

SC431228

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 operated by a private company, and is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to six children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 18 to 19 July 2017

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 **good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 21 March 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- Children make good progress in their education.
- The stable, dedicated staff team knows and understands the individual needs of the children.

- The children enjoy a wide variety of interesting activities, both at the home and in the community.
- Staff understand the importance of and facilitate contact for children with their families.
- Staff set consistent boundaries and challenge unwanted behaviours.
- The children's achievements are recognised and praised.
- Staff support children to develop good age-appropriate independence skills.

The children's home's areas for development:

- Children have good placement plans, but they do not comment or sign to say that they have had input into the plans or understand and agree with them.
- The manager has updated the home's statement of purpose. However, the revised statement has not been submitted to Ofsted.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
06/07/2016	Full	Good
27/01/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
10/11/2015	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 care planning standard is that children receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (2) requires the registered person to ensure that staff help each child to access and contribute to the records kept by the registered person in relation to the child. (Regulation 14 (2)(f))</p>	15/09/2017
The registered person must notify HMCI of any revisions to the statement of purpose and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16 (3)(b))	18/08/2017

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children have built good, trusting relationships with the dedicated staff. The children make good progress at this home because staff support them to achieve. Many of the children have experienced very unsettled pasts and can present with challenging behaviour. Professionals and parents spoken with all commented that they are surprised and very happy with how well the children have settled. A social worker said, 'He [child] really likes it there. He wants to stay as he knows the staff won't give up on him.'

Professionals describe their relationship with the home as excellent. A social worker said, 'I have a very positive working relationship with the home. Staff are very approachable. The home works well with me.' A teacher said, 'Well organised placement. The home works in partnership to facilitate educational needs. They attend meetings, and communication is of a high standard.'

The staff recognise the children's achievements and praise them openly. Good behaviour and achievements earn rewards through the home's incentive scheme, which all of the children respond well to. One of the children has a love of Lego, and is very skilled at building intricate designs. The staff actively encourage the child's hobby. The home's

maintenance person has built a big display area in the child's bedroom for him. When the child achieves at school and/or at the home, he receives a reward which enables him to add further to his collection.

The children's achievements and progress in education are a strength of the home. Many of the children were not attending school regularly prior to moving into the home. All of the children now attend school or college, and they are making good progress. A teacher said, 'He [child] was struggling socially and emotionally and was not attending school. He has attended full-time since arriving at the home and is doing extremely well. This is a result of being settled and happy. Very good home.'

The home employs a sports coach and benefits from having a pool and table tennis room on site. One of the children has chosen to join the local community table tennis club after discovering a love for the game. All of the children have access to a wide range of activities and social opportunities in the local community. On admission, many of the children lacked confidence in their sporting abilities. Now, the majority attend the local gym regularly and/or play for community football clubs. The children have gained a sense of achievement as they undertake fun, healthy activities which build self-confidence.

The children are supported to develop their independence in line with their age, understanding and ability. Their key workers spend time with them individually to help them to recognise areas in which to make progress using a 'good lives' model plan. This pathway plan encourages the children to develop essential life skills such as learning to budget and cook. One of the older children is now able to shop for and prepare all of his own meals independently. This has considerably increased both his confidence and practical skills. A social worker said, 'He [child] has come a long way, and been given many opportunities. His self-care skills have really improved, and he is more open in his demeanour.'

Staff understand the importance of maintaining contact for the children and their families. The staff work closely with parents and social workers to support contact in line with the children's care plans. A parent said, 'The home promotes contact. They provide transport, and even help me attend meetings when I need support with this.'

All of the children have good-quality individual placement plans. The plans are detailed, and support the staff to work with the children on all aspects of their lives. However, the children do not comment on or sign these plans. This does not show that they have had input to or understand and agree with their plans.

The staff work in partnership with families and professionals to ensure that transitions are well planned. A recently admitted child visited the home several times prior to moving in. This enabled him to familiarise himself with staff and the other children. The child's social worker said, 'The home provided a very smooth transition by arranging phased visits. I am very happy with the manager's interaction with [child's name] and his family. They also gave him the opportunity to personalise his bedroom before moving in.' The home accepts emergency admissions, and two children have been admitted in

emergency situations. The manager has met a recommendation set at the last inspection by ensuring that impact risk assessments are completed prior to any emergency admission. This reduces potential risks to the children who are already in placement.

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

The home provides a settled and nurturing environment for the children. Staff respond in a consistent manner, and they challenge unsafe behaviours and reinforce boundaries. Staff spend time with the children in key-working sessions to help them understand past behaviours that may hinder the children's progress. A social worker said, 'His [child's] biggest struggle was adhering to rules and boundaries. His behaviour has improved since being at this home. Incidents have decreased and he is making good progress socially and emotionally. This is due to staff being positive role models.' A parent said, 'It is a good home. They have achieved much more than I thought was possible. His [child's] behaviour has calmed. They [staff] are able to put in place boundaries. His behaviour has stabilised, he is no longer getting into trouble with the police.'

