

SC025747

Registered provider: The Together Trust

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is run and managed by a charitable organisation. The home provides care for up to three children with social and emotional difficulties and learning disabilities.

The registered manager has been in post since November 2015.

Inspection dates: 1 and 2 February 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **requires improvement to be good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 12 January 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/01/2022	Full	Good
07/01/2020	Full	Good
23/10/2018	Full	Good
04/12/2017	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Two children have recently moved out of the home. Therefore, at the time of the inspection, there were no children living in the home. One child had moved into supported accommodation and the other had returned to live with family.

Staff supported the children to develop their independence, according to their individual needs. Children developed their practical skills and completed many tasks safely and independently. Social and emotional independence was actively promoted by the staff team. One social worker commented, 'Initially, [name of child] was very dependent on staff. However, as a result of the support provided, [name of child] is much more independent and concerning behaviours have reduced dramatically.'

Education was promoted by staff, and children were supported to learn and to attend college. As a result, attendance was high, and children made progress. Children achieved recognised qualifications that can support future employment opportunities. One child achieved a qualification in automotive maintenance and completed functional skills in mathematics and English.

Staff work closely with an external agency that provides support to children who display harmful sexual behaviours. Children were supported to take part in regular sessions, and, as a result, they made considerable progress. One professional from the agency said, '[Name of child] has made remarkable progress, going from full supervision in the community to enjoying lengthy periods of independent time in the community.'

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

There were occasions when children made allegations. Investigations into allegations were shared with the appropriate agencies and handled fairly, quickly and in line with statutory guidance. A safeguarding partner said, 'I consider that the management [of] and response to allegations is appropriate.' However, the manager did not always keep clear records of strategies agreed between herself and safeguarding partners, making it difficult to assess practice and to understand the outcome of referrals.

Some children regularly went missing from care. Staff are proactive in their approach when children go missing, and the missing-from-care protocol is routinely followed. The incident reports are detailed and include contact with family members, and searches of known areas to gather information about the children's whereabouts. Return home interviews are also routinely undertaken.

Each child had an individual and up-to-date risk-management plan in place. These contained appropriate strategies to support staff to mitigate the risks, and staff fully understood each child's risks. However, the recording of incidents uses simple

chronological information and omits important details, such as what the incident was about. This reduces the effectiveness of the plans.

The home uses a consequence and reward system. Children receive consequences for negative behaviour, which are restorative in nature. For example, when a child was rude to a neighbour, the child was asked to write an apology letter. However, not all measures imposed have been evaluated by the manager for their effectiveness. Children were not always given the opportunity to comment on the consequences that they received.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The monitoring in the home is not effective. The quality-of-care review does not seek to include any feedback from children or other professionals about what could be done better. Significant incidents involving children, such as incidents of going missing from care, have not always been reviewed by the manager, or reviews are not evaluative. This prevents the manager from having a satisfactory level of oversight of the risks to children or to adapt strategies to manage risk.

Generally, the manager completes notifications under regulation 40 to ensure that the regulator is informed about matters of significant concern. However, there have been two occasions when a notification was not made. In addition, the quality of the information provided to the regulatory body is variable and it is not always clear what exact action the manager has taken. This results in a delay in matters of significant concern being fully understood.

The home environment is welcoming, and the children's bedrooms are being redecorated in preparation for new children moving in. However, there are locks on internal communal doors, meaning that children do not always have access to all areas of their home. This makes the home feel less like a family home.

Most staff receive regular supervision in line with the home's statement of purpose. However, some staff have not received regular supervision. This limits the opportunities for staff to reflect on their practice and the children's needs, and on their own development. Appraisals are completed annually. However, they do not include the views of the children and other professionals.

The manager has implemented a safe area report, which has recently been updated, and takes into consideration the local risks and hazards. However, the manager has not consulted with relevant agencies, such as the local police, to obtain their views.

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 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— use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(h)) In particular, ensure that significant incidents and missing-from-home incidents are evaluated with scrutiny, taking into consideration any possible learning outcomes that can be implemented within the children's risk-management plans, or to support the development of staff. In addition, ensure that there are clear and organised systems in place to ensure that any evidence or essential information for the management of allegations can be easily accessed by authorised persons.	3 March 2023
The registered person must ensure that— children can access all appropriate areas of the children's home's premises; and any limitation placed on a child's privacy or access to any area of the home's premises— is intended to safeguard each child accommodated in the home; is necessary and proportionate;	3 March 2023

is kept under review and, if necessary, revised; and allows children as much freedom as is possible when balanced against the need to protect them and keep them safe. (Regulation 21 (b)(c)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)) In particular, ensure that internal locks on the communal doors are removed.	
The registered person must ensure that— within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(b)(i)(ii)(c)) In particular, ensure that when behaviour management measures are imposed, they are evaluated to review their effectiveness. Ensure that children are spoken to about the measure, and that their views are included.	3 March 2023
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation; an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious; there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; a child protection enquiry involving a child— is instigated; or concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry); or	3 March 2023

there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. A notification made under this regulation— must include details of— the matter; the other persons, bodies or organisations (if any) who or which have been notified; and any actions taken by the registered person as a result of the matter; must be made or confirmed in writing. (Regulation 40 (4)(a)(b)(c)(d)(i)(ii)(e) (5)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(b)) In particular, ensure that when children make allegations, notifications are sent to Ofsted. Notifications must also clearly state what action has been taken and whether safeguarding referrals have been made.	
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality of care review") at least once every 6 months. In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating— the quality of care provided for children; the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. (Regulation 45 (1) (2)(a)(b)(C)) In particular, ensure that children's views and opinions are included in the quality-of-care review.	3 March 2023

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. Specifically, the registered person should ensure that risk assessments are clear, directive and do not become a chronology of events. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)
- The registered person should ensure that there is a system in place so that all staff receive appraisal of their performance which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. This should include views gathered from children and other professionals. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.5)
- The registered person should ensure that when conducting a review of the premises, they consult and consider the views of relevant persons. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.1)

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: SC025747

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: Lillian Adamson

Inspector

Kimmy Feeley, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023