

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 owned and managed under trust arrangements to accommodate up to six children with emotional and/or social difficulties. The manager is suitably qualified and experienced for the position held.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

Inspection dates: 4 to 5 May 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 12 November 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/11/2019	Full	Good
09/10/2018	Full	Outstanding
24/01/2018	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
12/09/2017	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Children live in a spacious and comfortable home which has undergone some recent modernisation, including all children's bedrooms now having their own en-suite bathrooms. Outside, facilities are impressive, with children having access to a well-equipped gym and a floodlit football and basketball pitch, as well as an outdoor cinema and pizza oven. One child described the home as being perfect and said, 'Look at all the facilities we have; what more could you ask for?'

Staff offer children the opportunity to take part in a wide range of activities outside the home, including water sports, cycling and quad biking. There are photographs throughout the home showing them enjoying these activities and each child has their own printed book of pictures. This means that children make positive memories and have a sense of belonging.

Children feel safe and enjoy positive relationships with staff, who are committed to them. Families and professionals provided consistent feedback during the inspection to corroborate this. This means that children are cared for by staff who understand their needs.

Children know how to voice their concerns when issues arise and feel confident to speak with staff. However, children are not aware that they may make a written complaint without the assistance of staff. This means that children are unaware of the process to raise a complaint confidentially.

Staff work hard at finding different ways to communicate with children whose first language is not English. For example, staff regularly use the services of interpreters and all staff have translation applications on their mobile phones. However, key documents, such as the children's guide, have not been translated into the first language of some children, which means that these children cannot access the same information as other children. Staff have failed to assist children to develop an understanding and awareness of each other's cultural needs. This limits the opportunity for children to develop positive relationships with each other.

Staff seek children's views on a regular basis through email exchanges, key-work sessions and monthly young people's meetings. However, there is little evidence of how children's views then influence the care that is provided.

Staff recognise the importance of children enjoying time with people who are important to them. Staff keep in contact with family members and work hard to improve their relationships with them. As a result, family members feel able to contact staff for advice and support on how best to manage behaviour and conflicts during family time. One parent, whose child has recently returned home, said, 'If it wasn't for them and the hard work that staff have put in, my child wouldn't be home.'

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

Serious incidents have occurred in which children have been at risk of harm. Staff take immediate action to keep children safe, for example by actively searching for them if they go missing from the home. However, staff do not always take the necessary follow-up actions after an incident. This has included not seeking appropriate medical advice or support, and not providing a child with the opportunity to make a complaint to the police after being physically assaulted. This leaves children exposed to further risk of harm.

Before a child is admitted to the home, the manager completes a risk assessment to ensure that the placement is safe for the child coming to live at the home and for those already living there. However, these assessments are of poor quality as there is little analysis of risk or consideration of how children's behaviours may impact on each other. As a result, children are assessed as low risk, which means that staff do not always have the correct information to help them keep children safe.

Risk assessments once children begin living at the home are also poor and do not clearly identify what strategies staff should follow to prevent risks from reoccurring. This means that staff do not provide a consistent approach to children when managing risk. Also, risk assessments do not always reflect the instances where children have been exposed to harm. This means that staff do not have an understanding of the risks, how often they occur and how significant the concerns are. As a result, children are placed at further risk of harm.

Children's individual crisis support plans are not consistent in quality. Some lack detail and do not always include all the necessary information, while others include lots of information but are, at times, confusing to read and contradictory. This means that staff do not have clear guidance to follow to help them understand how to keep children safe.

At the last inspection, a requirement was issued to inform Ofsted of any serious incidents that occur. However, a review of documents shows that this shortfall has continued and further serious incidents have not been notified to the regulator. This failure means that Ofsted is unable to scrutinise information to ensure that children are kept safe.

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

Staff receive regular supervision. In addition, a child psychologist visits the home on a regular basis to talk to staff about the children's progress. This approach helps staff to improve their knowledge and understanding of the impact of backgrounds and experiences on children.

The manager has ensured that staff receive training relevant to the individual needs of children in their care. However, training records are not kept up to date and attendance on mandatory training could not be evidenced for all staff. This has not negatively affected children, but more robust management oversight would ensure that children are not left at risk.

The manager does not always share information with staff effectively. An example of this is a recommendation from the independent visitor for a specialist assessment for a child to be shared with staff. One member of staff spoken to advised that they were aware of the assessment but it had not been shared with them. This means that staff cannot care for children in an individual way to meet their needs.

There is an inconsistent approach to recording information in children's records and daily logs. This means that, at times, staff do not have all relevant information or guidance, which could lead to children receiving inconsistent care.

The manager has failed to ensure that there are effective internal auditing systems to monitor how the home functions and the performance of staff. This means that the manager is unable to identify shortfalls in the quality of care provided and understand the impact that this has on children's progress.

The most recent statement of purpose, while available at the time of this inspection, has not been forwarded to Ofsted within the required timescale.

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, the 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 children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who—</p> <p>develop positive relationships with them;</p> <p>engage with them; and</p> <p>take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>ensure that each child—</p> <p>has access to the home's children's guide, and the home's complaints procedure, when the child's placement in the home is agreed and throughout the child's stay in the home. (Regulation 7 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(b)(ii))</p>	6 June 2021
<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—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>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;</p> <p>understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(v))</p>	6 June 2021
<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>	6 June 2021

<p>promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home’s statement of purpose;</p> <p>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.</p> <p>(Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(f))</p>	
<p>The registered person must compile in relation to the children’s home a statement ("the statement of purpose") which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1.</p> <p>The registered person must—</p> <p>notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision.</p> <p>(Regulation 16 (1) (3)(b))</p>	<p>6 June 2021</p>
<p>The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if—</p> <p>a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation;</p> <p>an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious;</p> <p>there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there;</p> <p>a child protection enquiry involving a child —</p> <p>is instigated; or</p> <p>concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry); or</p> <p>there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious.</p> <p>(Regulation 40 (4)(a)(b)(c)(d)(i)(ii)(e))</p> <p>This requirement was issued at the last inspection and is restated.</p>	<p>6 June 2021</p>

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children are consulted regularly on their views about the home’s care, to inform and support continued improvement in

the quality of care provided. Due consideration should be given to the child's cognitive ability and language in the development and implementation of any consultation processes. Children should be able to see the results of their views being listened to and acted upon. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.11)

- The registered person should ensure that children are aware of the complaints procedure and are able to access the forms and make a complaint without the need to ask staff, in order to protect their own privacy. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.13)
- The registered person should ensure that children are encouraged to develop positive relationships with each other both in and outside the home as set out in the positive relationships standard. This specifically relates to staff ensuring that children have a better understanding and awareness of different cultures and religions. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 43, paragraph 9.13)
- The registered person should have a workforce plan which details the processes and agreed timescales for staff to achieve induction, probation and any core training (such as around safeguarding, health and safety and mandatory qualifications). The plan should be updated to include any new training and qualifications completed by staff while working at the home, and used to record the ongoing training and continuing professional development needs of staff, including the home's manager. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)
- The registered person should ensure that staff are 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 62, paragraph 14.4)

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: 1254843

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Stanfield Business Centre, Addison Street,
Sunderland SR2 8SZ

Responsible individual: Martin Birch

Registered manager: Graeme Conley

Inspectors

Paula Shepherd, Social Care Inspector
Susan Atkinson-Millmoor, Regulatory Inspector Manager

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