

SC057718

Registered provider: The Together Trust

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a private children's home registered for up to five children. The home's statement of purpose states that children living in this home may have a range of social and emotional difficulties, physical and learning disabilities.

The home specialises in caring for children with autism spectrum conditions and additional complex needs.

The manager registered with Ofsted in June 2021. She is suitably experienced and qualified.

There were five children living in the home at the time of the inspection. The inspector spoke to or spent time observing all the children during the inspection.

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 October 2024

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: 1 August 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement |
|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| 01/08/2023 | Full | Good |
| 09/06/2022 | Full | Good |
| 24/03/2022 | Interim | Improved effectiveness |
| 21/04/2021 | Full | Requires improvement to be good |

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children benefit from long term placements and have developed positive and trusting relationships with the staff team. Children's social workers and families report that children receive a good level of care and make progress.

Children develop their confidence and use a range of picture exchange communication Systems. Staff use social stories, Makaton and children's other individual communication styles to promote children's confidence in communicating with others. Children's views are listened to and they are supported to share if they are unhappy about their care or the support in place.

Supportive plans are in place when children move into the home. Children come to visit the home and meet other children before moving in. The manager completes an assessment for most new children to determine if they can live together safely with the other children. For one child, the manager did not evidence her written rationale or consideration of children's risks and needs as a group of children.

Children enjoy school. The staff team and teaching staff work together to support children, by sharing effective strategies to help children made progress. Staff help to prepare children for their futures by developing their independence skills. Each child's independence plan is tailored to their capabilities and needs. Consequently, all children make good progress and develop new skills including preparing snacks, shopping and self-care skills. This increases their confidence and self-esteem.

Children's health needs are monitored well and for some their health conditions have improved. The staff team works proactively with speech and language therapists, physiotherapists, paediatrician departments and dieticians to ensure that all children's health needs are met. Children's health conditions are understood by staff. They know the signs and symptoms when children require additional medical support. For one child, although their health needs were managed well, their internal health plan was mostly blank and did not detail all the child's health needs. This required attention, to ensure that monitoring of their health remained consistent.

Children's identities, cultures and religion are respected. Children are supported to have regular family time, so that they can maintain relationships with family members and people that are important to them. The staff team provides additional support and supervision to ensure that children can spend quality and enjoyable time with their families. Children engage in fun and recreational activities in line with their interests and hobbies. Children have positive experiences and memories, which are captured in their memory books.

Children's bedrooms are decorated and personalised nicely. Children are consulted about how they would like their bedroom to be decorated and the things they would like in it.

In communal areas, children have spaces where they can relax, such as a sensory room and a chill out den. The home is appropriately adapted and furnished to support children's physical needs.

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

Children live harmoniously together. They are kind to one another and staff support them to respect each other's space. Positive recognition is prioritised by the staff team and achievements are celebrated.

Staff know how to use the whistleblowing policy should they have any concerns about children's safety. When it has been used, leaders and managers have taken immediate action to prioritise children's safety and to investigate the concerns. There has been a slight delay in the placing authority being notified, with staff failing to raise their concerns that evening with the emergency duty team. Instead, they notified the child's social worker the following morning.

On a separate occasion, a placing authority for one child raised their concerns that there had been a delay in staff reporting an unexplained bruise to the child's social worker. The placing authority have completed their own quality assurance visit and suitable action has now been taken to address any shortfalls in staff understanding of their roles. During the inspection, staff spoken to knew how to monitor, report and record any marks or bruising to children. They also understood their safeguarding responsibilities when monitoring children's well-being relating to any risk behaviour or medical needs.

Restraint is used by staff as a last resort, mostly to prevent children from harming themselves. Staff debriefs are used effectively to review what went well and any changes that could be made to support children. PECS and social stories are used to explore children's feelings and to explain the reasons for staff response to their behaviors. When mechanical restraint is used, such as walking harnesses when out in the community, children are on a risk reduction plan working towards more independence.

Children are supported by staff to make positive choices and to keep themselves safe. This is done through direct work and social stories to address areas such as internet safety, children taking private time and maintaining their own dignity.