During the inspection, it was evident that the children have developed good, trusting relationships with the staff. All of the children benefit from spending quality one-to-one time with staff. Children spoken with said that they feel safe living at the home. A child said, 'I'm happy here, and I like the other boys. I am safe, and the staff are very friendly.' Another child said, 'I like living here. I really like my key workers very much, and all the staff keep me safe.'

Since the last inspection, there have been no incidents of children going missing from the home. This is a significant improvement. The staff have worked well with the children at times of emotional upset to achieve this reduction. Each child has a detailed missing-from-home risk assessment, and the home has an updated missing person policy. This ensures that all of the new staff are aware of the procedures to follow should an incident occur.

A shortfall highlighted at the last inspection related to the physical intervention records lacking detail. The manager has met the recommendation for improvement. There have been two incidents requiring physical intervention since the last inspection, and both of the records are very detailed. The records provide an account of presenting behaviour, steps taken to de-escalate, and a discussion with the child afterwards to gain their views. This enables the manager and staff to reflect fully on the incident, and aids them to identify alternative approaches to reduce the number of incidents in the future.

Children receive rewards for positive behaviour and sanctions are applied for negative behaviour. The manager and staff regularly explore implementing alternative reparation measures to avoid sanctions which involve a fine. This has resulted in children learning how to regulate impulsive behaviour. For example, one of the children, when angry, often punched holes in the walls. Staff suggested that as an alternative to a monetary fine he assisted staff with the re-plastering of the wall. The child accepted this offer, and since taking part in repairing the wall the child has successfully refrained from repeating such behaviour.

There has been one safeguarding incident since the last inspection. This relates to the practice of a member of staff while working at a different establishment. A review of the investigation, which has not yet concluded, demonstrates that the manager has been proactive in addressing the matter. The local authority designated officer said, 'I have had no concerns. The manager refers appropriately, follows procedure and communicates well with other agencies.'

Staff spoken with during the inspection have a clear understanding of safeguarding procedures and the whistle-blowing policy. All of the staff have received mandatory safeguarding training, and they understand that they have a duty to safeguard children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The newly registered manager is suitably qualified. She worked at the home as a deputy manager prior to taking up the position of manager. She is dedicated to achieving progress, and she recognises that children respond well to a stable staff team that knows them well.

There have been several staffing changes since the last inspection, but the children have continued to receive consistent care. The manager has achieved this by careful rota planning, which ensures that there are always at least two established members of staff on duty. No agency staff have been required, meaning that the children are cared for by staff who understand their individual needs and interests.

The manager monitors the care practice and the children's progress. She performs daily and weekly checks to ensure that any practice issues are promptly actioned. The staff complete detailed daily records, which include individual progress made. This information is used to provide the basis of a comprehensive weekly report for the child's social worker. A social worker said, 'Communication is very good. The home works in a transparent manner. I receive regular weekly updates, and I am always updated of any incidents immediately.'

The independent visitor provides detailed monthly reports which highlight any areas requiring improvement. The manager works well with the independent visitor and responds promptly to the actions identified. This ensures that development is continuous.

The manager and staff have good insight into the children's needs and are committed to helping the children to develop a sense of belonging. The staff work positively with resources in the local community to ensure that the children have opportunities to socialise outside the home. The staff support and encourage the children to attend local facilities and clubs. This helps the children to increase their confidence and gain further independence skills.

Staff receive regular good-quality supervision. New staff receive a structured induction, and all of the staff have completed the mandatory training. Eligible staff have begun to

undertake or have completed a relevant level 3 qualification. Staff report that they feel supported and equipped to care for the children safely. A member of staff said, 'The home is managed well. The manager is approachable and has made some good changes. I feel listened to, and I appreciate the level of support given.' Another staff member said, 'She is very supportive and is the best manager I have ever worked for.'

The one requirement set at the last inspection is met. The manager has improved the complaint system to show a detailed record of the consultation with the child. Since the last inspection, one child has made a complaint. Their opinions throughout each stage of the investigation are clear. This ensures that the child understands the actions taken and the outcome of any concern that they have reported.

Staff implement and maintain the ethos of the home, as detailed in the home's statement of purpose. They provide a safe and stable environment with the children's needs at the centre of the daily practices. The manager regularly reviews and updates the statement of purpose. However, the updated version was not submitted to Ofsted as required.

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: SC431228

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Unique Care Homes Support Limited

Registered provider address: The Whitehouse, Wilderspool Business Park, Greenalls Avenue, Warrington WA4 6HL

Responsible individual: Joanne Murray

Registered manager: Rosie Ellington

Inspector

Lynne Drage, social care inspector

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