

# 1254843

Registered provider: Together for Children Sunderland Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

The home is operated under trust arrangements to accommodate up to six children and young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

**Inspection dates:** 12 to 13 September 2017

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,</b> taking into account	<b>outstanding</b>
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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:** not applicable

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** not applicable

**Enforcement action since last inspection:**

None.

## Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is outstanding because:

- A strong, consistent and stable staff group understands the ethos of the home completely and embodies it well.
- The home's significant strength is in building relationships with the young people who live there.
- A robust link worker system means that the young people have significant adults to relate to in their lives and, as a result, the home presents as a calm and settled environment in which to live.
- Staff routinely use a recognised and established therapeutic model, and this leads to a detailed and shared understanding of the young people's emotional needs.
- The high standard of the home's physical environment is in itself therapeutic.
- All children living at the home can demonstrate progress from their respective starting points, and some of the home's achievements are highly commendable.
- The home is a learning environment. For instance, staff have learned from experience how to offer a good standard of care and support to young people at risk of going missing and becoming vulnerable to sexual exploitation.
- The leadership and management of the home are exemplary.
- The task of file and record keeping at the home is undertaken with a high level of efficiency.
- Of particular note is the continuity between social workers' assessments and care plans and the home's comprehensive placement plans, so that it is clear why the young people live at the home and what the home is expected to do to help them.

The children's home's areas for development:

- The existing strong system of record keeping could be further strengthened by linking the record of one-to-one sessions to the placement plan so that the connection is evident.
- 'Pen pictures' of young people are completed but not to the same standard across the group. They could be added to the admissions process to enable young people to express their views at an early stage and therefore prevent them being asked repeated questions by staff.

## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
None		

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding**

The home's long-standing, stable and highly competent staff group embodies its ethos of listening to and involving children in everything that it does. The transformation from a local authority-run home to part of a trading company has not had any significant negative impact on how it functions. Nothing that was already excellent about the home has deteriorated, and some aspects have further improved.

Strong relationship building is a key element in the home's success. A robust link worker system gives the young people significant adults in their lives with whom they can form positive relationships. The home presents as a calm and settled environment, and its group of residents are a pleasure to meet. Young people who live there have varying degrees of negative experiences of adults in their lives. Given the potential for young people to sometimes feel angry and act out, under such circumstances, their calm and settled nature is an achievement for everyone at the home, particularly the young people themselves.

Strong, positive relationships are underpinned by staff's thorough understanding of young people's emotional well-being. This is achieved by their constructive use of an established therapeutic model. The inspector observed a group of staff conducting an in-depth analysis of a young person's behaviour, and this resulted in a well-shared and understood means of meeting their emotional needs. The presence of a child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) worker on the home's staff adds significant value to this therapeutic process.

The home's physical location and layout are in themselves therapeutic. The staff use its extensive grounds well, including rearing animals, growing vegetables to eat at mealtimes and planting attractive flowerbeds. The home as a community is building a yurt in its back garden, and this will add further space in which to conduct meaningful one-to-one sessions in a peaceful environment.

The home's purpose-built interior is spacious, and this allows young people to choose different evening activities without taking up one another's space. Staff are reassured by the trading company's recent purchase of the building, which was previously rented from the council, and this is viewed as an investment in the home's future.

The combination of a long-standing staff group that personifies the home's calm and peaceful culture and an environment conducive to therapeutic intervention means that the young people demonstrate significant progress from their respective starting points. Some of the home's achievements are exemplary, for instance the gradual improvement in one young person's school attendance rate, over time, from 27% to 95%. One professional, involved for a number of years in the life of a young person who has recently come to live at the home, told the inspector that staff were 'open, friendly and professional'. She said that she had been 'moved to tears' by the visible difference in the

young person's presentation in the short time that they have been living here.

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

The young people living at the home are safe. A culture of rigorous risk assessment means that staff understand the risks to vulnerable young people and are proactive in reducing them. The young people benefit from comprehensive crisis management plans. These are based on the risks that the young people face and are designed to prevent crises arising in their lives. This means that the number of reports of serious safeguarding incidents at the home have been reduced significantly over time, and the young people told the inspector that they felt safe living there.

The home is using prior experience well to improve services to those young people vulnerable to going missing and being sexually exploited. For example, in one case, a young person's social worker told inspectors that they valued the home's high-quality monthly updates. These demonstrate that the number of episodes when the young person was at risk has been reduced by more than half since they came to live at the home, with an evidently continuing downward trend.

In another case, a young person positively engaged with preventative services, with support from staff. The risk of their going missing has been further assessed, and its level significantly reduced by social workers and their police partners. Overall, the home had been successful in using its established therapeutic approach to reduce the risk of harm to young people and keep them safe.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding**

The home is very well managed by a team of highly experienced and competent managers who fully understand and can readily express the home's purpose and objectives. Managers make effective use of a range of performance information about the home to make sure that they know its strengths very well and where it needs to improve. They instil in the home's staff group a confident, child-centred approach to its practice, and this promotes the positive relationship building that is key to the home's success.

A robust system of case file audit means that the home's records are generally kept up to date. Recently, an improvement in the quality of social workers' file and record keeping has meant that there is a clear and understandable link between all young people's records and plans on file. This is particularly commendable where young people have only recently come to live at the home yet their records are complete and well linked.

The inspector spoke to a range of the home's partners and the young people's parents during the inspection, and all were positive about the young people's experience of living at the home and their progress while they were living there. One partner said, in terms of reducing young people's offending behaviour, that this is a 'pretty fantastic care home'.

Staff files are kept up to date, using detailed checklists. These confirm that the group of staff at the home are long-standing, well-trained and experienced workers. They are provided with regular supervision and further training opportunities to sharpen their existing skills. Staff understand very well the therapeutic values and culture of the home, and they embody its ethos.

## **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 difference 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:** 1254843

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** Together for Children Sunderland Limited

**Registered provider address:** City of Sunderland, PO Box 102, Sunderland SR2 7DN

**Responsible individual:** Debra Patterson

**Registered manager:** Graeme Conley

### Inspector:

Ian Young, social care inspector

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