

1249326

Registered provider: Unity Residential Care Services

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home may only provide care and accommodation for up to 3 children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home is owned by a private provider.

Inspection dates: 5 to 6 July 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: Not applicable

Overall judgement at last inspection: Not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection

Not applicable

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home requires improvement to be good because:

- Young people do not make progress educationally. Young people do not attend education regularly and staff do not provide educational work for young people.
- Young people do not benefit from a stable and consistent staff team.
- Young people's health needs are not consistently met.
- Young people's risk assessments do not fully identify the risks.
- Management oversight is not good enough.
- Behaviour management is weak in respect of sanctions and the recording of physical interventions.
- Safeguarding professionals have not been notified about all allegations.
- Staff do not benefit from consistent supervision.

The children's home's strengths:

- Young people have independent advocates.
- Young people say they are happy and feel safe.
- The responsible individual is aware of the shortfalls. She is providing additional management support.

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
The children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who help each child to understand how the child's views, wishes and feelings have been taken into account and give the child reasons for decisions in relation to the child. (Regulation 7 (2) (a) (iii))	10/08/2017
<p>The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff—</p> <p>help a child who is excluded from school, or who is of compulsory school age but not attending school, to access educational and training support throughout the period of exclusion or non-attendance and to return to school as soon as possible. (Regulation 8 (2) (a) (viii))</p>	10/08/2017
<p>The health and well-being standard is that staff help children to understand and develop skills to promote the child's well-being. (Regulation 10 (2) (iv))</p> <p>In particular, staff should help young people to find other ways to manage emotions other than self-harm.</p>	10/08/2017
<p>The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from relationships.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff—</p> <p>help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone. (Regulation 11 (2) (a) (iv))</p>	10/08/2017

<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 that staff—</p> <p>understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person. (Regulation 12 (1) and (2) (a) (v))</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 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;</p> <p>ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child;</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>demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received;</p> <p>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1) and (2) (a) (e) (g) (ii) (h))</p>	10/08/2017
<p>The registered person must ensure that all employees receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33(4)(b))</p>	10/08/2017
<p>The registered person must ensure that within 48 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person") has spoken to the user about the measure. (Regulation 35 (3) (b) (i))</p>	10/08/2017

The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there. (Regulation 40 (4) (c)).

10/08/2017

Inspection judgements

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

This is the first inspection since the home was registered in February 2017. There have been four young people who have moved into the home. One of the young people moved out to another of the provider's homes.

The quality of individualised care and young people's progress and experiences vary. Some young people are making progress, others do not fully engage in the daily routines of the home. There has been a period of unsettled behaviours between young people, where they have threatened and assaulted each other. This has now settled down and young people are enjoying reasonable relationships with each other. Staff recognise the areas for development within the team and are committed to improving the experiences and well-being of the young people in their care. A placing social worker considers that, 'The young person is safe but has not made any progress living in the home.'

Young people generally have positive relationships with staff. Some young people are happy in the home whereas others would like to live closer to their own family. One young person has secured an independent advocate to ensure that she is able to stay in the home long-term.

Young people's attendance and engagement in education is variable. There has been a nine-week delay in securing education provision for one young person. Whereas for another young person a school was challenged effectively when they refused a young person's enrolment. Some staff promote and encourage young people to attend education in a proactive manner. However, this is not consistent across the staff team and has resulted in young people being late for school or not attending at all. For those young people who refuse to attend education, staff do not engage them sufficiently in undertaking educational work. One young person has made significant progress in education following a sustained period of absence. The lack of education for some young people affects their future education and career prospects.

Young people's health needs are not consistently met. Young people have access to all primary health services. Staff are unable to motivate some young people to engage with health services who can support their emotional and physical well-being, including those seeking to reduce young people's reliance on self-harm. As a result, incidents of young people self-harming has increased. This lack of engagement does not help or encourage young people to understand their behaviours and make progress in their lives.

