

1027158

Registered provider: Unique Care Homes Support Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is one of three children's homes run by a private organisation which also operates a school. The home provides accommodation for up to six children who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 18 to 19 May 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **requires improvement to be good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers requires improvement to be good

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: 23 March 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home requires improvement to be good because

- A number of the shortfalls identified are due to changes to the management team and the impact of a number of staff leaving.
- The quality of care has declined, although there are no immediate risks to children's welfare or safety.
- The leadership and management of the home fail to uphold the ethos of the home as outlined in the statement of purpose.
- There have been significant changes to the staff team. The registered manager, deputy manager and four other staff have left the home. This has led to some shifts without enough experienced qualified staff on duty.
- The assessment of the impact of new admissions does not consider the risks, historical behaviours and proposed group dynamics effectively.
- There is a lack of consistency and organisation in the safe recruitment processes.
- Monitoring is poor. The independent visitor's reports and the manager's review of care fail to meet regulatory requirements. This is an ongoing shortfall.
- The home has not notified Ofsted about one serious incident.

The children's home's strengths

- The children are all attending education and making good progress towards their education targets, which promotes their future life chances.
- Children are encouraged to contribute to the running of the home and to participate in the weekly house meetings.
- The safeguarding arrangements are embedded and established in practice.
- When children go missing, every effort is made to try to find them and return them to the home as safely and as quickly as possible. Joint protocols are in place and are followed effectively.
- There is a new manager in post and she has the support of a mentor. The manager and registered individual are fully aware of the identified shortfalls.
- Efforts are being made by the senior managers to address the identified shortfalls without delay.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
23/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
24/11/2016	Full	Good
06/01/2016	Full	Good

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 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. (Regulation 12(2)(a)(i))</p> <p>In particular, implement robust impact risk assessments that consider group dynamics and risks of influential behaviours and risks pertinent to each child.</p>	02/06/2017
<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 helps children aspire to fulfil their potential and 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. (Regulation 13(1)(a)(b)(2)(a))</p>	02/06/2017
<p>The registered person must ensure that an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification, the level 3 diploma for residential childcare (England) ('the level 3 diploma'), or a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the level 3 diploma, by the relevant date. (Regulation 32(4)(a)(b)(5)(a)(b))</p>	02/06/2017
<p>The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40(4)(b))</p>	02/06/2017
<p>When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the</p>	02/06/2017

registered person must help the independent person, if they consent, to interview in private such of the children, their parents, and relatives, as the independent person requires. (Regulation 44(2)(a))	
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ('a quality of care review') at least once every six months. (Regulation 45(1))	02/07/2017

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further, the service should take account of the following recommendations:

- As set out in regulations 31–33, the registered person is responsible for maintaining good employment practice. They must ensure that recruitment, supervision and performance management of staff safeguards children and minimises potential risks to them. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)

Inspection judgements

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

The impact of the home and the care provided to the children placed are variable. There are some positive outcomes. The children all attend education and two of the children have prospective further education places, having achieved core subject entry level qualifications in English and maths.

The children spoke about the support from staff and the impact of the recent changes. These changes have left the children feeling unstable. There have been changes in the key staff team and a new child has been admitted. The children have formed a cohesive group with each other, as opposed to investing in relationships with the staff. There are some positive relationships, which the staff are developing. Children's reactions and behaviours influence each other. There has been a number of serious behavioural incidents involving several of the children. These incidents have included assaults on the staff, damage to property, damage to the home's vehicle and children barricading themselves away from the staff. The staff try to de-escalate situations and minimise risk but the police have been called on a number of occasions. They have talked to the children and defused matters.

The staff facilitate and support school attendance and this has been successful for all of the children. All of the social workers report that this is working well. The children have a structure and purpose to each day. After-school and weekend activities are provided. The children enjoy a range of clubs, trips, outings and sports. It is after these activities that the behavioural problems arise, resulting in late nights, risk-taking behaviours and generally being unsettled.

Transition from the home is managed well. One child has been reunified with their family,

having lived at the home for a year. A leaving meal was enjoyed by the staff and the children. The plans are in place for further education and the child has a part-time summer job arranged. Another transition is being planned well. However, the last admission to the home was poorly planned and badly orchestrated. This resulted in a child being involved in a prolonged behavioural incident, two days after admission, with the other children.

Children rarely misuse substances, despite this being problematic before. Some children smoke, although the staff are working preventatively to help them to reduce this. One child said that being at the home has helped her to reduce risk-taking behaviours that were present prior to her admission.

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

The risks that are pertinent to each child are identified in the individual safety plans. The staff update these plans following any risky incidents. However, the impact assessments for proposed admissions are ineffective. Two of the impact assessments state that there are no risks, despite risks such as substance misuse and going missing being known prior to admission. Information in the assessments is scant and there is evidence that information has been pasted from one child's assessment to the other with little adaptation. This does not provide for robust or accurate assessment of risks to children coming into the home or the potential impact on the existing children placed at the home.

