

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	03/11/2015
Unique reference number	SC025744
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	Mrs Jill Sheldrake
Registered manager	Post Vacant
Inspector	Janine Shortman-Thomas

Inspection date	03/11/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
how well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC025744

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Young people live in a safe, caring and supportive home. This enables them to make suitable progress relative to their individual needs and the time spent within the home. Some young people feel that their lives have improved since they have been in the home, and young people report that they feel safe.
- Staff support young people to engage in meaningful education or training provision which is suitable for their individual needs. While some young people have embraced these opportunities and maintain good school attendance, others have chosen not to engage with the opportunities offered to them.
- Staff confirm that they are well supported and informed by their knowledgeable and, experienced management team. Staff value the training, supervision and appraisal opportunities they are regularly afforded by leaders and managers. This support ensures staff continue to develop professionally and have the knowledge and skills they require to deliver a good standard of care to all young people.
- The manager and staff team have developed extensive and strong links with partner agencies which are used effectively and promptly when required.
- The Registered Manager has a good understanding of the home's strengths and areas for development. He makes good use of the internal and external monitoring processes that are used in the home, and uses the findings from these to continually develop the care practice of the staff and the home.
- Four shortfalls have been identified within this inspection. These relate to: supervision arrangements for education staff; ensuring the views of young people and other staff members are obtained and included within the annual appraisal process of staff; offering services within the homes Statement of Purpose which do not comply with the statutory guidance for young people who go missing from home, and obtaining consent for the Independent Visitor to view young people's case records as part of their monthly visits.

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.

Requirement	Due date
The registered person must ensure that the independent person who visits the children's home has been given consent to inspect the child's case records from the child and the child's placing authority prior to these being reviewed. (Regulation 44 (2)(b))	04/12/2015

Recommendations

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

- the registered person must have systems in place so that all staff receive supervision of their practice from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional, which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. This specifically relates to the supervision of education staff. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 61, paragraph 13.2)
- the registered person must ensure that staff annual appraisals 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 to the Quality Standards, page 61, paragraph 13.5)
- the registered person must ensure that the Statement of Purpose complies with the statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care, in regards to the completion of the Independent Return Home Interviews. This specifically relates to ensuring that the Independent Return Home Interview is carried out within 72 hours of the child returning to their home and that this interview is carried out by an independent person, i.e. not someone involved in caring for the child, as presently offered within the homes Statement of Purpose. (Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care. January 2014. Page 14, paragraph 32)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This section should outline:

- This children's home, is one of a number of homes operated by a charitable organisation. It provides care and accommodation for up to six children and young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties and learning disabilities.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
26/03/2015	CH - Interim	Sustained effectiveness
25/04/2014	CH - Full	Good
16/08/2013	CH - Interim	Good Progress
17/05/2013	CH - Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	good
Most young people make good progress from their starting points, with regard to their emotional well-being, risk taking behaviour and education. They are supported by staff who understand them, their lives, and their needs well. Staff work closely with a wide range of professionals to help young people understand their lives and equip them with the necessary skills to move forward. As a result, young people begin to find stability and are more resilient to the challenges they face. This in turn, assists them to manage their emotions and behaviour better and plan more positively for their future. Staff value and promote education for all young people. While some young people have exceptionally high attendance at school and, with additional tutorial support, are making progress in line with their abilities and expectations. Others, despite the best efforts of the staff team, do not grasp the opportunities that are currently available to them, and choose to disengage from the support that is offered by external services, the homes education support manager and the participation officer. Young people are encouraged and supported to maintain good physical health. Staff ensure that young people are registered with doctors and dentists and provide ongoing support and encouragement to those young people who find it difficult to attend appointments with specialist health teams, such as the children and adolescent mental health team. Staff work with other agencies, such as health professionals and the police, to encourage and educate young people about the dangers associated with some of their behaviour such as smoking, using alcohol and substances. However, despite staff advice and focused work, a few young people continue to smoke and occasionally misuse alcohol and substances when they are away from the home. Young people are supported and encouraged to enjoy an active and interesting childhood. Staff provide a range of fun and exciting opportunities for young people to engage in, both within the home and within the local community. They visit local attractions, take part in sponsored charity events and try out new activities such as kettle bells and boxing lessons. This allows young people gain new experiences, ensuring they are able to create positive memories and engage regularly in productive and meaningful events. Young people's views are central to all aspects of care planning. Staff listen to	

