

Children's homes - interim inspection

Inspection date	17/03/2016
Unique reference number	SC025712
Type of inspection	Interim
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 Sheldrake
Registered manager	Post vacant
Inspector	Stella Lovie

Inspection date	17/03/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Requires improvement
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 Requires improvement at the last full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judge that it has Improved effectiveness. The home was last inspected in December 2015. It was found to require improvement across the board. A substantial improvement plan was identified consisting of nine requirements and four recommendations. At the point of this interim inspection, the manager is able to demonstrate that she has taken suitable action in respect of nearly all those concerns. This shows that she learns from inspection activity to drive forward service development. The general home environment now presents very well and is homely and comfortable. The young person's bedroom has been completely re-decorated and re-furnished in a style chosen by him. It is clean and tidy and no longer unhygienic. It looks like a much loved room. This is testament to the good work done by the staff to help the young person improve his self-esteem. There has been real progress with the young person's education. He now attends an external education establishment on a full time basis. His attendance is very good and he is reported to be doing well from his starting point. As an education professional stated: 'I think the home is incredible. They are so supportive and efficient. We are meeting tomorrow to coordinate our response to the young person in line with his risk assessments so that we are all being consistent with him. He's doing very well here. We didn't think he'd be able to get to be full time here as quickly as he has. He's doing his level one in construction. Overall it's very, very good progress for him.' The young person benefits from regular one-to-one sessions with staff that enable him to learn and progress, and to develop confidence in himself and his abilities. For example, he has recently completed some direct work about understanding and respecting diversity. He engages in meetings with staff every month in which he makes choices about various aspects of the running of the home. He also chooses activities that he would like to do such as going to Blackpool, climbing Snowdon, doing arts and crafts, and becoming involved in a re-design of the garden. It is clear that his views and wishes are listened to and acted upon. However, further work is needed to engage the young person more with his placement planning so that he has a good understanding and input into this	

decision-making process. This would be assisted with the acquisition of an independent advocate for the young person. The manager has been working with the placing authority to try to get this service in place but it has not yet materialised.

Records show the young person has not needed to be restrained since the last inspection. There have been no occasions when he has gone missing. Use of sanctions with the young person has been minimal. The police and youth offending service work closely with the staff to educate the young person about the consequences and impact of his negative behaviour. He responds well to his individualised behaviour management strategies and they have been instrumental in promoting more positive behaviour. As his placing authority confirmed: 'He's as stable as we've ever had him. They are beginning to make some real progress with his entrenched behaviours through appropriate challenge and support. Why didn't we find this placement before! They are giving us hope that these positive changes will be sustained. We're very pleased with the work being done there. Their working with us is fantastic.'

Since the last inspection the young person's risk assessments are much clearer and more detailed, and they are now regularly reviewed. This helps staff to be confident in their practice with the young person so that there is more consistency in the application of agreed boundaries. Previous concerns such as the routine locking of various parts of the home have been appropriately addressed. The young person continues to make occasional allegations against staff. These are now dealt with robustly in consultation with relevant agencies and in accordance with agreed procedures. They are generally found to be vexatious.

The new manager of the home is an experienced professional who has been a Registered Manager in other homes within this organisation. She is in process of applying to be the Registered Manager of this home. Since she has taken over, she has worked hard to stabilise the staff team and to ensure staff have greater resilience and confidence. To this end, she has recruited experienced staff members into the core team, and has arranged appropriate training. The in-house clinical psychologist provides training, advice and support to staff to help them manage the young person's behaviour and to cope with the intensity of the work with him. In addition, specialist community-based services continue to undertake direct work with the young person and to work closely with the home on behaviour management strategies. This helps staff to see the vulnerable, damaged child behind the presenting behaviour, and they are no longer avoidant of appropriate challenge. The manager is confident that they now have a good balance of skills and life experience in the team. As a result, she reports that morale is much higher. Staff benefit from regular supervision and have all had their performance appraised. This would be further strengthened if those appraisals took into account the views of the young person and stakeholders to give a fully comprehensive picture of individual staff performance.

The quality of the young person's care is regularly monitored through effective quality assurance systems. Independent scrutiny of the home is comprehensive

and provides an effective driver for improvement. It includes consultation with a wide number of individuals including young people and social workers. However, reports of those independent visits fail to give a clear opinion in the summary as to whether the young person is being effectively safeguarded.

To conclude, the home has made unequivocal progress since the last inspection. Four recommendations are made to further improve practice.

Information about this children's home

The children's home is run by an established charity. It provides care and accommodation for up to two children and young people with emotional and behaviour difficulties, and/or learning disabilities. Currently it is acting as a solo placement home.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
02/12/2015	CH - Full	Requires improvement
05/03/2015	CH - Interim	sustained effectiveness
09/10/2014	CH - Full	Outstanding
11/03/2014	CH - Interim	Good Progress

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

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the *Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards*. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

None.

Recommendations

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

- The principle of listening to the child and taking their views, wishes and feelings into account when planning and undertaking their care applies to all children. The home should work in partnership with relevant people as appropriate to ensure that each child is provided with support to communicate their views, wishes and feelings and participate as fully as possible in all aspects of their care planning and daily care. This is with specific regard to ensuring the child's engagement with his placement plan. (The Guide, page 22, paragraphs 4.5 and 4.6)
- All children must have access to appropriate advocacy support and where possible this should be provided by a person that the child chooses. Looked-after children are entitled to an independent advocate to advise them and ensure they have the support needed to express their views, wishes and feelings about their care and lives. Homes caring for these children should ensure that children can access advocacy support and should also consider the use of an independent advocate where necessary. (The guide, page 23, paragraphs 4.16 and 4.18)
- Appraisal should take into account, where reasonable and practical, the views of other professionals who have worked with the staff member over the year and children in the home's care. (The Guide, page 61, paragraph 13.5)
- Any individual appointed to carry out visits to the home as an independent person must make a rigorous and impartial assessment of the home's arrangements for safeguarding the children in the home's care: with specific regard to stating a clear opinion on this in the summary of the visit. (The Guide, page 65, paragraph 15.5)

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

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