

1254835

Registered provider: Together For Children Sunderland Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home provides care and accommodation for up to six children and young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. It is provided by a limited company.

Inspection dates: 8 to 9 November 2017

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected requires improvement to be 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: 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 good because:

- The recording is improved in all records since the previous inspection when the service was part of the local authority.
- The members of staff demonstrate good knowledge of the young people and their individual needs.
- There is evidence of engagement by some young people and progress being

made.

- The feedback from other professionals and family members highlighted that the home communicates well with others.

The children's home's areas for development:

- There needs to be a more proactive approach to addressing needs and behaviours of young people.
- Risk assessments and care plans need to improve and link to each other.
- The staff need reflective practice opportunities to address their feelings associated with some of the behaviours witnessed.

Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement |
|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Not applicable | | |

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 |
|--|------------|
| <p>The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who—</p> <p>understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children;</p> <p>use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. (Regulation 6 (1) a)(b))</p> | 31/12/2017 |
| <p>The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on—</p> <p>mutual respect and trust;</p> <p>an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff—</p> <p>meet each child's behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 11(1)(2)(a)(i))</p> | 31/12/2017 |
| <p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff—</p> <p>assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(i))</p> | 31/12/2017 |
| <p>The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that—</p> <p>helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and</p> | 31/12/2017 |

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;

understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13(1)(2)(c)(f))

This is with particular reference to training in attachment and trauma and the mental health of young people.

Recommendations

- Staff supervision must enable staff to reflect and act upon how their own feelings and behaviour may be affected by the behaviour of the children they care for. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 39, paragraph 8.15)
- Where there is a possibility that a child will run away or go missing from a children's home placement, their placement plan should include a strategy to minimise this risk. If the child is looked after, their care plan (arranged by their placing authority) should include such a strategy. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.24)
- The registered person is responsible for leading a team which provides high quality care for all children living in the home. They must lead and manage the home in a way that delivers the ethos, outcomes and approach set out in the home's statement of purpose. They should also play a key role in shaping the ethos of the home through developing a culture of high aspiration for children which is demonstrated through the care, resources and opportunities offered to the children. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 52, paragraph 10.4)
- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 14.4)
This is with particular reference to the home's log book.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The home is newly registered as of April 2017, having previously been registered under the local authority. The young people are benefiting from a seamless transition that has been helped by positive relationships with the established staff team.

The home is well decorated, with input from the young people. There are photos of activities and events involving young people around the home. The computer room is very focused on the young people in terms of its décor, with leaflets and information readily available. However, the manager identified that there were still areas to be improved, in particular the room at the back of the home that is being developed to facilitate in-depth work with young people.

Some of the young people are making good progress in all aspects of their lives. Each young person has a dedicated key worker to help them to reflect on their history and their future plans. The staff team is aware of plans for all young people and records reflect that work undertaken is not limited to key workers. The young people can identify an adult within the home whom they feel close to and can share their concerns or worries with. A relative of one young person stated: '[Name] is well looked after and respects the staff.'

Education is valued in the home and the staff advocate well on behalf of young people who have school placements. However, not all young people are currently engaged in education. The staff team is addressing this issue but there are no proactive plans in place in the home for the young people on a daily basis. The result is that the routine that school placements offer young people is lost. This may make it more difficult for the young people to fully engage quickly once placements are identified. The attendance rates for those young people who have a school placement are varied but efforts are made by the staff team to address any identified issues.

The young people are offered a wide range of activities. However, the engagement rate from young people is varied with some choosing friends in the community over activities with staff or other young people in the home. Contact with family and friends is encouraged and supported where appropriate. However, staff have been unable to disrupt such relationships when they are inappropriate.

The young people are supported to express their wishes and feelings on a regular basis. This is achieved in formal settings such as the young people's meetings and in their key-work sessions. However, there is no evidence of young people actively participating in the planning of their care within the home, and their contribution to records is not evident. This is difficult as records are electronic, but staff need to demonstrate that they are involving young people on a regular basis.

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

improvement to be good

Comprehensive risk assessments identify young people's individual vulnerabilities, including those undertaken at the point of admission. However, these do not then link to care plans or look at shared risks of young people within the group and the effect these will have on each individual. The result is that information is dealt with in isolation and records do not demonstrate that mutual risks have been explored.

Risk assessments and care plans give an evaluation of risk and strategies for dealing with the presenting behaviour in some cases. However, they do not address the underlying causes of behaviours or emotions that young people are displaying and give very little guidance about how to disrupt the behaviour. In addition, practice observed on one of the inspection days demonstrated that members of staff are not always taking account of risks or the detailed strategies to mitigate risk contained in these assessments on a day-to-day basis. This leaves young people at risk and vulnerable.

The number of episodes of going missing from the home are high overall but have fluctuated over recent months. For some young people, the number of these episodes has reduced. Staff are aware of the procedures to follow if episodes do occur and do look for the young people in known areas. Most young people keep in touch by phone, and the staff team takes a young person answering a welfare call as an indication that the young person is safe and well without further steps to ensure safety. In addition, there is no overall evaluation of such episodes, which would identify required learning or strategies to help minimise future episodes.

Presenting behaviour in the home is managed, and the need for physical intervention is low. However, all of the staff are appropriately trained in de-escalating and intervention techniques. This ensures that the young people are protected in the home, from themselves and others.

Sanctions are used effectively but minimally to address behaviours, with a restorative approach being favoured. Rewards are used to good effect, empowering young people to develop a sense of empathy and improving social skills. This will benefit them now and in their future lives.

One-to-one sessions are held with young people that look at a range of issues, but again this is done reactively after a behaviour or incident has occurred. Incident recording tells the 'story' of what happened during the behaviour or incident but contain very few strategies to address the underlying causes.

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

The registered manager is appropriately qualified and experienced. He has been managing this home for a number of years and transferred over to the current company along with his team. He is supported by an experienced deputy manager and a motivated senior management team. The young people, staff, parents and other professionals all report very positively about the improvements seen in the monitoring

and oversight of the home. A member of staff stated: 'The manager is now on the ball more.'

The manager has a sense of the strengths and weaknesses of the home, and has produced a workforce development plan. All staff hold the requisite level 3 qualification or higher. All mandatory training is completed. It would be of benefit to the staff team to have training in attachment and the impact of trauma on young people as well as mental health issues in young people.

Recording remains an area for development. The log book does not follow guidance in terms of its completion, and contains too much individual information.

Recruitment practice is robust, ensuring that the young people are not cared for by people who may pose a risk to them. Formal supervision is regular, but records indicate that sessions do not routinely include reflective practice. This does not allow the staff to examine their own feelings about situations they are in with young people, and therefore affects their ability to learn and develop. Team meetings are regular and effective at reviewing the needs of the young people but do not include safeguarding as a standard agenda item, which would enhance the safeguarding culture of the home.

The manager conducts an annual locality risk assessment. However, this does not include the full range of issues identified in current guidance and in particular does not take account of the cultural needs of young people. This limits the manager's ability to assess the safety of the young people continually, specifically in this location.

The manager has a monitoring system in place, and this area of work continues to need to be addressed in terms of the quality of records and the links between them to improve practice.

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: 1254835

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Together for Children Sunderland Limited

Registered provider address: City of Sunderland, P O Box 102, Sunderland SR2 7DN

Responsible individual: Debra Patterson

Registered manager: Mark Christie

Inspector:

Susan Atkinson-Millmoor, social care inspector

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