young people and respond appropriately to their requests to ensure that they are fully involved in influencing the decisions affecting their lives. Staff regularly talk to young people during their key working sessions, young people's meetings and during informal and impromptu discussions to seek their views and wishes. They use this information to influence the day to day running of the home. This means young people feel listened to and valued and respected as individuals in their own right.

Contact is supported and facilitated for all young people sensitively. Young people benefit from appropriate contact with significant family members and are supported to maintain their links with their pre-established friendship groups. This helps to ensure that attachments are sustained and nurtured so that young people maintain a positive sense of identity.

Young people are supported well by the staff to increase their semi-independent skills in line with their age and level of understanding. Staff work effectively with leaving care workers to ensure young people have the skills, knowledge and confidence they require to sustain a healthy and safe life when they move on from the home. Staff work with young people as outlined within their pathway plans, and prepare young people well for their transition into adulthood.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
Young people report that they feel safe. They are effectively safeguarded by suitably trained staff who understand and fully implement their safeguarding duties and responsibilities. Staff demonstrate a good understanding of young people's needs, risks and vulnerabilities, which are detailed in individual care plans and risk assessments. Staff are consistent in their implementation of the carefully considered strategies identified to promote young people's safety and reduce young people's risk taking behaviour. Some young people come to the home with established and substantial risk-taking behaviour such as going missing and the involvement in criminal activity. Staff have a good understanding of young people's needs and backgrounds, and provide appropriate care to support them to manage their emotions in a safer and more socially acceptable manner. Through open discussion with the staff team during regular key working sessions, young people are encouraged and supported to consider and reflect on their actions and behaviour so that they can identify and implement alternative strategies to manage their emotional responses. This	

supportive care practice and positive working relationships with the police, social workers and therapists has reduced some risk taking behaviour for some young people. One social worker reported : 'They are familiar with (Name's) history and background and try to support them with this. Even though (name) continues to abscond the staff act quickly, they can recognise the signs and build up to this. The staff will talk to them about their actions on their return. Staff will follow (name) as much as they can and travel on trains to prove to (name) that they care about them and their safety.'

Young people are encouraged to behave in a manner that is acceptable and safe for them and others. Staff consistently implement the behaviour management plans that are in place. Staff reward and celebrate positive behaviour and challenge unacceptable behaviour using a range of consequences which are routinely monitored and evaluated for their effectiveness by the manager. When young people are unable to regulate their emotional responses, physical interventions are used as a last resort by adequately trained staff. Debriefs following the incident with staff and young people enable the young person to reflect on their behaviour and identify other means of managing their emotions. Staff use this opportunity to evaluate their care practice to inform development.

The provider has developed strong and effective links with the Local Authority Designated Officer and responded appropriately to a large number of allegations which have been made against the staff team within this inspection cycle. All complaints and allegations made against any member of staff or others are thoroughly investigated by the manager and leaders to reach a conclusion. Any learning from this is embedded into future care practice. The Local Authority Designated Officer reported: 'The provider has dealt with a number of allegations very well. They contact me about everything and are proactive in seeking information and advice. They keep me up to date with their investigations and keep me regularly informed. There is nothing of any concerns regarding the home.'

Safer recruitment practice is followed by the provider to ensure that only those suitable to work with vulnerable children and young people do so. A large number of new staff, including the manager, have been appointed since the last inspection. These staff have been appointed following careful selection and vetting, and follow a suitable induction and probation pathway. All but two staff have now secured the required qualification they need to undertake their role efficiently and safely. Suitable arrangements are in place to ensure the two additional staff complete this qualification within the required time frame.

