

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	21 June 2016
Unique reference number	SC025744
Type of inspection	Full
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	21 June 2016
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:

- Some young people report that their lives have improved since their arrival at the home and they confirm that they feel happy, safe and protected as a consequence of the support and care that they receive from the staff.
- Young people are supported well by staff to develop their skills in understanding acceptance and difference between individuals so that they can begin to build more positive and supportive relationships with each other.
- Parents and professionals are complimentary about the care and support that their children and young people receive from the dedicated and committed staff. One parent said, 'The staff are really good. They try to support [Name] the best they can and we work together to make sure we get the best for them.'
- The staff demonstrate a good understanding of young people's needs. They work well with young people, their families and other agencies to ensure that young people's needs are addressed consistently and swiftly.
- The quality assurance structures used within the home provide a thorough and rigorous assessment of the home's arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of young people. These systems support the manager in driving improvements forward in the home.
- The shortfalls identified throughout this inspection relate to:
 - ensuring that the statement of purpose includes the details of all the staff, including the bank and agency staff, working in the home
 - ensuring consistency among the staff team
 - staff qualifications
 - sanctions
 - including young people's feedback in any reviews of the children's guide
 - promoting young people's engagement in their individual risk management planning.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that must be taken so that the registered persons 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 persons must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
7: The children's views, wishes and feelings standard In order to meet the children's views, wishes and feelings standard, the registered person must (2)(c) ensure that they seek the children's comments before revising the children's guide.	30 September 2016
The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ('the statement of purpose') which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1. This is with particular reference to ensuring that the experience and qualifications of all staff, including all the bank staff and agency staff, are included within this document. (Regulation 16(1))	30 September 2016
The registered person must ensure that any individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification: the level 3 diploma for residential childcare (England) by the relevant date. The relevant date is, in the case of an individual who starts working in the care role in the home after 1 April 2014, the date which falls two years after the date on which the individual started working in a care role in a home, or, in the case of an individual who was working in a care role in a home on 1 April 2014, 1 April 2016. (Regulation 32(4)(a)(5)(a)(b))	30 December 2016
The registered manager must ensure that within 24 hours of the use of control, discipline or restraint in relation to the child in the home, a record is made which includes the effectiveness and any consequence of the use of the measure. (Regulation 35(3)(a)(viii))	30 September 2016

Recommendations

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

- The registered manager must ensure that the use of agency staff is carefully monitored and reviewed to ensure that children received continuity of care. ('Guide to children's homes regulations including the quality standards, page 54, paragraph 10.16)
- The home's records on each child represent a significant contribution to their life history. Children and young people should be supported to understand the nature of the records kept by the home, and encouraged and supported to access these. This is in particular reference to ensuring that young people are given the opportunity to sign their own individual risk assessments, so that they are aware of how the staff will support them during times of heightened anxiety. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.5)

Full report

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 with 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 their care planning for children and young people.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
3 March 2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
3 November 2015	Full	Good
26 March 2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
25 April 2014	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
Some young people benefit from improved emotional well-being as staff work hard to provide a safe and supportive home. Young people share positive and nurturing relationships with staff who are well attuned to their needs. This level of intuition ensures that young people receive additional individual attention and support during times of increased emotional anxiety and distress. Staff demonstrate a respectable understanding of young people's past experiences and articulate well how these have an impact on their current behaviours, vulnerabilities and risks. The staff work consistently, as a team and with other agencies, to develop well-thought-out clear strategies to support young people suitably. In addition, staff sensitively support and encourage young people to access and participate with the additional in-house therapy and support services, such as the community adolescent mental health teams, to aid them further in their journey to positive emotional well-being and happiness. One young person said, 'It was really difficult for me when I moved in. I was depressed and really not well. They got me the help that I needed and sorted me out with everything. I am really ready to move on now as I am like a different person now.' Young people's physical health needs are promoted well. All young people are registered with, and have access to a range of generic health services. Young people are supported and empowered to attend routine medical appointments and are compassionately encouraged and assisted to seek suitable medical attention, as and when this is needed. Appropriate processes are used to monitor and review young peoples' medications, and medication is administered by suitably trained staff in line with young people's care plans. Furthermore, young people are encouraged to eat a well-balanced and healthy diet and to take part in regular community activities such as dance and drama groups. This, in addition to positive links with a range of health professionals, ensures that young people remain in good physical health as they receive the correct level of health input when they need this. Good links with education providers ensure that young people attend a suitable education provision tailored to meet their individual needs. Staff work well with education professionals when barriers to learning are identified and ensure that suitable action plans are in place to enable young people to return to education as soon as possible. Consequently, young people's education is not disrupted for longer than necessary.	

