently young people develop into stable, well-rounded individuals.

Highly positive working relationships and an inclusive approach means that parents can continue to exercise their parental responsibilities and feel valued. For example, young people and their families were able to go on holiday with staff in the summer. As one educational professional stated: 'Staff are excellent at communication with parents. They took the family on holiday this year and the young person benefited hugely from this.' This promotes improved relationships between young people and their parents and siblings.

These exceptionally effective partnerships extend to the home's working relationships with external agencies. As one professional commented: 'We have a very smooth, calm working relationship with the home. They are very on the ball and proactive in telling us things we need to be aware of. They are very good at sharing information. I think they are very impressive. They are really good team players.'

Keeping children and young people safe **outstanding**

The home makes outstanding provision for safeguarding young people's welfare. Young people are and feel safe. Everyone involved in supporting them plays a role in ensuring young people stay protected from harm. This includes staff being confident in all areas of child protection and having the necessary knowledge and skills to keep young people safe. Strong links with other agencies give staff access to up-to-date advice and guidance so that everyday practice puts young people's welfare first. As a result, young people have a strong sense of safety and well-being.

Staff have an excellent awareness of safeguarding, particularly in relation to issues that may affect young people with disabilities. All staff attend training in safeguarding at an early stage in their employment and receive regular refresher training. Consequently, staff maintain their understanding of how to identify the signs and symptoms of abuse and how to manage and report child protection concerns. For example, staff are able to demonstrate that they understand the warning signs of sexual exploitation and are confident about how to act on them.

Young people indicate that they feel safe and staff clearly demonstrate respect and regard for them. Behaviour is managed well so that there are no restraints or sanctions, and young people do not feel the need to abscond. Young people are respected as emerging young adults. Effective behaviour management is based on dialogue, incentives, negotiation and sensitive guidance from staff. Comprehensive risk assessments are in place and are up-dated when required. These are thorough, insightful and highly individualised, reflecting the more diverse needs and personalities of young people. As a consequence, young people are not at risk of harm and do not engage in risk-taking, damaging behaviours.

Recruitment and selection procedures are rigorous and create a high threshold of entry to deter abusers. Environmental risk assessments, and action to address any problems, ensure that young people live in a home that is safe and free from hazards. However, one relatively minor shortfall is identified in relation to young people having regular opportunities to practise night time fire evacuations from the home.

Leadership and management **good**

The home continues to benefit from having a strong Registered Manager with a wealth of relevant knowledge and experience. She is suitably qualified and plans to take a higher management qualification in the new year. She exercises effective assertion with partner agencies and placing authorities to obtain the best possible services for the young people in her care. As a manager, she is supported by a stable and enthusiastic staff team, most of whom are qualified to an appropriate level. They report that they are well led and managed and there is evidence to support that this is the case. The home has a good relationship with the local community and

neighbours, one of whom commented: 'I couldn't wish for nicer neighbours. They are all a real credit to the organisation'.

Staff receive regular supervision of a good quality. This enables them to reflect on their practice and consider their professional development. There is good evidence in supervision records and staff meeting minutes that managers share information about relevant practice developments and new legislation. This helps staff to be aware of the bigger picture in the field of social care. They receive regular and relevant training that enables them to care effectively for the young people. However, appraisals of staff performance have not been undertaken at least annually, and do not include comments by young people. This inhibits systematic promotion of staff development.

Independent visitor reports are thorough and well documented. They give a good overview of the operation of the home and highlight good practice as well as shortfalls. Actions are raised and addressed quickly by the manager. This monitoring includes appropriate consultation with young people and placing authorities, all of which report positive feedback. All incidents and notifications are reviewed and commented upon. This amounts to effective external scrutiny.

In addition, managers regularly monitor, review and track the progress of individual young people to assess the quality of the service and the experiences of the young people. The home can thereby clearly demonstrate the very positive difference it has made to young people's lives. Quality assurance processes and inspection thus drive continuous improvement in outcomes for young people and service provision. To this end, both recommendations for service improvement from the last inspection have been addressed. Written service development plans are in place but are in process of being reviewed to enhance their strategic impact.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The 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 relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.