A failure to use consequences consistently in response to negative behaviour has been identified by the acting manager. This has been discussed in a recent team meeting and a clear plan is in place to change this. This has not been raised as a stand-alone shortfall but is linked to the concerns about the leadership of the home. In some cases, staff have imposed consequences that are not linked reasonably to the event. The manager is aware of this and has introduced a more realistic approach to introducing and reinforcing safe boundaries. The manager reminds staff to put appropriate consequences in place in response to unacceptable behaviour. This is likely to help children to learn from their actions.

The children at the home are not at direct risk of child sexual exploitation. The home works with several preventative partnership organisations to support and educate children about such risks and risk reduction strategies. Staff are knowledgeable about the potential risks and symptomatic behaviours and they remain vigilant.

There have been no allegations about the staff and no child protection referrals have been made since the last inspection. The new manager understands what to do in the event that allegations are made. She understands the role of the designated officer and how the home's safeguarding policy works. This means that allegations and referrals are likely to be managed in accordance with the correct protocols to safeguard children.

The use of physical restraint is minimal. When restraint has been used, it is by trained staff using appropriate techniques. The manager has reviewed and signed the records of

these incidents. All of the staff involved in an incident check the record for accuracy, sign the record and include the child's views. This provides a clear account of the incident and the action taken.

There has been a high number of incidents of children leaving the home together, unauthorised, for relatively short periods. Staff have responded appropriately and they have actively looked for children to aid their safe return. The home's missing from home protocols have been followed on each occasion. The records provide a chronology of the actions taken. The children regularly leave the home as a group. The home has become an unstable environment and recent changes to the staff team have exacerbated this. Children have lost key staff members, one child has left the home and one child has been admitted. Children who have experienced instability previously are finding these changes unsettling.

A big recruitment drive is part way through. Recruitment of new staff includes safe recruitment checks. The recruitment processes are not sufficiently robust or in line with best practice. References are not consistently verified prior to the staff starting work. This means that information pertinent to their suitability may not be identified.

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

Significant changes to the management team have left the home with a number of shortfalls under leadership and management. The registered manager and deputy manager have left the home in quick succession. The responsible individual has acted promptly and appointed another member of staff as the manager. However, the changeover period has resulted in ineffective monitoring and management oversight. The home has taken a new admission without receipt of all of the supporting paperwork and without a robust risk assessment. This does not provide good management and oversight of the home and does not support the home's statement of purpose.

A number of staff have left for various reasons. Therefore, the existing staff have worked extra shifts and have become tired. A number of the staff are new and inexperienced. There are two shifts recorded on the rota for May 2016 that do not have a balance of experienced or qualified staff in the home. On one shift, a member of staff who is in their probationary period, supported by two bank staff, ran the home. On another shift, on the day following a new admission to the home, there were three unqualified staff, one of whom was bank staff. This does not provide proper or adequate support for five children.

The new manager has reviewed and signed the home's records of incidents. However, there has been no review of the care undertaken for the period between October 2016 and March 2017. Additionally, despite being raised as a shortfall at the last inspection, the independent visitor has not gained the views of stakeholders or parents to inform the external monitoring reports.

Notifiable events are usually sent in to Ofsted and the records include enough detail and context. However, the incident reports show that, on one occasion, despite children being missing in the early hours of the morning and the police being involved, Ofsted was not

notified. This prevents Ofsted from having a clear picture of events in the home.

The reports and communications sent to children's social workers have been affected by staff changes. All of the social workers spoken to say that the home lets them know about incidents and anything of significance. However, three social workers were not aware that the registered manager had left, and reports on children's general progress have become intermittent. This does not enable social workers to monitor whether the home is successful in improving the outcomes for the children. This is related to poor management and oversight of the home.

New staff are inducted to their roles, given training and regular supervision. Morale has recently improved. A recruitment drive has been successful and a number of new staff have been appointed.

The home has not received any complaints since the last inspection.

The quality of care in this home has declined following a number of staff changes. This is being addressed. Plans to appoint and recruit staff are under way. The new manager is in post and making every attempt to ensure that the home runs smoothly. Another registered manager has been appointed as a mentor to the new manager. The responsible individual is spending two days a week in the home. The home has no plans to take any new admissions. The organisation has confirmed that they will settle the home and address the identified concerns before accepting any more placements.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: 1027158

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Unique Care Homes Support Limited

Registered provider address: Holland House, 1-5 Oakfield, Sale, Cheshire M33 6TT

Responsible individual: Joanne Murray

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Deirdra Keating, social care inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence>, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

© Crown copyright 2017