Transition arrangements for young people joining the home are good. The manager gives suitable consideration to all young people's needs and vulnerabilities and identifies how these may have an impact on and affect other young people living in the home well. Detailed and sufficient introduction plans, which include informing the staff and other young people sensitively of a young person's arrival and facilitating introductory visits, support young people to move into the home successfully.

The staff ensure that young people are supported to maintain close links and to remain in contact with those who are important to them. Young people are encouraged to maintain positive friendships groups in the local community, and friends and family members are encouraged and welcomed into the home.

Young people are encouraged and supported to take control over certain features of their lives, and are instrumental in developing their weekly menus and activities. Good consultation undertaken by the staff team ensures that young people's views are actively sought, listened to and acted upon in all areas of their daily lives. When young people raise any areas of concerns, the manager ensures that these are fully investigated and addressed promptly to ensure that a suitable outcome is reached. Furthermore, young people are actively involved in providing feedback on staff's performance and ideas on what developments can be made in their home to ensure that ongoing improvements can be achieved. As a result, young people feel valued, respected and fully involved in the development of their home.

Young people are increasing in confidence and developing some useful independent-living skills that will equip them well in their preparation and transition into adulthood. Staff support each young person attentively and sensitively to increase their knowledge and skills in line with their age and level of understanding. Young people confirmed that they feel confident in budgeting, shopping, preparing and cooking foods and are able to use household appliances well.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Young people report that they are safe and kept safe by the actions of the staff team. Young people's safety is promoted as staff have a good understanding of their safeguarding roles and responsibilities. All staff have completed safeguarding training and receive regular refresher training when this is required. Staff demonstrate that they are clearly aware of the home's whistle-blowing policy and speak confidently about this. As a result, staff have a good level of awareness and	

understanding of the procedures that they must implement when disclosures are made or any safeguarding concerns are identified, and they respond to these appropriately and promptly.

Staff support young people to develop safe, supportive and respectful relationships with each other well. When young people report that they are feeling bullied, staff listen to young people's thoughts and feelings considerately and respond appropriately to address this. For example, staff encourage young people to consider how their language towards others may have an impact on the response that they receive. The staff encourage young people to consider other people's thoughts and feelings and enable young people to improve their tolerance and acceptance of others, even if friendships in the home cannot be forged. Young people are encouraged to discuss their thoughts and feelings about their relationships with each other in informal day-to-day discussions, during individual key working sessions and more formally in group meetings. These meetings are facilitated by the manager and his deputy manager and provide a structured forum for young people to share their views and disagreements in a safe and managed way.

Positive and effective working relationships with a range of agencies, including social workers, independent reviewing officers, and the police have been developed by the manager and staff. These positive relationships, joined-up working and thorough and comprehensive risk assessments ensure that young people receive a well-planned and cohesive response during increased times of worry and distress. While some young people no longer absent themselves from the home, others, despite the best efforts of the staff, continue to do so. When young people do absent themselves from the home, the manager and staff make suitable efforts to search the local areas and to locate them. The staff inform the parents and all the relevant agencies, and ensure that the appropriate safeguarding meetings are requested and attended, while supporting young people appropriately and sensitively on their return. One parent said, 'The staff try everything that they can to try and stop [Name] from going, but they are still running away. The staff contact me straight away. They go out looking for them in the car. If I ring them to tell the staff that [Name] has come to my house, they come to collect her straight away.'

