

# SC057718

Registered provider: The Together Trust

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

The children's home is one of a number of homes operated by an independent organisation. It is registered to provide care for up to five children who may have emotional and/or social difficulties, physical disabilities or learning disabilities.

The home specialises in caring for children with autism spectrum conditions and additional complex needs. At the time of the inspection, four children were being cared for in the home full time and one child is cared for in a shared-care arrangement with his family.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since June 2021. She is suitably qualified and experienced.

### Inspection dates: 9 and 10 June 2022

**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      good

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

**Date of last inspection:** 24 March 2022

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** improved effectiveness

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>Inspection type</b>	<b>Inspection judgement</b>
24/03/2022	Interim	Improved effectiveness
21/04/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good
14/05/2019	Full	Good
26/11/2018	Full	Outstanding

## Inspection judgements

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

Children's positive experiences of living in the home and the quality of care they receive from staff enhance their lives. All children have made significant progress since coming to live at the home.

Children's families are encouraged and supported to play a key role in their children's lives. Parents are welcomed into the home to spend time with their children and contribute to their care. One parent said: 'They know my child like I know him. It is like they are his second family.'

Children are cared for by staff who have high aspirations for what they can achieve. In this positive environment, children make good progress with their communication. Staff use a range of communication tools, including Makaton, Picture Exchange Communication System and LAMP (a speech-generating device for non-verbal people). These communication tools help children to participate in day-to-day decisions about their lives and to share their feelings and wishes.

Children take part in a range of social activities. They recently joined the national jubilee celebrations with a party at the home. Staff dressed up as the queen and the children enjoyed getting dressed up for the day. They had party food, and photos of the day show that all those involved had lots of fun.

All the children are in full-time specialist education that meets their needs. There are good relationships with education staff, and staff in the home make active contributions to children's education planning meetings.

Twin brothers who have come to live at the home more recently are being cared for in a way which recognises and supports their unique needs. This is helping the children flourish as individuals while providing them with the opportunity to continue to grow up together and maintain these important family relationships.

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

Children's care records and their plans and assessments are written in a way that bring children to life for the adults reading them. The quality of these records mean that staff have all the information they need to understand children's needs, to care for them safely and help them to make progress in their lives.

Staff spend lots of time with children and have warm and nurturing relationships with them. However, children's key workers are not undertaking planned and purposeful one-to-one work with children that addresses the tasks and goals set out in their care plans. As a result, although children make good progress, there is a lack of focus on what needs to happen to support children to develop their skills and become more independent.

One child who is approaching adulthood does not have a pathway plan from his local authority. Another child's looked after review minutes have not been provided in a timely manner. The registered manager has raised these issues with frontline staff in the local authority. However, they have not escalated these issues to more senior managers to ensure that the required documentation is provided. This means that staff do not have all the information they need from local authorities to support children in line with their agreed plans.

Staff only intervene physically to safeguard children when they are at risk of harming themselves or others. Records of these interventions are detailed and clear. Children are given an opportunity to share their feelings after these events through the use of symbols and emojis which capture their experiences. This positive culture contributes to safeguarding children and helps them to build trusting relationships with staff.

Children have a safe and pleasant home environment. Children's bedrooms meet their individual sensory and physical needs. The sensory room and the refurbished back garden, with trampoline and play equipment, provide children with different ways to relax and to burn off energy when needed. The locality risk assessment does not specifically address the appropriateness and suitability of the location of the home for children with autism spectrum conditions and additional complex needs. This has not impacted on children and all the children are cared for safely when out in the community.

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

Staff and children benefit from strong and empathetic leadership and management. The registered manager and assistant manager provide staff with good support and guidance which enables staff to do their jobs effectively.

Staff receive regular practice-related supervision. New staff have regular reviews during their probationary period. When practice issues arise, the registered manager identifies and addresses these swiftly. She provides a proportionate response which keeps children safe and gives staff the guidance and challenge they need to meet expected standards of practice. Staff say this support has helped them to gain confidence in their roles and make a better contribution to the care of children and to the staff team.

Staff are provided with the training they need to understand and meet the needs of children with autism spectrum conditions and additional complex needs. In addition to formal training, new staff are able to learn from working alongside more experienced colleagues in order to build up their skills and knowledge.

There has been a reduction in the use of agency and bank staff as vacancies in the staff team have been filled. For the most part, the same agency and bank staff are used to ensure that children receive consistency from the staff caring for them.

Safer recruitment processes are in place for all staff, including agency and bank staff, to ensure that children are safeguarded.

Senior leaders and managers are strong advocates for children and work proactively with placing authorities. When necessary, senior leaders provide child-centred challenge to local authorities, while maintaining positive professional relationships to make sure children are safeguarded and their needs met.

## 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>In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff—</p> <p>if they consider a placing authority’s or 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 (c))</p> <p>Specifically, the registered person should ensure that concerns about local authority practice are escalated in a timely manner.</p>	31 July 2022
<p>The registered person must review the appropriateness and suitability of the location of the premises used for the purposes of the children’s home at least once in each calendar year taking into account the requirement in regulation 12(2)(c) (the protection of children standard).</p> <p>When conducting the review, the registered person must consult, and take into account the views of, each relevant person. (Regulation 46 (1)(2))</p> <p>Specifically, the registered person should ensure that the review addresses the appropriateness and suitability of the location for children with autism spectrum conditions and additional complex needs.</p>	31 July 2022

### Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that staff understand their roles in progressing children’s care plans through planned and purposeful one-to-one work which is clearly recorded. (‘Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards’, page 52, paragraph 10.5)

## **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:** SC057718

**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:** Joanne Grime

## Inspector

Dawn Parton, Social Care Inspector



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