

SC025744

Registered provider: The Together Trust

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The children's home is one of a number of homes operated by a charitable organisation. It provides care and accommodation for six young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties or learning disabilities.

Inspection dates: 23 to 24 October 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 16 January 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is outstanding because:

- Young people have extremely positive experiences in the home. They can see their achievements and are proud of their progress. Young people value their nurturing environment and are cared for by staff who provide thoughtful and individualised care.
- The management team and staff have created a calm and homely atmosphere in the home. Young people are able to settle, form relationships, begin to overcome previous experiences and, in time, consider their futures more positively.
- Staff know the young people very well and they listen and respond to the young people's views, wishes and feelings. This means that they are able to work in ways that help the young people to identify their specific issues and assist them to change their behaviours.
- Young people receive highly consistent care and benefit from the thorough placement planning process, which includes clear guidance for staff and ensures that young people's needs are appropriately identified. This practice places the young people at the centre of staff practice.
- Transitions into and out of the home are exceptionally well planned. Careful consideration is given to any likely impact that a new placement may have on the existing group of young people. Equally, planning for young people's future placements is thorough. This gives a new young person's placement, and those being prepared to move on, every chance of success.
- Partnership working is highly effective. Exceptionally positive relationships and good communication with external stakeholders lead to positive outcomes for the young people at this home.
- Considering the young people's previous disruptions in education, their educational progress is now exceptional. This is because the management team and staff have high aspirations and celebrate all of the young people's achievements. This teaches the young people to believe in their own abilities and prepare well for their futures.
- Significant progress has been achieved in using a child-centred practice model of care in relation to young people's health and emotional, social and psychological well-being.
- Staff work, and young people live, in a community where equality and diversity is a natural part of the culture. Young people are able to express their identity with complete acceptance by all those around them.
- Staff demonstrate a deep sense of care and affection for the young people in

their care. They are strongly focused on keeping young people safe and ensuring their well-being. A firm and clear safeguarding culture, together with effective safeguarding arrangements, provides the structure and guidance which enable staff to maintain these in a consistent and professional manner.

- The registered manager is aspirational and supported by a management team that uses and cascades lessons learned from research to help the staff focus on the things that matter to young people.
- Effective analysis of data, supported by rigorous monitoring, provides parents, carers and other professionals with regular and detailed reports. Young people's records clearly evidence and tell the story of the progress that they have made from their time living in the home. As a result, young people can see the positive choices that they have made across different aspects of their development and welfare.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
16/01/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
21/06/2016	Full	Good
03/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
03/11/2015	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Young people make exceptional progress in all areas of their development because their day-to-day experiences are consistently positive. They receive personalised care and support from a committed, knowledgeable, skilled and motivated staff team. The management team and staff use verbal praise, small rewards and their own gestures and behaviour to continually encourage the young people's achievements. Together with staff, young people celebrate their personal achievements and activities, however small. This continuous use of praise increases the young people's self-worth, confidence and gives them a sense of belonging in the home.

The management team and staff utilise the features of the home and its environment very well. It is a large and spacious house, but is set out and designed to provide the young people with a calm and homely atmosphere. Personal mementoes, framed photographs and art and craft displays made by the young people are proudly displayed throughout the home. This shows how young people, who often have previously had negative experiences, are now settled and benefiting from stability in their lives. One social worker described how the home 'feels like a family home', and said, 'My young person is really happy to be living in the home. She is provided with a sense of security and safety.'

Young people make excellent progress which is well promoted by their strong and supportive relationships with staff. These productive relationships help each of the young people and the group as a whole to enjoy stability, understand their previous negative experiences, change their behaviours and enable them to recognise the progress that they make. Collectively, young people told the inspector that they enjoy living in the home, and they said that this was mainly due to the genuine care that staff take when looking after them. One young person said, 'I have totally changed since I came to this home. Staff support us all and they motivate us so we all do our best. We all want to be here.'

Young people who have experienced troubled backgrounds which negatively impacted on their education are now enjoying learning. All of the young people now have excellent attendance in school or at alternative educational provision. The management team and staff are dedicated, nurturing and have a clear and strong ethos that encourages all young people to attend education. Adaptable daily routines ensure that the young people are ready and supported to learn. Staff celebrate the educational achievements of the young people. It is commonplace for the management team and staff to tell young people how proud they are of them, keep records of their achievements and share these with professionals and families. Consequently, young people have developed self-confidence and are proud of themselves.

