

# SC447645

Registered provider: Unity Residential Care Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

A private provider operates this home. The home provides care for up to four children who have experienced childhood instability that results in trauma and associated complex behaviours.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

A manager is in post, but they are not registered with Ofsted. An application to register has been received.

### Inspection dates: 30 November and 1 December 2021

|                                                                                           |             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| <b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account</b> | <b>good</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|

|                                                             |      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 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:** 29 October 2019

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

### Enforcement action since last inspection:

Due to concerns raised about the safety of children, a monitoring visit was carried out on 23 July 2020. As a result of this, Ofsted undertook higher enforcement action

due to concerns about the safety of children and the leadership and management of the home.

Following these concerns, Ofsted undertook six further monitoring visits, and one assurance visit, with the last visit taking place in April 2021. During this visit, there were no children living at the home.

The provider informed Ofsted on 10 May 2021 that the existing manager and staff team would be redeployed to other homes within the company and a manager and a team of staff who currently work at one of their other homes would be transferred to this home.

Ofsted acknowledged the impending changes and did not continue with enforcement action. On 21 May 2021, three children and the new manager and staff team moved into the home.

## Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement      |
|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| 29/10/2019      | Full            | Good                      |
| 19/02/2019      | Full            | Good                      |
| 10/01/2018      | Full            | Good                      |
| 22/03/2017      | Interim         | Declined in effectiveness |

## Inspection judgements

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

On 21 May 2021, three children moved into the home. Children were actively involved in the planning for their transition into the home and the move went well. There were opportunities to visit the home beforehand and the children chose how they wanted their rooms to be personalised. To support one child, staff took their favourite character to the home and took photos of the character in various places. This child-centred practice provided the child with visual representations of the home. As a result of this practice, children have invested into their new home and behaviours such as damaging property have reduced.

Managers and staff have trusting relationships with children. Staff are child-centred and caring towards the children. Children told the inspector they feel safe and happy. One child said to the inspector that 'staff really care about me'. The strong relationships between children and staff have had a positive effect on the children's identity and has provided them with a sense of belonging.

Staff have a thorough understanding of the individual needs of the children. Good-quality risk assessments and plans provide staff with information on how to support the children. Children are involved in their plans and share their views about approaches that help them. Staff consider the views of children, and this ensures that children are supported in ways that are most effective for them. This has led to a low number of incidents at the home.

All the children are making excellent progress with their education. For two children, a tutor was put in place over the summer to support them in their transition to full-time education. Prior to living at the home, their attendance was extremely low, but they are now attending on a full-time basis. Another child attends an agricultural college as part of their education. This is an area of interest for this child and has motivated him to pursue a career in this area. Staff and managers have high expectations for children, and this is a motivating factor that helps children to believe in themselves.

The health needs of children are well met. Staff support children to attend appointments and complete key-work sessions to help children explore any worries they have relating to these. Staff help children who have previously had their health needs neglected to get the treatment they need; for example, one child required extensive dental work, which has now been completed. Staff worked closely with the child to enable them to attend the many appointments for treatment. This approach has improved the health and well-being of children.

Staff and managers support the children to maintain relationships with important people in their lives. Managers forward plan for significant events, such as Christmas, and are proactive in making plans for the children to spend time with others. When there are concerns, the manager works with the local authority to

ensure that plans are in place to minimise risk, so that children are able to enjoy time with their families safely, which promotes their sense of identity.

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

Staff have a clear understanding of the risks to children and use strategies that consider their individual needs. Managers ensure that the home's therapeutic model is embedded within staff's practice. Managers and staff work closely with a therapist to consider the best approach for each child. As a result, staff provide children with consistent and individualised care that gives them a secure base.

Staff complete key-work sessions with children to a high standard. This work links to children's care plans and is creative and child-centred. Sessions are both planned and unplanned, and staff use them well to support the children to develop their knowledge. For example, a staff member created a wishes and feelings game to ensure that children were able to express their views in an informal and enjoyable way. The work completed with the children supports them to manage their feelings and behaviours in a more positive way.

The strong and caring relationships between staff and children have meant that children feel supported when they are experiencing distress and that staff are able to use verbal de-escalation strategies effectively to help children to manage their emotions. As a result, there has been a decrease in the use of physical intervention since the children moved into the home.

Staff and managers respond to safeguarding concerns effectively and take all necessary steps to protect children. Managers are thorough in their response and this has included debriefs and detailed key-work sessions with the children to ensure that they feel supported. When necessary, managers have escalated their concerns and worked closely with safeguarding partners; for example, when there were concerns about the risk to children, staff worked with wider agencies including the local authority and police. This ensured that all agencies worked jointly to ensure that the decisions made safeguarded the children.

The manager has not ensured that the recruitment agency commissioned to provide agency workers to the home have safely recruited staff. The manager has addressed this with the recruitment agency who are reviewing their processes.

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

There have been significant changes to the leadership and management of the home since the last monitoring visit. A new manager and staff team moved into the home on 21 May 2021.

The current manager places the children at the centre of their decision-making. She has high expectations for children and advocates for them to ensure that they are provided with support that meets their individual needs. For example, when she disagreed with a decision made about a child's school placement, she advocated for

a provision that was more suited to the needs of the child. During this time, she worked closely with virtual schools who commented that 'really moving results for children had been achieved' and it was 'a perfect example of multi-disciplinary work at its very best'. Through this dedicated approach, children are encouraged to believe in themselves and what they can achieve.

The manager scrutinises the children's records to track their progress and identify patterns and behaviours. When concerns arise, the manager reviews the child's plans of care and, when necessary, escalates her concerns to the placing authority. For example, the manager was able to identify that having contact with particular people was a negative experience for the child. The manager escalated these concerns to the child's placing authority and, as a result, a revised plan was put in place.

There are a number of thorough monitoring tools in place that provide the manager with a good understanding of the service and where improvements are needed. The manager is open to feedback and is keen to ensure that herself and her team provide children with a high level of care. The manager recognises the strengths and areas of development of the home and strives to provide the children with positive life experiences.

Managers and staff value the views of children and use them to inform the development of the service. Following children's meetings or the use of the wishes and feelings game, the manager writes a response to each individual child. This helps children to feel comfortable in sharing their wishes and feelings and that the manager will respond to them.

The manager considers the individual needs of the children and arranges training to make sure that staff have the appropriate skills and knowledge to care for the children. Staff also receive good-quality supervision that are regular, child-centred and consider staff and their personal and developmental needs. Team meetings and workshops complement supervision. Through these, staff are provided with evidence-based information that supports them in completing their role to a high standard. As a result, children are cared for by a knowledgeable and skilled staff team.

## 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 registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety.</p> <p>The registered person may only—</p> <p>employ an individual to work at the children's home; or</p> <p>if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home,</p> <p>if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3).</p> <p>The requirements are that—</p> <p>full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation (32) (1) (2)(a)(b) (3)(d))</p> <p>In particular, the manager is to ensure that recruitment agencies undertake checks that are compliant with safer recruitment.</p> | 21 January 2021 |

## 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:** SC447645

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

**Registered provider:** Unity Residential Care Services Limited

**Registered provider address:** 2, Lymevale Court, Lyme Drive, Parklands, Stoke-on-Trent ST4 6NW

**Responsible individual:** Hilary Jones

**Registered manager:** Post vacant

## Inspector

Melanie Griffin, Social Care Inspector

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