

SC025744

Registered provider: The Together Trust

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately operated home provides care for up to five children with social and emotional difficulties and/or learning disabilities.

The home registered with Ofsted in 1994 and the manager registered in June 2015.

Four children were living in the home at the time of this inspection.

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 February 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 28 February 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/02/2023	Full	Good
02/03/2022	Full	Good
24/04/2019	Full	Outstanding
12/12/2018	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children live in a safe and secure home. Children said they are able to personalise their home. For example, one child said that their bedroom has been painted in the colours of their favourite football team.

Children have trusting and sustained relationships with staff. Staff work hard to build positive relationships with children and this helps children to develop a sense of security and belonging. Staff know children well and act as advocates for them.

Children say that they enjoy positive experiences which take into account their hobbies and interests. Children benefit from the support of staff to access activities such as regular swimming lessons and cinema visits. They have also enjoyed a trips to a number of fun places.

Children who attend school are making good progress. Staff communicate effectively with schools and ensure that they attend regular education meetings. If children are not in full-time education, staff support them with identifying alternative provision such as apprenticeships when that is more appropriate to meet their needs.

Children attend regular house meetings and discuss a variety of topics. Staff use these meetings to find out children's views, wishes and feelings. The registered manager has oversight of records of these meetings.

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

When children go missing from home, they are supported with a coordinated and comprehensive response. The staff work well with the multi-agency missing-from-home team. Staff ensure crucial information is shared with the local authority and police. This helps build a comprehensive picture of potential locations where children could be. One complex safeguarding social worker said they felt staff do all they can to help locate children when they go missing from home.

Children are supported to spend time with the people they care about. This includes having regular and supported family time and links to previous carers. One parent said that they feel welcomed when they visit the home to see their child. Leaders and managers take a proactive approach to family time and work with the local authority to increase it when they feel it is in the children's best interests. Children say that they enjoy their time with their family.

Risk assessments provide some detail and include steps for staff to take in response to children's behaviour, as well as preventative steps. However, not all risks are included, and some assessments include previous risks that are now irrelevant. This potentially compromises safeguarding practice.

Children say that they feel safe. They can identify trusted adults who they can talk to about any worries they may have. There are positive relationships between the staff and the children. One child said, 'Staff actually care about you. Other care homes I've been to they don't.'

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Children are supported by a team that has been consistent for many years. External professionals said staff communicate well and advocate for the children and that they are kept informed about children's progress and any issues arising. Social workers and independent reviewing officers said they do not have any concerns about the way the home is managed or the children's care.

Recruitment of new staff is robust and effective. The manager ensures that new staff have their practice monitored and that they go through a good induction process.

There are effective arrangements in place for staff training. Mandatory learning includes courses such as safeguarding and positive behaviour support. In addition, staff undertake training that is specific to the needs of the children living at the home.

There are gaps in the manager's overall monitoring and reviewing systems. This does not support them to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided to children. For example, the manager has not reviewed children's plans and risk assessments to ensure that they are up to date and include all relevant information. Aspects of the internal monitoring could be strengthened to assist the manager in quickly identifying shortfalls.

Staff benefit from regular supervision and appraisal. However, staff supervision and appraisal do not always consider the needs of individual children or the views of wider professionals.

Leaders and managers do not consistently report safeguarding concerns to Ofsted without delay. This means that, on some occasions, the regulator's oversight is limited.

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, The 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 maintain records ("case records") for each child which— include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child; are kept up to date; and are signed and dated by the author of each entry. Case records must be kept— if the child dies before attaining the age of 18, for 15 years from the date of the child's death; in cases not falling within sub-paragraph (a), for 75 years from the child's date of birth; securely in the children's home during the period when the child to whom the case records relate is accommodated there; and in a secure place after the child has ceased to be accommodated in the home. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(b)(c)(d)) Specifically, this relates to risk assessments, care plans and case records being kept up to date and signed by the author.	8 March 2024

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the quality of care review identifies areas of strengths and possible weaknesses in the home's care. The report should clearly identify any actions required for the next six months of delivery in the home and how those actions will be addressed. The review process and the resulting report should be used as a tool for evaluation and continuous

improvement in the home. ('Guide to the Children's Home Regulations, including the quality standards', page 51, paragraph 15.2)

- The registered person should ensure that appraisals consider, where reasonable and practical, the views of other professionals who have worked with the staff member over the year and of children in the home's care. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.5)
- The registered person should ensure that staff supervision enables staff to reflect and act on how their own feelings and behaviour may be affected by the behaviour of the children they care for. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 39, paragraph 8.15)
- The registered person should have a system in place so that all serious events are notified, within 24 hours, to the appropriate people. The system should cover the action that should be followed if the event arises at the weekend or on a public holiday. Notification must include details of the action taken by the home's staff in response to the event. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 63, paragraph 14.10)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, 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: SC025744

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: The Together Trust

Registered provider address: The Together Trust Centre, Schools Hill, Cheadle
SK8 1JE

Responsible individual: Jill Sheldrake

Registered manager: Stephen Truelove

Inspector

James Meeks, Social Care Inspector

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