

SC025744

Registered provider: The Together Trust

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is one of a number of homes operated by a voluntary organisation. It provides care for up to six children who may have social and emotional difficulties and/or learning disabilities.

At the time of the inspection, there were two children living in the home.

The manager registered with Ofsted in November 2015.

Inspection dates: 28 February and 1 March 2023

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: 2 March 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
02/03/2022	Full	Good
24/04/2019	Full	Outstanding
12/12/2018	Full	Outstanding
23/10/2017	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Staff know the children well and always place the well-being of children at the centre of their practice. The children said that they are happy living in the home, and that if they have a problem they can talk to staff who will always help. A child said, 'Living here is like a family.'

Children enjoy access to a range of social and recreational opportunities, including activities in the local community. Children are also encouraged and supported to spend time with friends. This means that children have age-appropriate social interactions, and can build skills and strategies to form and maintain relationships so that they gain a sense of their own identity.

Family time is supported in line with relevant plans, ensuring it meets the individual needs of each child and that they can maintain relationships that are important to them.

Staff ensure that children's health needs are met, and they have access to local health services when they need them.

When children have moved from the home, staff have worked collaboratively with the child's placing authority and other relevant professionals to ensure that the child's needs have remained a priority.

The children have poor attendance at school. The manager and staff are working collaboratively with one child's school to support the child's additional needs and help them improve their attendance. For another child, the manager and staff have not provided enough challenge to the virtual school to ensure that the child's education needs are met.

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

Each child's individual risks are detailed in their risk assessments. These are robust documents which are updated following significant events, and give clear guidance to staff to ensure consistent responses to children's behaviours. Staff understand these documents and put them into practice.

When children go missing from care, there are clear and comprehensive plans in place for staff to follow. The manager and staff work collaboratively with external professionals, such as the local police and missing-from-home team, to ensure well-coordinated responses when children go missing from the home. As a result, the number of missing episodes for one child has significantly reduced.

When incidents occur that require children to be physically held, these incidents are reasonable and proportionate. They are recorded appropriately, and all relevant

professionals are notified. The manager has evaluated each incident and children are given the opportunity for a debrief following the incident.

Staff have completed mandatory training. However, they do not have training to meet the children's individual needs such as bereavement, substance misuse, e-safety and exploitation.

Direct work is completed with children in topics that are current and relevant to them. However, there are missed opportunities for staff to help the children understand how to keep themselves safe in topics such as substance misuse, e-safety and vaping.

When children raise a concern, they are supported appropriately and the manager and staff work collaboratively with professionals, such as the police and the complex safeguarding team, to ensure that the children receive any necessary support and that their needs are met.

When children are new to the home, the manager has attempted to gather as much information as possible prior to their placement. When this information has been incomplete or inaccurate, it has been challenged with the relevant professionals.

Children who are new to the home are welcomed sensitively and with the best possible planning. However, the referral process does not assess the children's compatibility, or take into account their risks and the effect this may have on each child. This means that there is no child-centred approach when making decisions about whether children should live together.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

There is an experienced manager and leadership team that have high expectations for what children can achieve. The staff are positive about the manager and describe a supportive environment.

Leaders and staff work proactively and positively with other agencies and professionals. They seek to build effective working relationships to secure positive outcomes for children. However, there is a lack of challenge to the placing authority for one child whose review has passed the required timescale.

There are systems in place for effective monitoring and review of the home. These ensure that leaders and the manager have good oversight of the home and are able to identify and address any issues. However, the quality of care review is not evaluative and does not include a plan of actions to improve or maintain the ongoing quality of care provided for children.

Supervisions take place regularly and focus on children's experiences. They are practice led, meaning that staff are reflective and learn from their experiences.

Staffing is consistent. When it has been necessary to use agency staff, safer recruitment checks have been completed, and a regular agency staff member who has worked alongside experienced staff from the home is used. This has ensured that the children are able to build a positive relationship with the staff supporting them.

Team meetings take place regularly and are well attended by the staff team. However, these are a missed opportunity for staff development and are used more as a session to share information.

The manager has completed a report to assess the suitability of the location of the home. He has reviewed this regularly, but the report does not factor in the information received from relevant professionals, and the updates do not consider changing risks or the strategies for managing these. This means that the latest risks are not detailed in the report.

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, 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 protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iv)) Specifically, the registered person must ensure that when new children arrive at the home, their compatibility with the other children living there has been assessed, specifically ensuring that any risks that may affect the children have been explored and strategies to manage these risks are identified. This is to ensure that all children's needs are met.	1 April 2023
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— help each child to understand how to keep safe. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(ii)) Specifically, the registered person must ensure that children are supported to understand how to keep safe through direct-work sessions aimed at known risks.	1 April 2023

In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child’s needs; if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority’s or a relevant person’s performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child’s needs are met in accordance with the child’s relevant plans. (Regulation 5 (b)(c)) Specifically, the registered person must challenge professionals when children’s reviews are not completed within timescales. Also, the registered person must escalate any concerns about the children’s access to a suitable education provision to the virtual school head.	1 April 2023
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children’s home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)) Specifically, the registered person must ensure that staff have completed training to meet the individual needs of the children.	1 April 2023

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the review of premises includes the identification of any risks and opportunities presented by the home’s location and strategies for managing these. The registered person should ensure that they consult relevant people and include this information in the report. (‘Guide to the

Children's Home Regulations, including the quality standards', page 51, paragraph 15.1)

- The registered person should ensure that quality of care review identifies areas of strength and possible weakness in the home's care. The report should clearly identify any actions required for the next 6 months of delivery within 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)

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

Katie Tomlinson, Social Care Inspector

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