

SC447645

Registered provider: Unity Residential Care Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is privately operated and provides care for up to four children who have experienced childhood instability that has resulted in trauma and associated complex behaviours.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since December 2021 and is suitably qualified.

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 March 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 4 January 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
04/01/2023	Full	Good
30/11/2021	Full	Good
29/10/2019	Full	Good
19/02/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

There are four children living in the home. Two of the children have lived in the home for over two years. Since the last inspection, two children have moved into the home, and two children have moved on from the home.

Children receive consistently high levels of care and support. A strength of the home is the positive relationships that exist between children and staff. The children develop a sense of belonging and have a range of positive experiences while living in the home. As a result, children are nurtured and feel safe. Children say they like the staff and have adults they can talk to if they have any worries.

Children benefit from living in a comfortable, spacious and well-maintained environment. The home is warm and has a homely atmosphere. There is a games room with a pool table and games console where children can relax and have fun. Children's bedrooms are personalised to their own individual tastes.

Staff support children to access education that is appropriate to meet their needs. Most children are in education, and their attendance is improving. When children are not in education or have difficulties attending school, staff work closely with education professionals to ensure that bespoke plans are put in place so that children still have access to learning. This supports children's educational progress. The feedback from the children's teachers was excellent. One teacher said, 'What they do for [name of child] is brilliant. There is clear communication. They worked well with the new school. They are a real source of stability for him. They have been excellent.'

Staff make sure that children can enjoy a range of activities, both inside and outside the home. Ensuring that children have fun is integral to their daily routines.

Staff meet children's health needs and advocate well for them to ensure that they receive the relevant specialist support when required.

Children are involved in the day-to-day running of the home through key work sessions, children's meetings and general conversations with staff. Children feel that staff listen to them.

Staff support children to see people who are important to them. Family and friends are encouraged to visit children in the home regularly. This supports children's identity and contributes positively to their life story.

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

Children say that they feel safe. Staff ensure that children are safeguarded effectively. Children are looked after by staff who know them well. Staff use their

experience and knowledge of the children, as well as following their clear behaviour support plans, to keep them safe. As a result, children become increasingly safe.

When safeguarding concerns are identified, they are quickly reported in line with safeguarding procedures. There is good communication between staff and social workers, who receive regular updates about children. When risks increase and incidents do occur, there is prompt communication with other agencies to support children and reduce risks.

Staff take prompt and appropriate action when children go missing from home. Staff follow missing-from-home procedures to ensure that children are quickly located. Staff support children to understand the risks of going missing and to know how to keep themselves safe. When risks increase, multi-agency meetings are held to support children to stay safe and reduce missing-from-home incidents and associated exploitation risks.

The manager takes appropriate action when there are complaints or allegations. She promptly informs the relevant professionals, including the local authority designated officer. Children are kept informed of any outcomes of their complaints and allegations. This ensures that children feel confident to raise concerns. It also helps them to feel safe and secure in their environment.

Physical interventions are only used when necessary. These are proportionate and only used to keep children and others safe. However, it is not clear if staff are always spoken to following an intervention. This is a shortfall because it has an impact on the manager's ability to review the incident effectively.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is managed by an ambitious and inspirational leader. She leads by example. She has high aspirations for children and will go above and beyond to keep them safe and help them to reach their potential. This leadership inspires staff to provide good-quality care. The manager has created a culture that places children at the centre of practice. She has an excellent knowledge of the children's starting points and what they have accomplished since coming to live in the home.

There is a stable, experienced and qualified workforce in place. This supports children to receive consistent care from staff who know them well. This gives children a sense of security and safety.

Staff morale is high. Staff say that they feel very well supported by the manager and that they enjoy working in the home. One member of staff said, 'Our manager goes above and beyond for our children and staff. She is approachable, hardworking and appreciative of how hard we work in the home.' Another said, '[Name of manager] is truly dedicated to our children. She cares for them like her own and is a true role model for us all.'

Staff receive regular, practice-related supervision and annual appraisals. Team meetings are reflective, and there is frequent use of workshops to upskill staff on topics such as nutrition, gangs and criminal exploitation, and professional boundaries. Training is also comprehensive and supports staff to meet children's needs.

While the manager has a good understanding of the home's strengths and areas for development, her oversight at times has been inconsistent. The monitoring systems have not always been effective in identifying shortfalls in case records. In addition, the manager has not completed her six-monthly review of the quality of care within the time frame stipulated in the regulations, nor has she forwarded this to Ofsted. This influences the manager's ability to understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of children. Leaders and managers have recognised this shortfall, and a new management structure has been developed to improve management oversight.

The manager will usually inform Ofsted when there are safeguarding concerns. However, on two occasions, the manager failed to notify Ofsted about safeguarding incidents. There has also been a delay in the manager submitting some notifications. While this has minimal impact on children, it does mean that the regulator may not have all the relevant, up-to-date information to understand what is happening in the home.

Staff and managers work closely with a wide range of professionals so that children receive well-coordinated care. The manager will challenge those who are not meeting children's needs, or when she feels decisions are not in the best interests of children. Feedback from professionals is consistently good. They are positive about the care children receive, and the progress that children make, while living in the home.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person 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
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— 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; 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; and 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)) This specifically relates to the manager ensuring that there is consistent management oversight and effective monitoring systems in place. In addition, that the manager must complete the six-monthly reviews of the quality of care within the time frame, ensuring that these are forwarded to Ofsted.	10 May 2024
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation;	10 May 2024

an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious;

there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there;

a child protection enquiry involving a child —

is instigated; or

concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry); or

there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious.

A notification made under this regulation—

must include details of—

the matter;

the other persons, bodies or organisations (if any) who or which have been notified; and

any actions taken by the registered person as a result of the matter.

must be made or confirmed in writing.

(Regulation 40 (4)(a)(b)(c)(d)(i)(ii)(e) (5)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(b))

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that records of restraint enable them and staff to review the use of control, discipline and restraint to identify effective practice and respond promptly where any issues or trends of concern emerge. The registered person should ensure that within 48 hours of the use of the measure, they have spoken to the staff about the measure, and that this is recorded. The review should provide the opportunity for amending practice to ensure it meets the needs of each child. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.59)

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: Sarah Knapper

Registered manager: Helen Thay

Inspector

Sonia Sullivan, Social Care Inspector

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