The safety of young people, staff and, the safety of the visitors to the home is promoted. Staff are vigilant and take appropriate steps to verify the identity of visitors to ensure young people are kept safe within their home. Staff ensure visitors are aware of the fire evacuation procedures and afford them appropriate levels of supervision throughout their stay. Health and safety arrangements for the

home are thorough and include weekly checks to ensure any hazards are detected and addressed swiftly. This ensures the physical environment is maintained to an acceptable standard and everyone's physical well-being is promoted.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
Young people live in a home that is effectively managed by an experienced and suitably qualified manager. The manager is in the final stages of his application with Ofsted to become the Registered Manager of the home. He is supported well in this home by an experienced and knowledgeable deputy manager and an education support manager, who both share his aspirations and motivation to deliver a good standard of care. The managers' knowledge, skills and experience to provide clear leadership and management to the committed staff team is recognised by partner agencies. Managers have a good understanding of all young people's needs. They have realistic goals and have high aspirations for all their young people to continue to develop and build on achievements already secured. Managers, staff and professionals are confident that the positive care practice afforded to young people within the home and the positive and nurturing relationships between staff and young people ensures this will be achievable for young people. The manager has nurtured positive working relationships with parents, carers and his partner agencies. Social workers, education colleagues, the Local Area Designated Officer, and the police all speak positively of the care and support the manager and staff provide to the young people. As a result young people benefit from a prompt multi-agency response as and when any issues or concerns are raised. This cohesive response assists in promoting young people's welfare and safety. Staff feel they receive good quality support and training, and are valued in their role. Staff confirm that they attend regular team meetings, receive regular supervision and can access informal support from their leaders and managers at any time. One member of staff reported that the training opportunities are 'fantastic within the organisation.' They went on to add that they feel that the training on offer further embeds their skills and knowledge which ensures that they can consistently deliver a high standard of care when meeting individual young people's needs. While managers and staff receive regular supervision, arrangements to ensure the education support manager receives appropriate	

supervision have yet to be identified and embedded into practice.

The manager effectively uses a range of internal and external quality audit processes to monitor and analyse the home's performance in improving young people's experiences and progress. This is strengthened further by the external scrutiny which is offered from both the independent visitor who visits the home monthly, and the additional examination which is undertaken by the senior managers within the company. The manager has been efficient in addressing any shortfalls raised within the independent visitors reports and has a clear focus on improving and developing the service further as identified within the recently reviewed and update development plan.

The manager responds effectively to and monitors any serious incidents, to ensure appropriate action is taken. All significant events relating to the welfare and protection of young people living in the home are notified to the appropriate authorities in a timely manner.

The Statement of Purpose clearly identifies the ethos of the home and is reviewed and updated regularly. This document outlines to children, young people and placing authorities what they can expect from the home and the staff who will look after their children. However the current document identifies that if the placing authority fails to undertake the Independent Return Home interviews with young people following any incidents of missing from home, that the staff from within the home will undertake these. This is not in accordance with the present statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care.

Two of the three recommendations raised at the last inspection have been met adequately. The behaviour management plans are now consistently implemented to promote positive behaviour for all young people, and the supervision matrix now details the length of each supervision and is signed by the supervisor and the member of staff. The third recommendation has yet to be actioned as no members of staff have reached their annual appraisal date. As such the recommendation to ensure that staff annual appraisals take into account the views of the young people the service is providing care for, has been reissued.

Case records reflect young people's everyday lives and the work that is undertaken by the staff team. Records reflect young peoples' needs, strengths and vulnerabilities as well as highlighting their achievements and future plans. While all information is stored securely, this has been shared with the Independent Visitor whom undertakes the regulation 44 visits without the consent of the young person or the placing authority.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place, however, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

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 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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