The staff's nurturing approach includes preparing young people's bedrooms, so that they are well presented when they come home from education. Young people and staff enjoy baking, and appreciate shared play, activities and holidays together. The management

team and staff encourage participation, and this ensures that the young people's views, wishes and feelings are listened to and acted upon. Young people's contributions are evident in the records and their care plans kept in the home, which provide them with memorable experiences to look back on. These plans include 'my month in pictures', which shows other people important to the young people and what it is that they have achieved each month. A staff member summed up the nurturing approach taken by all of the staff in the home, telling the inspector, 'Our young people just want to be wanted and just need people who care about them.'

This positive parenting approach is underpinned effectively by a model of care, and the staff work closely with external therapeutic services to identify, support and plan each young person's individual behaviour management plan. Using research-based principles in their practice, staff are trained and help the young people to learn better ways to express their emotions, deal with attachment difficulties and modify their behaviours. One young person told the inspector, 'Before arriving in this home I was totally off the rails, smoking cannabis and getting up to no good, but now I am OK and doing really well.' Another young person's social worker said, 'I am so impressed with the quality of care and the therapeutic intervention my young person receives. If I could place more young people with them, I would.'

Staff support the young people to live a healthy lifestyle. Young people enjoy physical and sporting activities, and staff encourage them to eat a healthy diet. Staff are skilled in therapeutic approaches and meet young people's emotional needs within their day-to-day care. For example, routines in the home are led by the young people's needs for attention at certain times of the day, such as when they return from school, mealtimes, bath time and bedtime. The home has an administrator, which reduces the need for staff to complete records and paperwork. This means that the young people appreciate that they are the focus of the home and, as one young person said, this makes them feel 'loved'. As a result, young people's physical health, emotional, social and psychological needs are being well met.

Transitions into and out of the home are exceptionally well planned. Young people leaving the home do so in a planned way. Equally, moving into the home is well planned and taken at the pace of the young person. For example, young people meet staff and other young people living in the home through planned visits and overnight stays. There is thorough consideration taken when looking at referrals for the home, and good information sharing between the young person's previous care provider, the parent or carer and this home. Professional planning meetings consider the needs of a young person as well as the existing resident group. The registered manager is committed to ensuring that any new admission is a good match for the current group. He feels listened to and supported by senior leaders within the organisation to ensure that the home can meet the young person's needs.

Staff provide the young people with the practical and emotional support that they need to either develop or maintain positive relationships with their families and previous carers. When appropriate, the staff encourage the young people to make regular phone calls, and the staff facilitate visits when contact arrangements need supervising in line

with the young people's contact plan. These arrangements mean that the young people are able to maintain their relationships with the people who are important in their lives.

Equality is embedded in the culture of this home. Staff and young people accept others for who they are. The staff treat the young people with total respect and dignity; their support of young people's individual identities is exceptional. Staff seek out support groups, such as the black and asian network who support young people to find their identity and maintain their heritage. Young people are involved in charity runs raising money for good causes and those people less fortunate than themselves. One young person is singing in an old people's home with her support group, creating entertainment and bringing joy to others.

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

Staff have a clear understanding about how to manage any safeguarding concerns. When there are concerns, they work quickly and effectively with partner agencies to ensure the safety of the young people and to check that individuals achieve a positive resolution that informs future practice. The registered manager is a trained designated safeguarding lead and is able to train his staff in a range of topics, for example young people going missing from home, child sexual exploitation, radicalisation, social media and internet safety. This training is enhanced by research, discussions between the staff team members and by using reflective practice.

There have been instances when young people have taken risks, and these have been managed extremely well by the management team and staff. Meetings with other professionals to agree individual strategies for young people have reduced risk-taking behaviour significantly since the last inspection. The records and data analysis shows a significant decrease of young people being violent and abusive towards staff, damage to property is now rare and physical interventions have reduced.

Behaviour is very well managed. Some young people had difficulties in managing their emotions and behaviour when they first came to the home. This has, over time, significantly improved for all the young people. The assistant manager is a trainer in behaviour management techniques, and all staff work to the model of encouraging playfulness, acceptance, communication and empathy with the young people. As a result, the home is really settled.