The manager ensures that only staff who are safe to work in the home are brought into the team. Children live in a safe home environment, which is monitored well to ensure that they do not come to harm. Fire drills are undertaken with children so that they know how to respond should there be an emergency. However, for some children fire drills have been undertaken a few weeks after they have moved into the home. There should be minimum delay in fire drills being carried out.

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

The manager's oversight of children's risks assessments is not consistent. Some risk assessments do not include up-to-date risk reviews or procedures in place to safeguard

children. An example of this, daily body charts being completed and sent to a child's social worker to monitor any bruising or marks. That said, staff spoken to were clear about the procedures and the social worker confirmed that the records are sent regularly.

Supervision for some staff has not taken place regularly or in line with the home's statement of purpose. In addition, team meetings are infrequent. This is a missed opportunity to frequently reflect on staff professional development, to talk through children's needs or safeguarding matters and staff practice. Additionally, when concerns have been raised by staff about practical tasks in the home these have not been followed up to appropriately resolve the issue. Staff appraisals do not consistently include children's feedback about their relationships with staff. However, staff report that they feel supported both on a professional and personal level by the senior team.

The manager's suitability of the location of the premises assessment does not evidence feedback from children or key agencies. In addition, the assessment has not been updated when new children move into the home.

The independent visitor does not obtain regular feedback from children, staff and their families. Some visits have taken place when children are at school and so the opportunity to obtain children's views of their care is reduced and the visitor is not able to demonstrate full scrutiny of the service. The provider had recognised these shortfalls and planned to take action to improve the system.

The manager recognises the home's strengths and areas for development. She is receptive to constructive feedback and learning opportunities. She has a good understanding of the children, their progress and their needs. The manager advocates on behalf of children and she is a positive role model for both children and staff.

There are some staff vacancies in the team. Some shifts have been covered by the providers own bank staff, who have previously developed relationships with the children. There are sufficient staff in place to be able to provide care to individual children.

Leaders and managers have positive relationships with professionals. However, the manager has not escalated concerns to social workers when key documents are not available. This means that some children's placing authority care plans and personal education plans are not on file.

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 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>understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person;</p> <p>take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and</p> <p>are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(v)(vi)(vii))</p> <p>Specifically, the registered person should ensure that children’s placing authorities are notified without delay in relation to significant safeguarding concerns. This includes the use of the placing authority emergency duty team.</p> | <p>22 November 2024</p> |
| <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> <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>22 November 2024</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>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(f)(h))</p> <p>Specifically, the registered person should ensure that their oversight of children’s risks assessments is consistent, by including up-to-date risk reviews and procedures in place to safeguard children.</p> <p>The registered person should ensure that team meetings re carried out frequently. They should be used to talk about staff professional development, to talk through children’s needs or safeguarding matters and staff practice.</p> | |
| <p>The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which—</p> <p>include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child;</p> <p>are kept up to date; and</p> <p>are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c))</p> <p>The registered person should ensure that they effectively escalate concerns to social workers when key documents are not available.</p> <p>The registered person should ensure that children’s internal health plans detail all the child’s health needs, to ensure that monitoring of their health is consistent.</p> | 22 November 2024 |
| <p>The registered person must ensure that all employees—</p> <p>receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(b))</p> | 22 November 2024 |

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the home complies with relevant health and safety legislations. Specifically, there should be minimum delay in fire drills being carried out when children move into the home. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that the views of the children and other professionals when completing appraisals with staff. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.5)
- The registered person should ensure that under regulation 46, they review the appropriateness and suitability of the location and premises of the home at least once a year. The review should include the identification of any risks and opportunities presented by the home's location and strategies for managing these. Providers should refer to the non-statutory advice about the location assessment process. Specifically, it should include evidence of feedback from children or key agencies. In addition, the assessment should be updated when new children move into the home. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.1)
- The registered person should ensure that any individual appointed to carry out visits to the home as an independent person makes a rigorous and impartial assessment of the home's arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children in the home's care. Specifically, the independent person should obtain regular feedback from children, staff and their families to ensure that there is full scrutiny of the service. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.5)

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

Inspectors

Cheryl Field, Social Care Inspector
Nicola Forrester, Social Care Inspector

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