

Children's homes – interim inspection

Inspection date	16/01/2017
Unique reference number	SC025744
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	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	Stephen Truelove
Inspector	Janine Shortman-Thomas

Inspection date	16/01/2017
Previous inspection judgement	Good
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 good at the full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judge that it has sustained effectiveness. The home has experienced a period of transition as four young people have joined and three have left since the last inspection. Young people's transitions into and out of the home are managed adequately by the manager and staff. The manager ensures that each young person's needs are suitably considered in conjunction with the needs of those already living in the home before he welcomes any new young people. Suitable transition planning into the home allows young people and their families the opportunity to visit the home for a meal and/or an overnight stay before they move in. This offers young people the opportunity to allay any fears or worries they may have before they join the home, and supports them with a smooth and stress-free move. The majority of young people have made good progress relative to their starting points, particularly in relation to their emotional well-being and education. All young people are now supported by the staff to access a suitable education provision which meets their individual learning needs. Good links with education providers ensure that a cohesive package of support is provided to all young people and shared goals for young people are achieved. That said, some young people have been reluctant to engage fully with the staff and the services that have been made available to them. Consequently, they have not taken full advantage of the good support on offer to them and they have continued to engage in risk-taking and criminal behaviours. Staff demonstrate a strong resilience when supporting these young people during these times, and they make every effort to help young people to settle into the home and reduce these behaviours. Unfortunately, the efforts and support that the staff have provided have been unsuccessful in supporting and enabling some young people to modify their behaviours. Subsequently, one young person's placement ended prematurely, and another young person continues to engage in behaviours which comprise their health and well-being. Young people enjoy positive relationships with staff. Staff understand the needs of each young person and provide them with good quality care and support. The young people spoken with say they feel safe, well cared for, and like living in the home. One young person said, 'I have done really well here. I am going to school	

now and not smoking cannabis like I used too. I was smoking it every day but I am not now. The staff are great. They treat you well and they always have time for you. We have done loads of things while I have been here.’ They went on to add, ‘If I can’t go home to my mum, I want to stay here.’

Staff are fully aware of their responsibility to protect and keep young people safe, and the manager and staff take young people’s concerns seriously. All staff are trained in safeguarding and demonstrate a good understanding of the home’s safeguarding procedures and protocols. Staff are acutely aware of the potential for bullying and support young people to manage their relationships with each other effectively. Staff are proficient at recognising potential bullying situations and proactive in addressing these promptly. This includes completing work with both the perceived bully and the victim as well as discussing the importance of positive relationships during young people’s meetings. This approach has addressed the two complaints that young people have raised regarding bullying behaviour effectively and enables young people to live together in harmony.

Young people are provided with a range of interesting and exciting opportunities. They are encouraged to identify the activities that they wish to take part in and are supported to go trampolining and bowling, as well as attending activities such as Laser Quest and theme parks. These experiences serve to strengthen young people’s childhood experiences and create positive childhood memories.

Young people continue to benefit from living in a clean, comfortable home. There is adequate communal space in the lounge and dining area for them to spend time together as well as space where they can take quiet time, such as in their bedrooms. The home is currently undergoing some redecoration work as young people’s bedrooms are being repainted and redecorated to their specifications to reflect their individual taste. This ensures that young people feel as comfortable and relaxed as possible during their stay.

The leadership and management arrangements remain effective. The manager ensures that he continues to enhance and develop the service for young people by using the findings from previous inspections and from the feedback that he receives monthly from the external independent visitor. Consequently, the four requirements and two recommendations made at the last inspection have all been met sufficiently by the manager. This, alongside the home’s internal monitoring processes and development planning, ensures that the manager is aware of how well the home is operating and meeting young people’s needs, and where further areas of development are required.

Staff are dedicated and committed to providing a high standard of care to all young people. They speak fondly of all the young people and understand their needs and vulnerabilities well, and work effectively within the constraints of young people’s care plans and risk assessments. Staff are aware of and understand the potential risks for young people that are associated with their use of the internet, going missing from the home, and engaging in substance and alcohol misuse. Young

people's known risks and vulnerabilities in these areas are highlighted clearly within their individual risk management plans. Staff demonstrate that they understand these risks and plans thoroughly and confirm that they implement these consistently. The manager and staff have forged positive and effective working relationships with the police, drug and alcohol teams, health services and specialist teams set up to support children at risk of child sexual exploitation. As such, young people are supported and encouraged by the staff to engage with these specialist services quickly when these issues become a cause for concern for young people. The staff use their positive relationships with young people to encourage them to engage with these particular services. However, some young people are reluctant to engage and therefore do not reap the benefits of this specialist knowledge and support. While the manager reported that in these and other instances, the staff complete direct work with young people to increase their knowledge and awareness of the risks associated with these particular risk-taking behaviours, little evidence of this was made available during the inspection.

Information about this children's home

- 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 or young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties or learning disabilities.
- The home provides care and accommodation for children and young people between the ages of 8 and up to 17 years of either gender on admission.
- The home enlists the support of a clinical psychologist in its care planning for children and young people.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/06/2016	Full	Good
03/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
03/11/2015	Full	Good
26/03/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

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

Recommendations

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

- Children must feel safe and be safe. The manager and staff should support children to be aware of and manage their own safety, both inside and outside of the home. This is in particular regards to improving the quality of the direct work sessions that staff undertake with young people so as to increase young people's knowledge and awareness of the potential dangers and risks associated with their individual vulnerabilities. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 43, paragraph 9.9)

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'.

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 that 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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