A visiting child sexual exploitation mentor for the young people told the inspector how well young people engage with her. She visits the home regularly and has built up sound relationships with the young people. She confirmed that the impact of this work means that the young people are no longer at risk of child sexual exploitation and that the young people's missing from home incidents have significantly decreased.

Young people are able to take age-appropriate risks. Risk assessments are thorough, regularly updated and have clear strategies for staff to follow. The staff demonstrate well how to keep young people safe and the young people's individual risk assessments

are live documents which have, and do, lessen the risks that young people might take. Staff are aware that young people's level of risk is typical adolescent behaviour, such as entering relationships, sexual awareness and stranger danger. The staff equip the young people with knowledge on how to keep safe and make more positive choices, rather than denying them all opportunities to learn by their own mistakes.

Specialist police officers have sat alongside the young people on the computer to outline the dangers and what to look out for when surfing and using social media networks. All young people told the inspector that they are safe and feel safe in the home. The young people also said that they know how to make a complaint or raise a concern, and they are confident that the registered manager and staff will act quickly to help them with any worries that they may have.

The recruitment and selection process for new staff is thorough. The registered manager is involved in shortlisting and interviewing new applicants to assess whether they are suitable to work with the young people in the home. Meticulous attention to matters of health and safety increases young people's, staff members' and visitors' welfare and provides a safe environment for everyone. The registered manager has clear contingency plans in place for future work scheduled to take place in the basement of the home. This will ensure that any disruption is kept to a minimum and will not impact on the running of the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager has been at the home since November 2015. He is experienced, qualified, leads by example and is aspirational. He is supported in the home by a management team and administrator who are equally experienced and qualified. Together they have a model for working with young people, and a strong understanding of how to lead and manage the staff team. This enables each member of staff to grow in confidence and develop their ability to care for young people well. The leadership and management in this home is highly effective, and, together with the staff, they demonstrate ambition for the home, based on a strong drive to improve young people's lives.

The registered manager has an excellent insight into the strengths of the home and the areas for development. He uses internal and external quality assurance tools, as well as consultation, to continue to develop the home and drive up standards. Data and analysis reports, updated each month in relation to all areas of young people's lives, show trends and patterns of how they have achieved progress in the home. These reports show the impact and how staff intervention has improved the outcomes of the young people in the home. Young people have a journey file, which clearly tells their story of their time spent in the home and will provide them with fond memories when they get older.

Staff are sufficient in number, highly motivated and enthusiastic. They are qualified, skilled and knowledgeable, with vast experience of working with young people in residential settings. The management team and administrator ensure that staff training

programmes are relevant, and reflective of young people's specific needs. This means that staff continually refresh their skill base, including lessons learned from research to meet the young people's ever-evolving needs.

Staff benefit from regular practice-related supervision and annual appraisals. These formal sessions encourage staff to identify and consider their learning needs and to reflect on their performance. Contributions from external professionals and young people to the staff appraisal process enable staff to evaluate their own practice to maximise positive outcomes for the young people.

The manager strives for excellence, and, together with the staff team, ensures that the home's stated aims and objectives are met. Young people are provided with an opportunity to enjoy positive experiences where they can make happy memories. The home's statement of purpose fully describes the services that the home provides, and these practices are evident throughout the home and echoed by external professionals and are worthy of wider dissemination.

The registered manager has provided personal feedback, based on his own experiences, to the author on the report for the residential child care review. He has attended Ofsted roadshows on guidance and new framework training and is a regular participant in many local groups and provider meetings. The knowledge that he has gleaned from such events is cascaded down to his staff team members to increase their knowledge and provide the young people with a high level of nurturing care.

Partnership working is excellent, and the registered manager is not afraid to challenge other professionals in order to ensure positive outcomes for the young people. There are many examples of the management team and staff working together to support young people to have positive outcomes in education, health, emotional well-being and safeguarding. These are clearly evident within the records kept in the home.

A social worker has written in feedback gained by the home, 'I have worked in many independent homes for a long time and have to say the registered manager is one of the most professional and informative managers I have worked with and he always has a professional attitude. His understanding of current legislation is very strong.'

No requirements or recommendations are made at this inspection.

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: SC025744

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: Stephen Truelove

Inspector

Mark Kersh, social care inspector

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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>

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