Young people's views are not fully embedded in the day-to-day running of the home. Young people's wishes and feelings are heard but are not always acted upon. There is no feedback given to young people in respect of their requests or concerns. For example, a young person requested to see 'Charlie the dog'. It is unclear if this happened or not. Consequently, this does not give young people a level of control over their lives to help raise their self-efficacy.

Young people enjoy a range of activities, either with staff or on their own. They enjoy feeding the two donkeys who live opposite the home. A basketball hoop has been fitted to the home that encourages one young person's love of basketball. Young people attend groups that will help them socialise with their peers. This improves young people's self-esteem and confidence while making and sustaining friendships.

Young people maintain links with their families in accordance with their care plans. Staff facilitate and supervise young people's time with their families even if they live a considerable distance away. This ensures that young people are not isolated from their families and gives them a sense of identity.

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

Since the home was registered, some young people have assaulted staff and each other. Staff spoken to during the inspection say that challenges from young people's behaviour is improving and aggressive outbursts are reducing. Young people themselves acknowledge that there have been some issues but, 'Things are a lot better now.' However, this settled behaviour is not due to staff input but rather young people learning to live with each other.

There has been a reduction in young people going missing. When they do go missing staff are proactive in finding them and reporting them missing to the police if necessary. Due to the swift response from staff, young people have only been missing for a short period of time.

Risk assessments are generic and do not fully assess whether each young person is at risk of harm or take into account information in other plans. For example, whether young people are at risk of child sexual exploitation is not considered when admitting a new young person. In addition, risk assessments do not outline strategies to help reduce the risk of harm to young people.

Staff do not engage young people in key-work sessions after the need for them has been identified following incidents. Physical restraint is sometimes used in order to keep staff and young people safe. Records of these incidents are not comprehensive. Specifically, follow-up work is not always undertaken with those involved to ensure that a full debrief is undertaken. This limits the oversight managers have to make sure that young people are safe. This means that young people do not benefit from consistent boundaries that promote their safety and welfare.

Staff do not always follow safeguarding procedures when young people make allegations. Safeguarding professionals and Ofsted are not always notified. This does not allow for independent oversight and for the regulatory body to have a sufficient overview of staff practice. As a result, young people's safety is not promoted.

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

The home is managed by an appropriately qualified and experienced registered manager. The registered manager was not present during this inspection. Management oversight is not good enough. There is a lack of aspirational leadership for young people. The registered manager does not routinely act on young people's wishes and feelings, and there is a lack of learning from incidents.

The registered manager has not used the home's monitoring systems to ensure that the quality of care young people receive is regularly reviewed. As a result, the experiences and progress for some young people do not improve.

The staff team has not remained stable since the home's registration. This has resulted in an inconsistent staff group caring for young people. The service does not have sufficient staff to meet young people's needs. A young person explained, 'Different staff affect me, and all of us when you have new people looking after you.' Some of the staff are appropriately qualified. Those who are unqualified are within regulatory timescales to obtain their qualification. Overall, managers and staff have good working relationships with other professionals, and will generally advocate and challenge in young people's best interests.

Professional supervision of staff is not regular and young people's progress is not vigorously discussed. These arrangements impact on the manager's ability to make sure that young people are safe, to monitor their progress and to check staff performance.

Due to the registered manager's absence during the inspection it is unclear if she was fully aware of the shortfalls in the home. However, the responsible individual has provided additional management support to the registered manager to help improve the quality of care for young people.

The registered manager has developed relationships with professionals from a wide range of agencies including, education, police, social care and health. In the main, she offers robust challenge when the responses from other services are not effective. This helps young people to get the support that they need.

As a result of the shortfalls found in this inspection the manager is not meeting the aims and objectives outlined in the home's statement of purpose.

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 differences 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: 1249326

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Unity Residential Care Services

Registered provider address: Unity Residential Care Services Ltd, 98 Lancaster Road, Newcastle Under Lyme ST5 1DS

Responsible individual: Hilary Jones

Registered manager: Susan Weston

Inspector

Sandra King, 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