Allegations and complaints about the home are taken seriously and are managed swiftly and effectively by the manager. The designated officer said, 'I have confidence in the way that allegations are managed. The staff take these seriously, and contact me regarding all the allegations made, and I feel that these are managed appropriately. They are very transparent in their reporting and recording of their concerns and they bring this to our attention quickly.'

Young people live in a large, safe, comfortable home. Staff respect young people's privacy, and the size of the home allows them to enjoy their privacy and time alone, while having the option of enjoying spending time together. Staff and young people are kept safe, as routine health and safety checks and fire drills are frequently undertaken by staff and young people, and safe recruitment practice is

used.

Sanctions are used sparingly and are appropriate to support young people in modifying their unacceptable behaviour. While young people are offered the opportunity to discuss and consider their behaviours so that they can identify alternative strategies for the future, the registered manager does not systematically review and evaluate the sanctions used within the required timeframe to ensure that the use of such sanction is fair, appropriate and effective, in order to inform future care planning.

Staff contribute effectively towards young people's individual risk management plans, which are implemented, monitored and revised routinely. Staff provide appropriate support and guidance to young people during times of increased anxiety and crisis. They use their knowledge of young people's risks and vulnerabilities to promote their safety and well-being. When staff are concerned about the safety of young people, they take appropriate action to make sure that they receive the support that they need. For example, the manager provides additional staffing and increased supervision, introduces supervised spends and accesses additional support as required. While the manager makes suitable efforts to share these risk assessments with the placing social workers, he has missed an opportunity to share these assessments with young people, so that they have a full understanding of how they are being supported by the staff to manage their emotions and risk-taking behaviours.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
The home is managed by a suitably qualified and experienced manager, who has been registered with Ofsted since 17 November 2015. He is competently supported by a deputy manager and senior care worker, who share his drive and commitment to continue to improve the home, to enhance the progress and experiences of young people safely. The three good-practice recommendations have been suitably addressed. Staff provide good quality care to all young people as they have increased their knowledge and understanding of mental health issues and self-harm, as sufficient training has been provided. Furthermore, all safeguarding agencies are informed of any significant events promptly so that they can respond quickly and ensure that all young people are safeguarded promptly and effectively. In addition, young people and professionals are now systematically involved in the annual appraisals of staff to provide the manager with a holistic overview of staffs' performance and areas for continued development.	

The manager has a comprehensive understanding of the home's strengths and areas for continued development, which are identified in the home's recently reviewed and updated annual development plan. This, alongside the rigorous scrutiny that is provided by the monthly visits undertaken by the independent visitor, offers additional rigour and challenge to the manager, to ensure that he and the home continue to improve and develop.

Professionals support the staff's approach to meeting young people's complex and challenging needs. They confirm that the efforts and dedication demonstrated by the manager and staff promote young people's safety and enable them to feel a sense of stability and belonging. One professional said, 'I don't think there is anything else that they could do. They are very tuned in to [Name]'s attachment and arousal issues. The fact that [Name] is still in placement is amazing. They provide good guidance, boundaries and routines and [Name] has responded well to this. The staff respond appropriately to [Name] and they are committed to her.'

Young people's records and case files are detailed and complete. They are reviewed systematically and updated to ensure that they provide a detailed picture of young people's needs, progression and future goals.

The home employs an adequate number of committed staff who are trained, supported and experienced to deliver a good standard of care for all young people. While some staff have the required qualifications, others are in the process of achieving these. While there is a suitable plan in place to ensure that all the permanent staff acquire the necessary national vocational qualifications, one member of staff has not achieved this within the prescribed timeframe. In addition, a number of additional bank and agency staff have been utilised to cover shifts in the home in emergency situations. While this is necessary to provide a safe level of care, it has resulted in creating some inconsistency for young people. Furthermore, these staff members are not identified in the home's statement of purpose. Thus, it is unclear whether these staff members have achieved the required qualifications within the necessary timeframes.

The manager has recently reviewed and updated the children's guide to support young people's transitions to the home positively. However, the manager has missed an opportunity to seek the views of young people on this review. In this way, he has lost valuable information as to what young people find helpful in this and what information they feel that they may have benefited from.

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 children looked after 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 that 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 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 whom 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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