

SC025712

Registered provider: The Together Trust

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and managed by a charitable organisation. It is registered to care for up to two children who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties and/or learning disabilities.

The registered manager is well established in post. The manager is also registered to manage another of the organisation's homes.

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 11 September 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/09/2018	Full	Good
08/11/2017	Full	Good
21/02/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
14/09/2016	Full	Good

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet 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 within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The registered person must— keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16 (3)(a)(b)) With particular reference to the accuracy of information in respect of input from the organisation's clinical psychologist.	12/12/2019
Ensure that staff continually and actively assess the risk to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. Where there are safeguarding concerns for a child, their placement plan, agreed between the home and their placing authority, must include details of the steps the home will take to manage any risks on a day-to-day basis. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5) In particular, each review of individual risk assessments should be clearly signed and dated.	12/12/2019

Recommendations

- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)
- Specifically, this refers to the need for all handwritten records to be legible.
- 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. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 23, paragraph 4.16)

- When a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority must provide an opportunity for the child to have an independent return home interview. Homes should take account of information provided by such interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect each child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)

Specifically, missing from care records should make clear when an independent return home interview has been requested and when it has taken place. Reasons why an interview was not requested or did not take place should be clearly recorded.

- The registered person should ensure that all incidents of control, discipline and restraint are subject to systems of regular scrutiny to ensure that their use is fair and the principles as set out in the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.35, are respected. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.36)

This is with particular reference to the recording of dates and times of debriefing discussions with young people and staff.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Young people who have experienced unplanned endings in previous care settings are welcomed into the home. They quickly develop a sense of belonging and make good progress.

Young people are cared for by a consistent group of adults. This gives them a good opportunity to build stable and trusting relationships. Key workers for young people undertake their roles well. They ensure that all staff understand the needs of each young person. As a result of this, the promotion of young people's experiences and progress remain at the centre of the staff group's practice.

Young people are, for the most part, given opportunities to participate in decisions about their care in the home and wider decision-making about their longer-term care. Young people are not consistently given the opportunity to have an independent advocate. On one occasion, staff made the decision on behalf of a young person that an independent advocate was not required. The young person was not involved in this decision. As a result of this, the young person was not enabled to make an informed choice about a service which may be of benefit to him.

Young people's education is prioritised. Staff have high aspirations for young people. Young people with a history of poor school attendance make excellent progress. Staff provide young people with structure and routine, which helps them to access and actively engage with their schools. Where young people are not being provided with appropriate educational resources, staff are persistent in their efforts to advocate on the young person's behalf. As a result, young people know staff are invested in their education and are helping them to succeed.

Young people, on the whole, have the specialist help they need to meet their individual needs. Where young people are not receiving this help within reasonable timescales, staff challenge local authorities and service providers. As a result of this, those responsible for young people's agreed plans of care are actively encouraged to provide the resources required to support young people's progress.

Young people are encouraged to take part in activities in the community. One young person is a member of a football team and plays regular matches. Another young person enjoys roller skating and archery. Both young people enjoyed a summer holiday together where they were involved in outdoor activities. These opportunities encourage young people to lead healthy lifestyles. They broaden their life experiences and build their belief in what they can achieve.

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

Young people are cared for by adults who have a good understanding of the risks that they face. Plans are in place to reduce these risks. It was a recommendation of the last inspection that risk assessments were reviewed regularly and contained up-to-date information. There has been some progress in this area.

There are risk assessments for all identified risks, with clear plans in place to reduce these risks. Staff say that these are reviewed monthly. Where risks are reviewed and no amendments are made, the date of review is not recorded. There is therefore no evidence of this. Where amendments are made, the date of the amendment is not clearly recorded. Further work is needed to improve practice in this area. A requirement is therefore made in respect of the recording of risk assessments.

Young people who go missing from care receive a proactive response from staff. Staff use their knowledge of young people's family and friends networks to locate young people. Information is shared with local authorities and the police in a timely manner. This effective partnership working helps to keep young people safe.

The records of missing from home incidents do not consistently record if a missing from home interview has been requested or has taken place. There is no record of incidents where a judgement may have been made that a return interview was not deemed necessary. In addition, records are handwritten and due to the poor quality of some of this writing not all records are legible. These deficits in recording collectively mean that external scrutiny of decision-making is hampered. It is also a barrier to young people accessing and understanding their records.

Use of restraint is not currently a feature of the home. Young people's behaviour is managed by effective de-escalation of situations by staff. Where restraint has been used previously, this has been recorded in detail by staff. The use of restraint does seem to have been proportionate to the risks presented by young people. Management oversight of restraints has taken place. There is no consistent recording by managers of times and dates of debriefing sessions with young people and staff. Again, this is a barrier to effective external oversight of practice. It prevents young people from having a comprehensive knowledge of the home's response to incidents of restraint.

Young people who are at risk of self-harm are responded to with warmth and sensitivity. Staff use their skills to acknowledge young people's feelings and support them using the organisation's practice model. This gives young people an opportunity to reflect on their feelings and begin to develop alternative strategies to manage emotional distress.

Consideration of equality and diversity is integral to the practice within the home. These are not dealt with as isolated issues. Through their day-to-day care, young people experience an environment which seeks to treat each person with respect. For example, staff use opportunities through the use of social media and music to have conversations with young people about issues of discrimination or injustice. This approach helps young people to maintain a positive and open response to equality and diversity as part of their contribution to their own lives and to the lives of those around them.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is managed by a permanent and experienced registered manager. The registered manager also manages another of the organisation's homes. There is currently no evidence that this reduced management oversight is having an adverse impact on young people or staff.

The registered manager and assistant manager are ambitious for young people. They have high expectations of the staff team to deliver a good quality of care to young people. Staff say that the support from managers is good. There are sufficient staff with the right skills to care for young people. When additional staffing is needed, this is generally provided from within the staff team or from another home within the organisation. This means that young people have consistency of care and can build relationships.

Staff receive regular supervision and have annual appraisals of their practice. Records of supervision demonstrate good support to staff. There is also evidence of challenge when practice has not met expectations. This means that staff have the appropriate management input to develop and maintain good standards of practice.

At the start of the inspection, the statement of purpose for the home had not been updated to reflect staffing changes. This was amended by the assistant manager on the first day of inspection. The statement of purpose does not accurately reflect the relationship between the home and the organisation's clinical psychologist. It details a

much greater input to the home than is the case in practice. The inspector discussed this with the clinical psychologist, who confirmed that her professional relationship with the home is not as described in the statement of purpose. As a result of this discrepancy, young people, families and commissioners are being provided with inaccurate written information in relation to the therapeutic service provided by the home.

The home provides a lovely family environment for young people. It has recently been redecorated by staff. The home is furnished to a high standard. There are photographs of young people and staff in the living room. Young people are encouraged to personalise their bedrooms.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and 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 whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: SC025712

Provision sub-type: 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: Lillian Adamson

Inspector

Dawn Parton: social care inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence>, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

© Crown copyright 2019